

Luke 22:24-30; Phil. 2: 1-11; The Greatest of All I. The Cause of Strife II. The Call for Service III. The Promise of Glory

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the greatest person you have ever known? Who is the most important person that you can think of? Most people will think of a president or prime minister- some ruler of men who has great power. But today we are going to find quite a different definition of greatness as Jesus reveals the greatest of all. However, your definition of greatness may be different. Some of you will think of a close family member- someone who served and influenced your life greatly! That is more like the greatness found in our text. In our context here in Luke 22, we have just considered the celebration of the Last Supper. Suffering and death are pressing upon Jesus. He has just fulfilled the Passover- as the Lamb of God is going to be betrayed. Yet here in the context of the greatest sacrifice- and the first celebration of the Lord's Supper- we find boasting and bickering! Arguing and pride right after Communion! So today we find that Jesus teaches His disciples the source of true greatness in order to humble the proud.

I. The Cause of Strife

In our first point we find the source of strife- as our passage opens, we find the disciples arguing- a dispute has arisen between them. In v. 23- they were all considering- will it be I- surely I will not betray you! And in the next conversation- they are asking- will I be the greatest? Now this is not the first time that these disciples were caught arguing like this. Back in Mt. 20 James and John had their mother ask Jesus for a favor- please let my sons sit at your right and your left. After that, the disciples were arguing among themselves. To this Jesus said—the rulers lord it over them but not you- whoever would be great, this one must be a servant. But once again in our text- on the eve of Jesus' betrayal- the disciples are caught in a dispute. Now a dispute is really a continuous argument. The word used is “philonedia” which is a love for victory- or a pursuit of strife. Now the word- Phileo means love- but these men were not loving each other as they ought- they loved the place of honor- they loved the prospect of being the

greatest- just like the Scribes back in chapter 20. They were quarrelling with each other- jockeying for position. Children, it was kind of like the game- musical chairs. The music has stopped- and these disciples are scrambling for the last chair- they want to be in the seat of honor- to get the praise. They wanted to know- who would be the best- the strongest- the most important. Like two grown men in an arm-wrestling match- they want the bragging rights. Consider me- look at me- I am so necessary- I have the most important job! Now this is really in line with our fallen human nature. We hear that we each need to make a name for ourselves- that we need to make a mark- leave our imprint on this world- and the way to do that is to seek positions of power and influence. This is the way of the world as Jesus says in v. 25. The Gentile rulers act like this. The pursuit of kings and princes, governors and presidents- is to put themselves and to keep themselves in the front of the cameras. You need me- I am so vitally important. The Herods and Caesars of Jesus' day did this- and the leaders of today still do! We saw this every day this past month- each leader giving their own spin on the events- each ruler with their press conferences- giving little information beyond the fact that they are doing a good job. You could not do anything without my help. I am the only one who can do what needs to be done- and you need me! They seek to lord it over others- to force others to do their will. The political world is all about self-promotion. Even in corporate America- you need to step on others in order to get ahead. I mean, who doesn't enjoy the praise- the attention of being needed and identified- the esteem of the praise of men is very addictive! And this can unfortunately be found in the church as well. Church leaders who serve for the distinction- who rule for the sake of ruling- who crave power, influence and praise. But Jesus sees what's going on in the heart of His disciples. He is going to rebuke and refocus them- bringing us to see our own pride. To reshape our priorities! So Jesus is going to ask His disciples- even ask us. Are you willing to be forgotten- overlooked- your service not recognized? Are you willing to serve without the praise and adoration of man- to be selfless instead of selfish?

II. The Call for Service

So in our second point we see that Jesus calls His disciples to service- to let go of pride in the pursuit of humble obedience. Jesus continues in v. 26- but not so with you. Instead of seeking your own places of honor, seek to honor others. Whoever would be the greatest must become like one of the youngest. Now remember that in that day, the older members of society were given great respect. There would be deference- honoring- that would take place when an elderly person was present. The elderly and wise members of society would normally have the seats of honor- their input would be respected. When they spoke, people would listen. But Jesus says, if you want to be great- you need to be like the youngest. Someone who is often overlooked. This is another way of saying- the first shall be last and the last shall be first as Mt. 18 says it. Only those who humble themselves like a child will be great in the Kingdom of Heaven. So become like a young one- lowly as you seek to serve as v. 26 concludes. The word for service here is "diaconeo" which is the word we use for deacon. Be like a servant who waits on tables- one who helps others before themselves. One who bring food to those in need- visits the oppressed- considers the needs of others before their own as we read in Phil. 2. The greater you are- the lowlier you must become. The principle that Jesus is teaching is this- greatness in the Kingdom of God is the opposite of worldly greatness! It is in helping, serving, and ministering to others that true greatness is found. When you go out to eat, who is higher- more important. The one who eats, or the waiter who brings out the food and cleans the table. Jesus says- it the waiter! Why, because the waiter is showing love- humility- displaying a servant like heart. And that is what delights Jesus- this kind of behavior is praised by God! What do we need more of in this world- pride or humility? Those who take or those who give? The highest among you must be the servant of all. Putting the needs of others- doing all in love- loving your neighbor as we saw last week- that is where true greatness in God's eyes is found. So this humility- willingness to serve- must be evident in the leaders of the church. You apostles- you are fighting and arguing- trying to decide who is going to be great- but in your pride you are missing the point of my kingdom. The principle carries over to today. The officers of our church are called to set an example in

their humble service. The leaders are those who minister to the needs of others. Even the leaders in the home- the husbands should be willing to do the most menial task- nothing is too low for them to perform- no task too degrading as they serve their loved ones. That is how a true servant of Christ is known- in their service of others. And to reinforce this concept, Jesus gives us an example of what this service looks like. I am among you as one who serves- v. 27. Or as we read in Phil. 2- have this mind in you- which is also in Christ. He came not to be served- but to serve- to give his life as a ransom as Mt. 20 says! Since Christ was willing to come and humbly serve- to experience humiliation for us- we also ought to be willing to serve. If Jesus was willing to wash His disciple's feet in John 13- so also ought we. Jesus does not ask us to do anything He was unwilling to do! If the Son of God was willing to serve his fallen, bickering disciples- so we all ought to serve those God has placed around us. Jesus came to serve- to seek and save the lost! To give His life as a ransom for many- and it is in His service- in His sacrificial love for us that we find life! And truly there is no one greater than Jesus- the chief servant of mankind now become King of Kings! Imagine what a lost state we would be in if Jesus would have considered himself too high- too lofty- too important to help us! So may we not see others as little people who do not matter- but rather serving the least of these as Christ served us!

III. The Promise of Glory

So this Kingdom of God Principle is established- greatness is found in humility- there is glory in serving others! Although greatness is not found in self-exaltation, that does not mean that greatness is not received. In our last point, Jesus returns to this concept of glory. Glory for yourself is not gained by making other people small- it is not attained by comparing yourselves to others- or by conquering others. You are not made great by your exploits- neither in manipulating or ignoring the needs of others. Rather, greatness is something that is found in service- and glory is something that is graciously given to those who faithfully serve! As Jesus continues in v. 29, I will assign to you a kingdom. Shockingly, we find that there will be honor- there will be glory- there will be a kingdom established- but glory in this kingdom to come is

not something earned- it is graciously given. The word used here is bestowal- or bequeathed! It is assigned- generously given! In keeping with His covenantal promise, riches, glory and honor will be given to those who faithfully serve within His church below. Note that these rewards are not earned, but they are promised and graciously given. Faithful service in this world will not be forgotten- we will be rewarded in the world to come. Or as I Cor. 15 says, your service in the Lord is not in vain! Even though the disciples were wrongly thinking about earthly kingdoms and honor- the concept of honor and kingdoms is not altogether wrong. Jesus promises a kingdom in v. 29- this is the kingdom of God and His Christ- the Kingdom to come- the one Christ has now established. When Christ returns, His 12 disciples will judge the 12 tribes v. 30 continues. These men will one day have the unique privilege of ruling over the clans of Israel- but that will not be attained in this life- not yet! It will only be seen when the Son returns on the clouds of glory. So for us, we have to accept the theology of the cross- suffering, sacrifice and service of others in this life. Only in the life to come will we receive the crown and glory God has promised to His people. Or as Mt. 19 puts it, if you have lost father, mother or lands in this life- if you gave up all the privileges of a powerful position in order to serve- then you will be receive 100 fold back in the Kingdom to come- and will inherit eternal life. Again, Jesus says- the first will be last, and the last first! Those who serve tables in this life- will sit at Jesus' table in the life to come! Those who humble themselves in this life- will be glorified and exalted by Jesus in the life to come!

To conclude, understanding greatness- where it comes from- and particularly who is great in the eyes of Jesus- helps to keep us grounded in our calling within the church today. As our theme stated, Jesus teaches His disciples the source of true greatness to humble the proud. Greatness is found in service- the more you empty yourself- the more you give of your time to help others- the greater you are in God's sight- and the more you become a blessing to others! Remember, God gives grace to the humble but He opposes the proud. So may we all put the needs of others before our own- not using our position to lord over- or to rule harshly- but rather let us use our positions to serve as Christ has served us!