

**The Gospel of Mark: “Who’s the Greatest?”**  
Mark 9:30-37

**The Question of True Greatness with the Disciples**

- Jesus is avoiding the crowds, not seeking the crowds.
  - Jesus is not hungry for popularity; He’s after disciples.
  - Jesus is patient with His disciples, teaching and reteaching them.
- Most importantly, Jesus is determined to serve and save others, no matter the cost.
  - Jesus will be crucified at the hands of the men.
  - Ultimately, Jesus will be delivered over by God.

*All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. (Isaiah 53:6)*

- Jesus doesn’t resist the divine will.

*He humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. (Philippians 2:8)*

- Jesus embodies and exemplifies true greatness.
- Ironically, the disciples are discussing their own greatness.
    - They have caught Jesus on the way up.
    - They expect to have positions of power, influence, and prestige.

*He counts the cost of discipleship; they count the benefits. Jesus speaks of surrendering his life; the disciples speak of fulfilling theirs. (Mark Edwards)*

- This is a preview of Gethsemane, where Jesus will agonize alone in the garden.
- But Jesus patiently and pointedly teaches about true greatness.

*And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all. (1 Thessalonians 5:14)*

- Notice that Jesus doesn’t dismiss the idea of greatness.
  - Instead, Jesus redefines the nature of greatness.
    - Jesus denies that status is the essence of greatness.
    - Jesus points to service as the pathway to greatness.
- According to Jesus, true greatness is about forgetfulness of oneself & attentiveness to the needy.

## The Quest for True Greatness among Us

- As followers of Christ, do we embrace service?

- What is your attitude toward “lowly” tasks? Toward “lowly” people?

*Let us strive to make a practical use of this heart-searching maxim. Let us seek to do good to our fellow men, and to mortify that self-pleasing and self-indulgence, to which we are all so prone. Is there any service that we can render to our fellow Christians? Is there any kindness that we can do them, to help them and promote their happiness? If there is, let us do it without delay. Well would it be for Christendom, if empty boasts of churchmanship and orthodoxy were less frequent, and practical attention to our Lord's words in this passage more common. The men who are willing to be last of all, and servants of all, for Christ's sake, are always few. Yet these are the men who do good, break down prejudices, convince infidels that Christianity is a reality, and shake the world. (J.C. Ryle)*

- Are you humble in relation to others?

*Humility is not thinking less of yourself, it is thinking of yourself less. (C.S. Lewis)*

- Do you trust the righteous judgment of God to crown earthly humility with eternal honor?

*Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, <sup>10</sup> so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, <sup>11</sup> and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2:9-11)*

*For God is not unjust so as to overlook your work and the love that you have shown for his name in serving the saints, as you still do. (Hebrews 6:10)*

- As a church, what would it look for us to be great?

- Would it be a great building, a great membership, and a great budget?
- Or would it be a church that has a reputation for care, concern, humility, and otherness?

*Outdo one another in showing honor. (Romans 12:10)*

- Do you see the uniqueness and beauty of Christianity?

*How can a man be happy when he has to serve someone? (Plato)*

- Christianity is entirely different.
- Christianity is founded by the Servant of all who died for all.
- Christian service, then, is an act of gratitude & imitation, receiving grace, bring good to others, and giving glory to God.