

Luke 9: 37-48; Mt. 20:20-27; Thinking too Much of Ourselves I. The Challenging Words II. The Challenging Life
 Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, humans like to be the best. Some people think they are best at everything- while others continually beat themselves up because they are not the best. I remember commercial from this past year that said -do you just want to be good at something- or do you want to be the best! Be a pro- drive this truck. Well- the heart of pride swells up within us- yes- I want to be the best! We tend to think higher of ourselves than we should. Think we are smarter or greater than we really are. Pride is an age-old sin that does not disappear when we become a Christian. But today we see that Jesus Christ teaches us to properly view ourselves in the light of His glory. With this theme: Jesus Christ humbles His disciples by revealing their weakness. Text is v. 44-48. As J.C. Ryle said- of all men, none ought to be so humble as the Christian. A Christian is one that knows their weakness and their need- which moves us to humility as we praise Him!

I. The Challenging Words

We start with the challenging words of Jesus given in v. 44- let these words sink into your ears. Pay attention- here- disciples, this is going to be hard for you to grasp! What I am going to tell you is going to go against everything you are expecting! The disciples still do not understand the connection between His identity as the Messiah- the Son of God; and His calling to humility -that He must suffer and die. The words of Jesus hear are contrary to the Jewish expectation- if Jesus is the Christ than now is the golden age for Israel! Now comes the Kingdom- what is left for the Son to do is to establish His throne in Jerusalem. Fuller and greater signs of power and wonders- the embrace by the people- and a physical throne occupied by the son of David- that is what the disciples were looking forward to- likely expecting a political liberation from the Romans. But Jesus had taught them many times before- I go to Jerusalem to die! At least 8 times in the gospel of Mark- once already in this same chapter back in v. 22. The last time Jesus said anything about His death- Peter even rebuked Him. Surely not- Peter said in Mt. 16- far be it from you to do such a thing! The disciples still did not understand. That is why Jesus warns them- pay attention- let this sink in. Jesus says in

v. 44- the Son of man is going to be delivered- He will be handed over, surrendered- even betrayed. As Judas will fulfill, Christ will be sold to the chief priests for 30 pieces of silver. He will be handed over to the hands of man- given into their power so that they can do as they please. Jesus will give Himself over so that the wicked men can carry out their wicked plans against Him. He will suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed. But as straight-forward as these words seem- these disciples did not grasp. Listen to what we read about them in v. 45- they did not know or understand, it was concealed from them, and they did not perceive it. These words did not enter into the realm of possibility- they seemed odd and even untrue. They were ignorant of the meaning; the truth was hidden and their minds did not understand. Why? Well- we have to remember that the ability to understand is a spiritual gift given by the Holy Ghost. The Father must reveal the depth of these words. Perhaps these words were too deep for them to grasp- too heavy to carry- they remained a mystery. They did not have the ability to take them into their hearts. Perhaps the Father knew that if they understood they would try to stop Jesus from going forward again- trying to forbid Him from going to Jerusalem. But in any case, we know that after Christ's death and resurrection- after the Holy Spirit was poured out upon them- they would one day remember and their faith would grow because of these words. Later on, they will remember and believe- and their hearts will burn within them! As John 12 says- after Jesus was glorified they remembered these things that has been done to Him. Now before we rebuke the disciples too harshly- remember that we too are completely dependant on God's Spirit for wisdom! The fact is- whatever you understand concerning the words of Jesus are only perceived by way of the Holy Spirit! If the Spirit had not given you eyes to see and ears to hear, you would not know Jesus or receive His words rightly! Understanding the Bible in the true sense of the word is not possible by human logic or reason! So the first way in which Jesus humbles us today is by reminding us- what have we received that He has not given? What do we know that He has not revealed? We all know people who think they have all the answers- they are convinced they know everything there is to know. If you have ever tried to teach a student who thinks they already know

everything- you may know how difficult that can be! So when it comes to learning about Christ and His Word, we must take a humble posture- saying Lord speak and give us ears by your Spirit so that we might listen! To know, uncover and take to heart the truth of His Word!

II. The Challenging Life

Yet, there is one more lesson of humility that Jesus would have us learn. A lesson from a challenging life! Right after Jesus has been teaching about His need to suffer and die, once again the disciples are arguing about who will be the greater- v. 46. So Jesus is talking about the cross- and His followers are pushing for the crown. Who will sit at Jesus' right hand- what rank will the disciples fall into? His disciples have a pride of place and position, while Jesus will find glory through His sacrificial death! Remember James and John had also sent their mother to ask something of Jesus in Mt. 20- this mother asks for a place of honor for her two sons! Well- into this context of pride Jesus reveals that greatness comes by way of service! The suffering and exaltation are hard to reconcile- which may have led to the difficulty to grasp this point as we just saw. But Jesus teaches them that true greatness is found in humility- taking a child into their midst in v. 47 Jesus says- greatness comes by way of service. During that day, the rabbi taught that spending time with children was below them- a waste of their time! But Jesus takes a little one on His knee and says- no one is so important that they cannot spend time with children. If you want to be great- serve the little ones. Mt. 18 says that you must become like a child if you will be great in the kingdom. But here Jesus says- you must receive a child. Take my little ones into your arms. Little ones or children can be a reference to smaller children- or those who are small in the eyes of the world. This child is to be received in the name of Jesus. The association of the child with Jesus is the focus of this verse. In His name- the child is served in the name of Jesus. Either the child belongs to Jesus- or the one serving does- but the service is unto the Lord. If you embrace the child, you embrace the Son, and you end up embracing the Father as well. The way to greatness is by embracing little ones. What do you think that means for Christian mothers who stay at home wiping noses and making lunch pails? The greatest in this world are not those who rule nations- but those who sacrificially serve small ones.

Taking little ones by the hand, you end up in place of great honor. OR as Mt. 10 says- if you give a little one a cup of cold water in my name, you will by no means lose your reward. Or if you receive a prophet in my name, you will receive a prophet's reward! Serving God's people is how we serve Christ! Becoming the least- the smallest- the lowest in rank or influence is the proper place for a Christian. As Jesus said- I came to serve, not to be served! The fact of the matter is- we all think that we are pretty important. We have a high view of ourselves and our position, but greatness is not attained in a worldly manner. Only by receiving Jesus – by serving those around us and being humble, can we find great worth. Once again, it is humiliation before exaltation. Seeking to be childlike can we become the elder. The small become the large. The weak become the strong. The last become first. In learning to wash the feet of others, do we follow Christ to the cross and then to the crown. Remember, that is what Jesus did for you! He came to seek and save the lost- to be humble and die- in order to save us from our sins! He was not too proud to wash His disciple's feet- or to carry your sins! So- as Rom. 12 says, do not consider yourself more highly than you ought, but think with sober judgement. Or as Phil. 2 says, consider the needs of others more than your own. That is how Jesus works- as is evidenced in His life of humiliation and suffering!

To conclude, as we now approach the Lord's Table we are thankful for Christ's humiliation! Communion reminds us of Jesus sacrifice- His suffering to gain eternal life for us! He needed to die for the forgiveness of our sins. He laid down His life for us- now we are to do the same- laying down our lives for the fellowship! The Christian life is one that constantly calls for humility- only in denying ourselves as we saw a few weeks ago- can we follow Christ! But the glory of it all is, those who follow Christ in humility will also enjoy His glory in the world to come! We stand not by our wisdom or power- but in His glory! A Christian is one that knows their weakness and their need- which moves us to humility as we praise Him! Let Him who boasts- boast in the Lord! Only the servant of all is great in the eyes of God! So let us partake of this heavenly food and drink with humility towards ourselves- and joyful thanksgiving towards our Savior!