

Who is Jesus – Jesus is a Servant – Mark 9:33-35 – Mark 10:35-45
FBC Nacogdoches – Sunday, August 11, 2019 – A.M. Message

Message Description

- How do you measure achievement, success, and greatness? The measuring stick the Lord uses is not the same as the one we naturally embrace. In this message, as we study the greatness of Christ, we will learn how the Lord measures greatness and surprising ways we can embrace godly ambition and be truly great in our families, in our work-places, and in the church.

Introduction

- This is our last message in our series on the identity of Jesus from the gospel of **Mark**.
 - We have learned seven things about Jesus.
 - Jesus is the center.
 - Jesus is divine.
 - Jesus prays.
 - Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath.
 - Jesus is fearsome.
 - Jesus is the Messiah.
 - Today: Jesus is a servant.
 - We will look at two closely related events in Christ's relationship with his disciples.
 - These events are representative of similar events involving Jesus and the disciples recorded in the gospels.
 - These two events happened one right after the other.
 - Read **Mark 9:33-35**.
 - **9:33**
 - Capernaum on the Northwest corner of the Sea of Galilee.
 - Likely Peter and Andrew's house.
 - Jesus' Galilean ministry began and now ends at Capernaum.
 - Jesus will come very close to here after the resurrection when he restores Peter.
 - **9:34**
 - The previous discussion with Jesus had been about his death.
 - Perhaps now they were even talking about who would replace Jesus.
 - The disciples obviously knew their discussions were improper.
 - Seen in their silence.
 - **9:35**
 - This is a radical statement.
 - Don't miss this.
 - Don't dismiss this.
 - This statement turns the world on its head.
 - Read **Mark 10:35-45**.
 - **10:35**
 - **Matthew** reveals that their mother accompanied them and spoke first (**Matthew 20:20, 21**), after which James and John reiterated her request.
 - If she was Jesus' aunt, the 3 undoubtedly hoped to capitalize on the family ties.
 - **10:37**
 - A request for a position of authority and esteem...
 - **10:41**
 - Not righteous indignation, since they, too, had been guilty in the past of such self-serving conduct (**Matthew 9:33, 34**) and would be so in the future (**Luke 22:24**).
 - **10:42**
 - Jesus describe the system of the world.
 - **10:43a**
 - Christians are not to follow the system of the world.
 - We are to be strangers and aliens...
 - **10:43b-44**
 - Restatement of the radical statement we read in **Mark 9:35**.
 - **10:40**
 - Jesus doesn't discourage ambition, but defines true greatness as service, sacrifice, and humility.
 - **10:45**
 - In case you don't understand this or don't believe this, Jesus presents himself as the example.
 - *Theme of the account: Jesus is a Servant.*

- Like no other leader, influencer...
- Jesus led by serving.
 - Never did he pull the **power card**.
- We are to be like Jesus in this respect.
 - Servant-living should be our highest calling!
- **Why is servant-living important?**
 - A. It is God's measuring stick for greatness and spiritual maturity.**
 - The world has its measurements...
 - Popularity
 - Position/Power/Authority
 - Influence
 - Wealth
 - The "*gentiles*" (**10:42**) use those measurements.
 - The Lord measures differently...
 - **Mark 9:35b** | *If anyone wants to be first, he must be last and servant of all.* (CSB)
 - "*First*" means recognized...
 - Leader
 - Mature believer
 - Great
 - The key to being "*first*" is to be "*last and servant of all.*"
 - God's measuring stick is servant-living.
 - The seeds of greatness can only grow through our willingness to serve.ⁱ
 - B. Jesus gives us the example of servant-living.**
 - In the middle of a passage about servant-living in **Philippians**, Paul commands this...
 - **Philippians 2:5** | *Adopt the same attitude as that of Christ Jesus.* (CSB)
 - We are to be imitators of Christ!
 - **1 Corinthians 11:1** | *Imitate me, as I also imitate Christ.* (CSB)
 - **Ephesians 5:1** | *Therefore, be imitators of God, as dearly loved children.* (CSB)
 - Christian means "little Christ's."
 - We see Jesus pressing the disciples to follow his lead in the passage we read...
 - **Mark 10:45** | *For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.* (CSB)
 - Jesus says this again in a similar account recorded in **Luke**...
 - **Luke 22:27** | *For who is greater, the one at the table or the one serving? Isn't it the one at the table? But I am among you as the one who serves.* (CSB)
 - But let's go back to the classic passage in **Philippians**...
 - **Philippians 2:5** | *Adopt the same attitude as that of Christ Jesus,* (CSB)
 - **Philippians 2:6** | *who, existing in the form of God, did not consider equality with God as something to be exploited.* (CSB)
 - Jesus did not see his power/position as an opportunity to benefit himself.
 - **Philippians 2:7** | *Instead he emptied himself by assuming the form of a servant, taking on the likeness of humanity. And when he had come as a man,* (CSB)
 - Jesus saw his position as an opportunity to serve.
 - **Philippians 2:8** | *he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death— even to death on a cross.* (CSB)
 - Jesus served in the ultimate way...
 - C. God promises eternal rewards for those whose life is characterized by the activity and attitude of a servant.**
 - Much we could say about this...
 - In a nutshell...
 - We will not all receive the same reward in heaven.
 - Those who imitate Christ in the activity and attitude of servant-living will be greatly rewarded.
 - One verse...
 - **Mark 9:41** | *Whoever gives you a cup of water to drink in my name, because you belong to Christ—truly I tell you, he will never lose his reward.* (CSB)
 - D. Servant-living demonstrates a genuine trust in the Lord.**
 - The chief reason we pursue position, power, preferences, influence...
 - Is to take care of ourselves!
 - A servant-living lifestyle is about trusting God to take care of you.
 - When you trust God, you don't have to self-promote.
 - **James 4:10** | *Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.* (CSB)

- Why is this so hard?
 - This is hard! *Radical!*
 - If we don't see what Jesus teaches here as radical, we have missed the point.
 - This should challenge everyone.
 - Even after walking with Jesus for three years, this was still the hardest lesson for the disciples to learn.
 - The disciples continued to struggle with this over and over.
 - After hearing Jesus' teaching...
 - After seeing Jesus model this...
 - Advanced Christian living...
 - **Calculus IV of Christian living**
 - **Organic Chemistry of Christian living**
 - We have a built-in desire to be well-thought-of, respected, and liked.
 - And since the world uses its success-driven/power measurement, we are motivated to pursue that.
 - Somehow, we must change who we are trying to please.
 - We can't impress the world and honor God at the same time on this one.
 - **So, servant-living is a defining mark of spiritual maturity!**
 - So, how do we do this?
 - What does it look like to be a servant?
- Warning: This is going to be radical.
 - It was radical to Jesus' first audience.
 - It will be radical for us if we hear it rightly.

How to Be a Servant?

I. Defend no preference.

- At the most basic level, what does it mean to serve someone?
 - It means to put that person ahead of oneself.
 - **We hear people say that JOY means putting...**
 - **Jesus first**
 - **Others second**
 - **Yourself third**
 - That is true!
- This involves action, but it also involves attitude.
 - The attitude that says...
 - "I have to get my way..."
 - "My preferences are better than your preferences..."
 - Someone who is always trying to defend his or her point of view...
 - That attitude is not a servant-living attitude.
- If our actions are that of a servant but our attitude is selfish and self-centered, then we are not embracing servant-living.
 - **Philippians 2:5** | *Adopt the same attitude as that of Christ Jesus.* (CSB)
 - You've seen what follows **Philippians 2:5**, but what about what precedes it?
 - **Philippians 2:3** | *Do nothing out of selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility consider others as more important than yourselves.* (CSB)
 - **Philippians 2:4** | *Everyone should look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.* (CSB)
- The attitude of a servant is willing to let the preferences, concerns, needs, and interests of others be held as more important than his own.
 - Many verses remind of us this...
 - **Romans 15:1** | *Now we who are strong have an obligation to bear the weaknesses of those without strength, and not to please ourselves.* (CSB)
 - **1 Corinthians 13:5** | *... [Love] is not self-seeking...* (CSB)
 - **Mark 12:31** | *... [The second most important commandment is to] Love your neighbor as yourself...* (CSB)
 - **1 Corinthians 10:24** | *No one is to seek his own good, but the good of the other person.* (CSB)
 - But one stands out...
 - **Romans 12:10** | *Love one another deeply as brothers and sisters. Outdo one another in showing honor.* (CSB)
- How do we "*outdo one another in showing honor*?"
 - Versions

- **Romans 12:10** | *Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor; (NASB95)*
- **Romans 12:10** | *Love each other with genuine affection, and take delight in honoring each other. (NLT)*
- Let me explain it by taking you out on a date with my wife.
 - First, I really like my wife! And I really like going out on dates with her!
 - So, when we have the opportunity to go to a nice restaurant in Houston or Dallas or somewhere...
 - I usually have a very strong opinion about where I want to eat.
 - Don't tell my wife this...
 - But I never pick the restaurant!
 - We usually have this friendly fight that goes like this...
 - Donna, "Where would you like to go eat?"
 - Me, "Doesn't matter. Let's go somewhere you would really enjoy."
 - Donna, "I picked last time. You pick."
 - Me, "You are better at picking than I am. Where do you want to go?"
 - And back and forth, then finally...
 - Donna, "Ok, well let's try ..."
 - Now for the subtext...
 - I always know exactly where I want to go eat.
 - During the whole spat I am secretly praying she picks the place I already want to go.
 - So, why do I push her to pick?
 - Because it makes me happy for her to be happy!
 - Because her enjoying the restaurant is more pleasing to me than good food.
 - We do the same thing with sometimes putting our kids ahead of ourselves.
 - Now, it isn't a sin to pick the restaurant...
 - But that attitude of trying to put others first in everything is servant-living.
 - **And there are much more important (and difficult) areas than choosing restaurants.**
 - *Outdo one another in showing honor... (Romans 12:10, CSB)*
 - *Take delight in honoring each other... (Romans 12:10, NLT)*
 - *Consider others (and their needs/preferences) as more important than your own... (Philippians 2:3, CSB)*

II. Seek no recognition.

- Now from a focus on attitude to a focus on action.
- All service is not created equally.
 - Motives of service...
 - Some service is done by those whose primary interest is how they can benefit from the service.
 - Some service is done by those whose primary interest is how they can benefit others.
 - That makes all the difference!
- We are not engaged in servant-living if the service is motivated by how it may benefit us.
 - Directly
 - In the esteem of others
 - Or even in how it makes us feel
- Look at how Jesus said this...
 - **Matthew 6:1** | *Be careful not to practice your righteousness in front of others to be seen by them. Otherwise, you have no reward with your Father in heaven. (CSB)*
- And then after making a general statement, Jesus gives three examples.
 - The first example is giving to the poor...
 - **Matthew 6:2-4** | *So whenever you give to the poor, don't sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be applauded by people. Truly I tell you, they have their reward. But when you give to the poor, don't let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you. (CSB)*
- God only honors service that is for the benefit of the ones being served.
 - This statement does not mean that all service has to be secret.
 - We see this demonstrated in the life of Jesus and the apostles...
 - But our motives must be carefully examined.
- Everyone struggles with keeping motives pure.
 - We know we struggle when we find these questions running through our minds...
 - A. How is this going to benefit me?
 - B. How am I going to be recognized?
 - C. Will people know who deserves the credit for this?

- D. Will I be upset if my work is not noticed or I am not praised?
- One of the best ways to address this is to do at least some service in secret.
 - **What service or sacrifice have you done in the last few months that no one knows about?**
 - Don't take pride in the answer!
 - But let your answer motivate you to do more service while seeking no recognition.
 - That is servant-living!

III. **Set no limits.**

- Service sets no limits.
- The best example of this is Jesus washing the feet of the disciples in **John 13**.
 - This was a degrading task.
 - It wasn't just ceremonial.
 - It was dirty.
 - It was hard work.
 - The disciples pushed back on this because they were shocked (and embarrassed they didn't do it first).
 - But there is even more to the story that you may have missed...
 - The account is preceded by two verses that set the scene.
 - **John 13:1** | *Before the Passover Festival, Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart from this world to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.* (CSB)
 - Jesus knew he only had one last time to make the right impression on the disciples before his crucifixion.
 - And he chose to demonstrate servant-living.
 - **John 13:2** | *Now when it was time for supper, the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas, Simon Iscariot's son, to betray him.* (CSB)
 - And one of the men whose feet he washed was none other than his betrayer.
 - Jesus washed the feet of the vilest hypocrite he knew.
 - Jesus set no limits on his service.
 - Now, it is important to find opportunities of service that best fit your personality and giftedness.
 - No question.
 - But this is not the primary (or frankly even the occasional) pattern found in Scripture.
 - People just saw a need and served!
 - **Acts 6** has the leading men in the church waiting tables.
 - **John 13** has the leading man of all history washing feet.
 - We need to stop saying...
 - **I've done my part in that area of service.**
 - **That is too hard.**
 - **That is for less mature, less capable, less important, less ??? people than me.**
 - **That is beneath me.**
 - We should set no limits in our service.
 - **In a church I pastored 20+ years ago...**
 - **I faced some difficult opposition.**
 - **Really the only time I've ever faced any serious opposition to leadership.**
 - **The struggle was over issues of race.**
 - **There were some families that I really didn't like because of their views and their actions and threats.**
 - **I thought they were ungodly, lost, divisive, depraved...**
 - **And I didn't want to serve them.**
 - **In fact, I struggled to serve them for a while.**
 - **But they had needs (deaths, troubled marriages, etc.) just like everyone else.**
 - **But the Lord taught me...**
 - **Jesus could have said Judas was not worthy of his service...**
 - **And Jesus could have said the same thing about me...**
 - **And I loved on and served those families to the very best of my ability.**
 - Servant-living sets no limits!

IV. **Protect no treasure.**

- What is our treasure?
 - Resources
 - Time
 - Energy
- Most of us would say that we have too little of each of these.

- **I start each morning looking at a task list of everyone I want to talk to and everything I want to do, and it is disheartening to know there is just not enough time and energy to get to all of it.**
- But there is the disconnect.
 - I think that my time, money, and energy is personal treasure that I must guard.
 - Instead, I should see my time, money, and energy as treasures that God has entrusted to me for a season so I can be a blessing to others for his name's sake.
- That attitude changes my perspective from one of a guard/protector of treasure to one of a wise steward and distributor of treasure.
 - **It is likely too simple of an illustration but this morning I stopped by McDonalds to buy an Egg McMuffin.**
 - **Very friendly lady at the drive-through window...**
 - **She had no problem handing me my breakfast sandwich.**
 - **She didn't hesitate.**
 - **She didn't question my plans with the McMuffin.**
 - **She didn't say, "I'll give you half now and maybe half later."**
 - **She didn't act like I was taking something from her.**
 - **She didn't seem to be trying to protect her supply of McMuffins.**
 - **She saw her role as a distributor of a treasure that had been entrusted to her.**
- Yet, we often have the opposite attitude in our own lives.
 - I can't be generous with my money; I need to protect MY treasure.
 - I can't be generous with my time; I need to protect MY treasure.
 - I can't be generous with my energy; I need to protect MY treasure.
- We think...
 - I can't sacrifice for my spouse, family, church, friends, neighbors, or even God...
 - I can't sacrifice because I have to protect MY treasure.
 - I have to protect my...
 - Dreams
 - Opportunities
 - Security
 - Leisure
 - And THAT IS NOT SERVANT-LIVING!
- If I would stop trying so hard to protect my treasure and focus on stewarding it...
 - I would feel so much less pressure in life...
 - I would experience a much fuller life and the joy that comes from servant-living.
- Let me show you a video that teaches this point (protect no treasure) much better than I can...
 - **Robertson McQuilkin Videoⁱⁱ**
 - **President of Columbia Bible College and Seminary.**
 - **A New Testament Scholar of world renown...**
 - **In probably the greatest point of opportunity in his career so far as the chance to go speak to crowds around the world and teach from his wealth of knowledge he had gained from a lifetime of hard work and study.**
 - **His wife, Muriel, was diagnosed with Alzheimer's in the mid 80's.**
 - **The audio that you will hear was recorded in 1990.**
 - **Play video.**
 - **That was in 1990.**
 - **His wife stopped recognizing him in 1993.**
 - **She died in 2003.**
- What are you sacrificing? How are you serving by sacrificing your treasure (time, resources, energy)?
 - In your marriage?
 - With your family?
 - In your church?
 - For those in your workplace, neighborhood?

Conclusion

- Let me close by rereading three verses we began with...
 - **Mark 10:43-44 | *But it is not so among you. On the contrary, whoever wants to become great among you will be your servant, and whoever wants to be first among you will be a slave to all. (CSB)***
 - Shocking!
 - If you want to be first (mature, great, significant), then be a slave.
 - A slave is one who has no property or volition of his own.
 - And be a slave to whom?
 - ALL!

- Can you imagine being a slave to every person you encounter?
- That is the idea!
- **Mark 10:45** | *For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.* (CSB)
- Jesus isn't asking more of you than of himself.
- He is our model.
 - Isn't Jesus amazing!
- *As a ransom for many?*
- Gospel invitation

Outline Ideas

- #1
 - Scripture story...
 - Theme of the account: Jesus is a Servant.
 - Why is servant living important?
 - Measuring stick...
 - Jesus' example...
 - Eternal rewards...
 - Fulfills the purpose for which we were made...
 - Honors the Lord...
 - Why is this so hard?
 - Radical
 - Disciples struggled
 - We have a built-in desire to be...
 - Successful
 - Liked
 - Advanced living
 - Mark of maturity...
- #2
 - What is servant focused living?
 - Why is this important?
 - **Philippians 2:5-6**
 - How to embrace this radical lifestyle?
 - Defend no preference
 - Cherish no preference
 - Enshrine no preference
 - Surrender self
 - Seek no recognition
 - Draw no lines
 - Set no limits
 - Cherish no treasure
 - Protect no treasure
 - Harbor no treasure
 - Adore no treasure
 - Hold nothing back

Notes on the Text

- In **9:34**, it is clear that the disciples knew that this kind of behavior was wrong.
 - Why did they engage what they knew was wrong?
 - Why did they do something that they were clearly embarrassed about?
- In **10:43-44**, it is clear that Jesus does not condemn, but endorses a desire to be great. But the desire must be pursued in the right manner.
 - It is ok to "*want to become great*" (**43**).
 - It is ok to desire "*to be first*" (**44**).
- **10:43** says "*on the contrary.*"
 - What was wrong with the disciples' original pursuit of greatness?
 - What was right about the pursuit of greatness that Jesus proposes?
 - Answers...
 - The first pursuit puffs up man.
 - And emulates the "Gentiles" (**42**).

- The second pursuit honors Jesus (45).
- And imitates Christ (45).
- Jesus' life is a ransom for many!
- Why is the word-picture *ransom* used (10:45)?

Thoughts

- If we don't see what Jesus teaches here as radical, we have missed the point.
 - This should challenge everyone.
 - Even after walking with Jesus for three years, this was still the hardest lesson for the disciples to learn.
 - After hearing Jesus' teaching...
 - After seeing Jesus model this...
 - Advanced Christian living...
 - **Calculus of Christian living**
 - **Organic Chemistry of Christian living**
- There are many things in the Christian world that are backwards from the secular world.
 - Not me first.
 - Better to serve than to be served.
- **Picture puzzle...**
 - **What looks out of place?**
- What if our whole view of life was wrong?
- **Upside down org chart...**
- How to be great? Two alternatives...
 - Worldly advice...
 - Godly counsel...
- How many books have been written on...
 - How to be great?
 - How to succeed?
 - How to excel?
 - How to make your mark?
- But Jesus says we have greatness backwards.
 - **Luke 22:27** | *For who is greater, the one at the table or the one serving? Isn't it the one at the table? But I am among you as the one who serves. (CSB)*
 - **Mark 10:43**
- The Lord uses a different metric to evaluate greatness...
 - Not...
 - Popularity
 - Position
 - Prosperity
 - Acclaim
 - Power
 - We will be very surprised in heaven at who is the greatest!
- Why does service make us great?
 - Jesus says so...
 - Resounding truth of the gospels...
 - Biggest struggle of the disciples...
 - It makes us like Jesus...
 - Jesus avoided "worldly success."
 - Jesus is our finish line.
 - Jesus is our model.
 - Eternal reward for servants...
 - Causes others to honor the Lord...
 - Fulfills the purpose for which we were made...
- So, what does it look like to be a servant?
 - Put other's needs/interests/preferences first...
 - **Robertson McQuilkin Video**ⁱⁱⁱ
 - **President of Columbia Bible College and Seminary.**
 - **A New Testament Scholar of world renown...**
 - **His wife was diagnosed with Alzheimer's in the mid 80's.**
 - **In 1990 he resigned to take care of his wife.**
 - Don't complain about things that are a matter of someone's preference.
 - Seek no reward or recognition...

- Draw no lines...
 - Jesus washing feet...
- Sacrifice...
 - What are you sacrificing?
- Ideas for service...
 - Volunteer office two hours a week...
 - Adopt a child...

References

- Difference between the righteous and the wicked can be seen in attitude toward service.
 - **Malachi 3:18** | *So you will again see the difference between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who does not serve him. (CSB)*
- **Proverbs 11:2** | *When arrogance comes, disgrace follows, but with humility comes wisdom. (CSB)*
- **James 4:6** | *But he gives greater grace. Therefore he says: God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble. (CSB)*
- **Matthew 20:20-21** | *Then the mother of Zebedee's sons approached him with her sons. She knelt down to ask him for something. "What do you want?" he asked her. "Promise," she said to him, "that these two sons of mine may sit, one on your right and the other on your left, in your kingdom." (CSB)*
- We will be humbled. By our choice and submission or by the hand of God.
 - **Matthew 23:11-12** | *The greatest among you will be your servant. Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted. (CSB)*
- Others first...
 - **Philippians 2:3** | *Do nothing out of selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility consider others as more important than yourselves. (CSB)*
 - **Philippians 2:5-8** | *Adopt the same attitude as that of Christ Jesus, who, existing in the form of God, did not consider equality with God as something to be exploited. Instead he emptied himself by assuming the form of a servant, taking on the likeness of humanity. And when he had come as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death—even to death on a cross. (CSB)*
- Fight to show more honor not to exercise more authority...
 - **Romans 12:10** | *Love one another deeply as brothers and sisters. Outdo one another in showing honor. (CSB)*
- Definition of greatness...
 - **Luke 22:27** | *For who is greater, the one at the table or the one serving? Isn't it the one at the table? But I am among you as the one who serves. (CSB)*
 - **Galatians 5:13** | *For you were called to be free, brothers and sisters; only don't use this freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but serve one another through love. (CSB)*
 - **Mark 9:41** | *And whoever gives you a cup of water to drink in my name, because you belong to Christ—truly I tell you, he will never lose his reward. (CSB)*

Servanthood

- He's planted eternity in our hearts along with seeds of greatness that can only grow through our willingness to serve.^{iv}
- Martin Luther King Jr. said, "Everybody can be great because anybody can serve. You don't have to have a college degree to serve. You don't have to make your subject and verb agree to serve. You only need a heart full of grace, a soul generated by love."^v
- Greatness in the world is having many servants and being over many people. Greatness in God's sight is serving, not being served.^{vi}
- Our kids need to know that the world's fast-track approach to success is centered on self—self-improvement, self-satisfaction, self-reliance, and plain old selfishness. And they need to hear that the Bible's call to success is in direct contrast to the world's: it is selfless, centered on God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. Do they see in our everyday choices that a life of true success—of Christlike greatness—depends upon a daily yielding to Jesus as Lord? Do our children know that we trustingly lay at the foot of the cross our plans, goals, and aspirations—along with the goals and dreams that we have for them?^{vii}
- The secret to greatness in the kingdom of God is neither power nor position. Greatness is being conformed to the image of Jesus Christ. If we want to identify with Jesus in His glory, we must also identify with Him in His humility. A true servant looks for legitimate needs to meet, whether at home or across the ocean, ministering to others with joy and understanding.^{viii}
- You want to be great, do something great for God? You want to please and honor the Lord Jesus with your life? Then become a *diakonos* (servant; v. 43), a *doulos* (slave) of all (v. 44). Become a table waiter, a household servant. Become a slave. Such a person will have the mind of Christ, esteeming others better than himself, not giving attention to their own interests, but to those of others (Phil 2:3-5).^{ix}

- So many people today are not looking for a place to serve, but for a place to be served. That's normal for the world to have that attitude, but we are very alarmed and concerned to see this attitude among Christians. (Letter from a woman in Ohio to Focus on the Family editor Rolf Zettersten)^x
- Jesus said of Himself: "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45). On the night before He was crucified, He served His disciples by washing their feet and said, "Yet I am among you as the One who serves" (Luke 22:27). This deed was no novelty; it characterized His life. Although Jesus was God, He was also the humblest, most servant-hearted man who ever lived. And never did He demonstrate His willingness to do the lowliest form of service more than when He was with the people of God. As Jesus served the Father by serving the Father's children, so should we.^{xi}
- If we have the world's mentality of wanting the foremost place, we are not qualified for Christian leadership. This mentality can lift us into ecclesiastical leadership or fit us for being a big name among men, but it unfits us for real spiritual leadership. To the extent that we want power we are in the flesh, and the Holy Spirit has no part in us. (Schaeffer, *No Little People*, 67–68)^{xii}
- Some may try to serve God without loving Him, but no one can love God without serving Him.^{xiii}
- Spurgeon boldly declared, "He is no Christian who does not seek to serve His God."^{xiv}
- Tony Merida says, "The gospel frees us from our addiction to ourselves!" ("Twitter Post"). Before Christ redeems us and sets us free, we are like crack addicts addicted to ourselves. We are like alcoholics intoxicated with ourselves. We are not as interested in serving as in being served, in giving as in receiving, in pursuing God's way as in getting our way, in being the least as in being the greatest.^{xv}
- Let's take a "painful pride" test.
 - Am I upset if I am not praised for my work?
 - Do I like and even long to sit at the head table in the seat of honor?
 - Do I seek credit for what others have done?
 - Do honorary titles pump me up?
 - Is popularity crucial to my sense of self-worth?
 - Am I a name dropper of those I know (or pretend to know?)
 - Do I think I have something valuable to say about almost everything?^{xvi}
- Jesus is the ultimate model of authentic life; that is, he lived life as it was created to be by the author of life for all humans to follow (Acts 3:15). Jesus did not glorify himself by becoming the center of an adoring cult of people who demeaned themselves in response to his demands. Instead he described himself as a suffering servant (Mark 9:35). Jesus was self-sacrificing and self-denying. This empowered him to be the ultimate giver of love to all humankind. He calls us to follow his supreme example so that we can fulfill our mission in life just as he did.^{xvii}
- Being a servant doesn't come easily, especially for those who have been trained to lead and especially for those who dream of being served. Of course there is also the battle we must engage with the flesh. There is a voice in our head from our fallen sinful nature that can whisper persuasively, "The Lord takes care of those who take care of themselves." Just enough truth to *deceive* us, and just enough heresy to *derail* us.^{xviii}
- A servant doesn't measure the size or significance of the service, there is no need to.^{xix}
- Secret Service: What service or sacrifice have you done in the last few months that no one knows about?^{xx}
- Is this a problem today?
 - What is the leading cause of divorce?
 - What is the leading cause of strife at work, school, neighborhood, family?
 - What is the leading cause of problems even in church?^{xxi}
- The gospels contain five accounts of Jesus chastising the disciples because of their ongoing problems with 'firsthood.'
 - At least three different occasions.
 - No other issue with the disciples is dealt with as often.^{xxii}

Notes on 9:33

- The use of the definite article suggests this to be the house Jesus habitually stayed in when in Capernaum. Whether it was Peter's house (cf. 1:29) or someone else's is not known.^{xxiii}
- The house was probably that of Peter and Andrew (1:29).^{xxiv}
- The location of Capernaum was advantageous for several reasons. The town is located to the west of the Jordan River, placing it near the border between two first century political areas. The [Jordan River](#) was the boundary between the political district of [Galilee](#), ruled by Herod Antipas, and the political district of [Gaulanitis](#), ruled by Herod Philip. Being to the west of the Jordan River indicates Capernaum is in Herod Antipas' territory. In fact, it is the only significant town on the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee in Galilee.^{xxv}

- Jesus and the disciples arrive in Capernaum on the Sea of Galilee. This will be His last visit here, and as He had done previously, He gives private teaching to the Twelve.^{xxvi}
- The **Galilean Ministry ends as it began at Capernaum**. No subsequent visit to the town is mentioned in the Gospels, although after the Resurrection the Lord was seen by the shore of the lake (Jo. 21:1 ff.) and among the hills (Mt. 28:16).^{xxvii}

Notes on 9:34

- Swete says that the dispute as to who should be greatest, was probably suggested by the selection of the Three for the mysterious ascent of Hermon, and the prominence of Peter among the three.^{xxviii}
- In conjunction with their messianic expectation of a political liberator, the disciples dream of status, honor, and power, along the lines of the Maccabean revolt (166–160 B.C.; cf. 8:34–38).^{xxix}
- The fact is recorded for our learning. The Holy Spirit has caused it to be written down for the perpetual use of Christ's church. Let us take care that it is not written in vain.^{xxx}
- It is an awful fact, whether we like to admit it or not, that **pride is one of the commonest sins which beset human nature**. We are all born Pharisees.
 - **We all naturally think far better of ourselves than we ought.**
 - **We all naturally imagine that we deserve something better than we have.**
 - It is an old sin. It began in the Garden of Eden, when Adam and Eve thought they had not got everything that their merits deserved. It is a subtle sin. It rules and reigns in many a heart without being detected, and can even wear the clothing of humility. It is a most soul-ruining sin. It prevents repentance, keeps people back from Christ, checks brotherly love and nips spiritual concern in the bud.^{xxxi}
- Questions of rank and priority were not uncommon in the Mediterranean world, including Jewish Palestine.^{xxxii}
- The previous discussion with Jesus had been about His death. They were embarrassed that in light of that disclosure, they were talking about such selfish things. **Perhaps they were even talking about who would replace Him.**^{xxxiii}

Notes on 9:35

- Rabbis usually sat down to teach (cf. Matt. 15:29; Luke 4:20; 5:3; John 8:2).^{xxxiv}
- *tous dōdeka* (cf. 3:14, 16, 6:7) 'the Twelve': a title, not simply a number.^{xxxv}
- **"If anyone wants to be first"** This is a FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE, which is assumed to be true from the author's perspective. **Jesus did not condemn ambition, but defined it in terms of the new ethic of the Kingdom of God. Greatness is linked to service (cf. 10:31, 45; Matt. 20:26; 19:30; John 13:5), not control or power!** God's Kingdom is so different from human societies.^{xxxvi}
- The disciples' concept of greatness and leadership, drawn from their culture, needed to be completely reversed. Not those who lord their position over others are great in God's kingdom, but those who humbly serve others (cf. 10:31, 43–45; Matt. 19:30–20:16; 23:11, 12; Luke 13:30; 14:8–11; 18:14; 22:24–27).^{xxxvii}
- The **spirit of service is the passport to eminence in the Kingdom** of God, for it is the spirit of the Master Who Himself became διάκονος πάντων ['servant of all']" (Swete, p. 205).^{xxxviii}
- **Being Number One is "American," and it is even thought to be "Christian." Don't misunderstand: the Scriptures do call God's people to do their very best. Paul strove to do so (Philippians 3:12–14), and he encouraged Timothy to do the same in his ministry (1 Timothy 3:1). But to be "Numero Uno"—to want always to be served—is sub-Christian.**^{xxxix}
- **Jesus does not repudiate greatness. He redefines it.**^{xl}
- Jesus does say there is a position you should aspire to obtain: a *diakonos*, a waiter of tables, one who washes others' feet (John 13:1–20) or changes their soiled undergarments. The work is not glorious in man's eyes, but it is great in God's! Here is a posture and position worthy of heaven!^{xli}
- They had it backward. If they wanted to be first in the kingdom, they needed to be servants. If they wanted to be truly great, they needed to be more childlike. Instead of arguing and fighting with each other, instead of putting each other down, instead of rejecting each other and exalting themselves, they needed to take the role of a servant.^{xlii}

Notes on 9:36

- The Aramaic word *talya* can mean both "servant" and "child," so Jesus' act of taking a child (v. 36) serves as an acted out parable supporting his call for the disciples to be servants (v. 35).^{xliii}
- The meaning of the symbolic action cannot be grasped without recognition of the lowly place occupied by children in ancient society and a realization that **the same Aramaic word means both child and servant**. A child in the Bible is both

a symbol of innocence and of helplessness and vulnerability. In 10:13–16 and in Matt 18:3–4 disciples are exhorted to become humble like a child, but here and in Matt 18:5 and Luke 9:48 the child represents any helpless person but especially a humble fellow believer whom the true disciple is to receive.^{xliv}

Notes on 9:27

- Effectively, “Treat well those who have no standing in this world (children, lepers, AIDS victims, the mentally impaired, the physically disabled, the aged), and you will receive an audience with My Father!”^{xlv}
- *And become as little children.* Children are, to a great extent, destitute of ambition, pride, and haughtiness. They are characteristically humble and teachable. By requiring his disciples to be *like them*, he did not intend to express any opinion about the native moral character of children, but simply that *in these respects* they must become like them. They must lay aside their ambitious views and their pride, and be willing to occupy their proper station—a very lowly one.^{xlvi}
- To “welcome” or “receive” (RSV, NASB, NEB, REB) means *to be concerned about, to care for, to show kindness to*. To do so in the name of Jesus means to do as he would do, to do so for his sake, to do so as a Christian. To accept the outcasts and oppressed is a way of accepting both God and Jesus. Greatness in the kingdom consists not of position but of ministry.^{xlvii}

Notes on 10:35

- Matthew reveals that their mother accompanied them and spoke first (Matt. 20:20, 21), after which James and John reiterated her request. If she was Jesus’ aunt, the 3 undoubtedly hoped to capitalize on the family ties.^{xlviii}

Notes on 10:37

- James and John ask for seats on Jesus’ right and left in his *glory* (37). Mark frankly puts the request down to them, Matthew says their mother did the asking! (Mt. 20:20). Even there, however, they are standing (or ‘kneeling’) with her, since Jesus’ response is a question to them. Luke omits the whole embarrassing story.^{xlix}

Notes on 10:41

- the ten ... began to be greatly displeased. Not righteous indignation, since they, too, had been guilty in the past of such self-serving conduct (9:33, 34) and would be so in the future (Luke 22:24). The rest of the disciples resented James and John for their attempt to gain an advantage over the others in pursuing the honor they all wanted.^l

Notes on 10:42

- ἐξουσιάζω; κατεξουσιάζω: to rule or reign by exercising authority over—‘to rule, to reign.’^{li}

Notes on 10:43

- “‘whoever wishes to be great’” Jesus does not discourage greatness or ambition, but defines true greatness as service and humility (cf. Matt. 20:26; Mark 9:35).^{lii}
- This was a *revolutionary* view of power. That someone would use their power to serve someone else? No way. What good is gaining power if you’re not going to use it to serve yourself? Isn’t that why you go after it?^{liii}

Notes on 10:45

- Implicit in this statement is a bold challenge reminiscent of other sayings of Jesus: those who readily accept Jesus’ ransom ought also accept his example of service.^{liv}
- The disciples should adopt the posture of servants and slaves not on the basis of ethical reasoning but *because* it is the posture of the Son of Man.^{lv}
- The reason why a servant is the most preeminent position in the kingdom of God is that the sole function of a servant is to give, and giving is the essence of God.^{lvi}
- In this verse, Jesus delivered the stunning summary of all his teaching on servanthood in the Gospel of Mark. He gave the disciples the supreme example of servanthood: himself. And they had seen him serve. They had seen him touch the unclean. They had seen him heal the multitudes. They had seen him feed thousands. Before it was over, they would see him wash the grime from their feet. They had seen the only one who truly deserved to be called “Lord” place himself in humble service to others.^{lvii}
- William Lane said, “The reversal of all human ideas of greatness and rank was achieved when Jesus came, not to be served, but to serve” (Mark, 383).^{lviii}

- John Piper says, “Mark 10:45 is what turns Christianity into gospel” (“The Son of Man”).^{lix}
- C. J. Mahaney says, “Ultimately our Christian service exists only to draw attention to *this* source—to our crucified and risen Lord who gave Himself as the ransom for us all” (*Humility*, 48).^{lx}
- In verse 45, we see the term “come.” Tim Keller rightly says this “is a strong giveaway that he existed before he was born” (*King’s Cross*, 140).^{lxi}
- Christ is the representative of true greatness. His life on earth was not one of seeking worldly greatness but of serving.^{lxii}

Notes on the Matthew 20 Account

- The mother of James & John did three things right...
 - A. She wanted the best for her sons.
 - B. She knew the best was to serve Jesus.
 - C. She recognized that the authority rested in Jesus.^{lxiii}

Notes on Romans 12:10

- To honor the other person is one way of holding in check the innate human tendency to honor oneself unduly.^{lxiv}
- Paul is then calling on Christians to outdo each other in bestowing honor on one another; for example, to recognize and praise one another’s accomplishments and to defer to one another.^{lxv}
- NIV translates a very difficult expression *Honor one another above yourselves*. The trouble here is that the verb is used in a way that is difficult to find elsewhere, which makes us uncertain of the precise meaning. The alternatives appear to be “be eager to show respect for one another” (GNB) and “let each man consider the other worthy of more honor than himself” (TH).^{lxvi}

ⁱ Kerry Shook, *One Month To Live: Thirty Days To A No-Regrets Life*, n.d.

ⁱⁱ <https://vimeo.com/85110047>

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://vimeo.com/85110047>

^{iv} Kerry Shook, *One Month To Live: Thirty Days To A No-Regrets Life*, n.d.

^v Adele Ahlberg Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook*, n.d.

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