

Faith Walk! - Sermon Discussion

Date : 2 Oct 2022

Sermon Title : What's So Great?

Speaker : Rev John Foo

Text : Matthew 20:20-28

INTRODUCTION

In this week's passage, we read how the mother of two of Jesus' disciples (James and John) asked Jesus to seat them on His right and left in His Kingdom. Her request might have left us wondering what was so good about this seating arrangement. Jesus, being the King, is the highest in power and thus, the two seated on His either side would be seen as being equally great, because, after all the signs and wonders that Jesus had performed, they knew that He was somebody great and that being on "Team Jesus" meant that they would be on the winning team.

As a parent, the mother of James and John made her request because she wanted the best for her children. As her children, the two disciples also desired greatness in their affirmative response to Jesus when He asked them if they could drink the cup He was going to drink. (Matt 20:22) After all, who wants to be great? Who wants to be a winner? You! Me! Everybody!

But how often do we stop to think about what kind of greatness we aspire to attain? Do we carefully consider the requirements of God's kind of greatness and are we prepared to fulfil them? Jesus knew the real issue at hand and first addressed the kind of greatness that was being pursued.

World's Kind of Greatness

In the context of the passage, their version of greatness stemmed from the thinking that Jesus had come to set up an earthly kingdom. At that time, Israel was under the rule of the Romans, and they believed that Jesus would lead a military army to deliver them from the oppression of the Romans. When the mother of James and John put forth her request, the other ten disciples were not happy at all. (Matt 20:24) They too, were vying to be the most important amongst the twelve disciples and eyed the places of honour and prestige for themselves.

- Jesus knew that the greatness they wanted was the world's kind of greatness, which entails being accomplished, gaining power, and holding titles.

For we walk by faith, not by sight. 2 Corinthians 5:7

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Jesus' Kind of Greatness

Jesus did not refuse the mother's request nor say it was wrong to be great. In fact, Jesus had earlier promised the twelve disciples that when He sits on the throne, they would also sit on twelve thrones to judge the twelve tribes of Israel. (Matthew 19:28)

- However, He made it clear that His kind of greatness was not from lording over others and exercising authority, but by being a servant. (Matthew 20:25–27)
- Jesus told them that if they wanted to be great, they had to serve others!

Having performed the greatest service to us all by going to Calvary and dying on the cross for our sins, Jesus also reminds us of His role in God's plan (Matt 20:28) and that He has set the example for us to follow. (John 13:14–15)

What It Means to Serve

Serving others is how greatness is measured in God's kingdom, which is a stark contrast to how greatness is measured in the world.

- If God were to use the world's way of measuring greatness, only a few would be great in His kingdom.
- Because God's measure of greatness is different from that of the world's, when held against God's measure, everybody can be great, because anyone can serve.

When we serve, many people will never even say thank you. But serving is not about receiving appreciation from others. When we remember that we serve because we love our Lord Jesus Christ, then who we serve doesn't matter. We are called to serve everyone (not just who we like), so what really matters is whether we are willing to or not. All we need is the right attitude and a willing heart.

CONCLUSION

God does not measure greatness according to the standards of this world, and so, we do not measure our own greatness in God's kingdom. On the day that He comes, it is God Himself who will esteem us as being truly great and it is for Him to say, "Well done good and faithful servant, enter then into the joy of the Lord."

By anchoring the knowledge that Jesus' kind of greatness is derived from serving others, often without any form of affirmation from them, we gain awareness of what greatness truly is and what is required of us. By being willing to serve and stepping up to the plate, we commit ourselves to be channels of Christ's love to others.

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A. Review Sermon Application

Purpose: Reflect on how you have been embodying God's truth.

- 1a. How successful have you been in fulfilling what you/your group had committed to do for the last FaithWalk!?
- 1b. What were some challenges you faced and what would you like to celebrate?

2. Get a volunteer to read Matthew 20:20-28 aloud slowly.
 - a. Take some time to meditate on God's Word that has been read. Visualise the scene in the passage unfolding before you. Which character in the passage can you relate to the most:
 - (i) James or John
 - (ii) The wife of Zebedee
 - (iii) One of the other 10 disciples
 - b. Why do you see yourself as the person you have chosen in 2a?
 - c. What would your thoughts be after hearing what Jesus says in verses 25-27?

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B. Relate Sermon Content

Purpose: Relate with the Truth and Resolve for Transformation.

- 3a. Has knowing that Jesus' kind of greatness is different from the world's kind of greatness changed the way you live your life?
- (i) If yes, how has your life changed?
 - (ii) If no, why not?
- 3b. How can you apply what you have learnt this week about Jesus' kind of greatness in a committed and sustained daily walk?
- 3c. How can your group members encourage or help you to achieve 3b. above, in the following week(s), till your next meeting?
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- 4a. We must serve with the right attitude and a willing heart because we love our Lord Jesus Christ, and not as fulfilling an obligation or for a reward.
- Do you think your current service to others will receive Christ's "Well done good and faithful servant, enter then into the joy of the Lord.", when He returns?
- 4b. When we serve, many people will never even say thank you. But serving is not about receiving appreciation from others. We are called to serve everyone, not just who we like.
- (i) What is one challenge you will face, serving in this way?
 - (ii) What is one thing you can do to overcome this challenge?

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C. Testimonies, Prayer and Action

Purpose: Give glory to God, seek Him and embody His Word.

5. Share your testimony on an occasion where someone asked you to help with a task or serve in an area that you were equipped to handle, but uncomfortable with making a commitment, but stepped up nevertheless because of your love for God.

OR

Give thanks to God that because His measure of greatness is different from that of the world's, when held against God's measure, anybody can be great, since anyone can serve.

6. As a group, take time to pray for each other and ask the Holy Spirit to help you surrender yourselves willingly to serve God's people from all walks of life. Seek guidance on keeping your focus on Jesus' kind of greatness as you continue in your journey to be His good and faithful disciple.

Optional items:

Suggested worship songs:

1. You Hold it All Together – Maverick City https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4t_ROjJyg48
2. A Thousand Hallelujahs – Hillsong https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vR_sl9lkowA
3. Heart of A Servant – City Harvest Church <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yK-gwUzBRbc>

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