

Serve Each Other

Jesus is making His way to the Cross. What awaits Him is unimaginable...pain, brutality, rejection, betrayal, the cosmic weight of becoming the sin-payment and with that, taking on the totality of His Father's wrath – and all of this, out of love.

Surely at a time like this, His closest friends would be there, rally to support Him and stand with Him. Not so. Instead, two of them, the Son's of Zebedee choose this moment to negotiate a preferred seating arrangement for themselves in glory. Wow. Can you imagine someone being that self-focused, so filled with themselves and their own position, status and security that they are completely unaware of the needs of others? Sure you can. That's you. That's me.

What we see in our text is that Jesus doesn't just condemn us for this, He offers us His life, His grace and the energy of His Spirit to do what is counter to our nature – which is to actually become a servant. Not merely to do acts of service, but to be a servant – to lay down our lives just as Jesus so willingly laid down His life for us.

A Mother's Request: Matthew 20:20-28

²⁰Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee came up to him with her sons, and kneeling before him she asked him for something. ²¹And he said to her, "What do you want?" She said to him, "Say that these two sons of mine are to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your kingdom." ²²Jesus answered, "You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I am to drink?" They said to him, "We are able." ²³He said to them, "You will drink my cup, but to sit at my right hand and at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared by my Father."

²⁴And when the ten heard it, they were indignant at the two brothers. ²⁵But Jesus called them to him and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. ²⁶It shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, ²⁷and whoever would be first among you must be your slave, ²⁸even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

Consider these insights into the text:

1. An expression of self-interest uncovered (v.20-21)

The Mother of James and John ask Jesus to allow them to sit on His right side and His left in His future Kingdom (v.22-23) Jesus denies their request on two accounts:

- Their ignorance (v.22) Neither the mother nor the sons really know what they are asking
- His inability (v.23) Seating arrangements in the Kingdom of heaven will be assigned by the Father not the Son.

2. An example of true greatness revealed (v.24-25)

Jesus used this tense situation to set before us a picture of true greatness:

- Greatness as viewed by the Gentiles (v.25) Greatness to them is the powerful lording over others
- Greatness as viewed by a Kingdom mind (v.25ff)

3. An expectation of servant living required (v.26-28)

- Requires serving, sacrificing for others

Discussion Questions

- 1) What did Jesus have to say about the path to true greatness (Matt. 20:25-26)
- 2) What do you find hardest about this definition of greatness?
- 3) Is there a particular person you find it especially difficult to serve? If so, why?
- 4) What changes must happen in us to take on the nature of a servant?

Resources**BOOK**

[Humility: True Greatness](#)

by C.J. Mahaney

Notes:**Digging Deeper**

What is one tangible step you can take this week to embrace the Jesus life as a servant, "the first among you must be your slave."?

Knowing that your service is meant to build up the body of Christ, is there something you have been uniquely gifted to do that you sense God reawakening you to do?