

2. Many still prefer to rule than to serve; but God needs more servants.

IV. JESUS EXPLAINS THE STANDARD OF GREATNESS IN GOD'S KINGDOM (10:42-45).

- A. Gentile greatness: "And Jesus called them to him, and saith unto them, Ye know that they who are accounted to rule over the Gentiles lord it over them; and their great ones exercise authority over them" (42).
1. By way of rebuking their improper request, and by way of contrast, Jesus reminded them that such princely authority as they asked would not even exist in the kingdom of heaven.
 2. Greatness in worldly kingdoms is characterized by great power over other people, but not in God's (2 Cor. 1:23,24; 1 Peter 5:3).
- B. Greatness in God's kingdom: "But it is not so among you: but whosoever would be first among you, shall be your minister; and whosoever would be first among you, shall be servant of all" (43,44).
1. The one who would be great in God's kingdom must be the best minister--margin: servant.
 2. The one who receives first place must be first in service--margin: bondservant--a slave to his fellowman in Jesus name.
 3. Jesus thus wisely sought to restore peace and order to the ranks of the indignant ten and to guide the ambitions of the selfseeking two.
- C. Our perfect example: "For the Son of man also came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many" (45).
1. He left heaven to serve, not to be served.
 2. He came to give, not to receive.
 3. Greatness in God's kingdom is measured not by the size or amount one does (the two talent man did less than half as much as the five), but according to the use made of what we have in God's service.

CONCLUSION -

- I. Vain and worldly ambition still arouse envy and jealousy.
- II. Faithful service is what the world needs, what we need, and what God wills.
- III. God constantly offers his very best to faithful servants.

STUDIES IN MARK--LESSON THIRTY

Jesus Teaches True Greatness

Mark 10:35-45

INTRODUCTION -

- I. If you were to ask, "Who is the greatest person in the world, America, or the church today?" the answers received would probably include some famous statesman, politician, astronaut, entertainer, sports figure, scientist, and perhaps Billy Graham or the Pope. Such would reveal the multitude of ideas about the nature of true greatness.
- II. Human desire for greatness is not to be wholly or improperly censured (Phil. 1:9-11).
 - A. But, fed by pride and guided by improper passion, the desire can and often does result in much injury. "The 'mother of the sons of Zebedee' is too often among God's people" with the desire that her sons succeed rather than serve God.
 - B. Mark 10:35-45 reveals that Jesus sought to guide and regulate his disciples so that their desire for greatness would result in the enormous good which is desirable and possible.
- III. If the nature and standard of greatness Jesus teaches in this lesson is understood and practiced by children of God, great and eternal good will be the result. For if our behaviour and desires are thus regulated, the work which Jesus came from heaven to do will become the main and daily business of our lives: Seeking and saving the lost (Luke 19:10; Matt. 6:33).
- IV. From Matthew 20:17-19, we learn that Jesus, on his way up to Jerusalem, took the twelve aside and for the third time predicted his suffering and death at Jerusalem (Cf. Matt. 16:19-21; Luke 9:22; Mark 8:31; 9:31; 10:32-34).
 - A. He gave six or seven specifics of that tragic event: (1) Delivery or betrayal by Judas. (2) Condemnation. (3) Delivery to the Gentiles. (4) Mocking, and the manner of it. (5) Scourging. (6) Death, by crucifixion. (7) Resurrection on the third day.--McGarvey-Pendleton, p. 555.
 - B. This remarkable and detailed forecast, uttered to twelve men several days in advance of the events, is one of the strongest evidences of Jesus' deity.

DISCUSSION -

I. JAMES AND JOHN REQUEST PLACES OF HONOR (10:35-37).

A. Whatsoever we ask: "And there come near unto him James and John, the sons of Zebedee, saying unto him, Teacher, we would that thou shouldest do for us whatsoever we shall ask of thee" (35).

1. According to Matthew 20:20, their request was voiced through their mother, who gave her influence to their "me first" desire.
2. From Matthew 27:56 and Mark 15:40, it appears their mother was Salome.
3. Salome showed a mother's love and ambition for her sons, and "a mother's faith in Jesus."
4. She and Zebedee were among the Lord's most faithful disciples.
5. What one does through another, he does (John 4:1,2).

B. What would you? "And he said unto them, What would ye that I should do for you" (36)?

1. He forced them to express their desire before making any reply.
2. They attempted to secure a commitment from Jesus before they stated their request.
3. Their childish maneuver was strange, following immediately the Lord's third prediction of his death, perhaps prompted by his recent promise the apostles would sit upon twelve thrones (Matt. (19:28)).

C. Their request: "And they said unto him, Grant unto us that we may sit, one on thy right hand, and one on thy left hand, in thy glory" (37).

1. Theirs was a serious, ambitious attempt to secure "the chief seats" in his kingdom or glory.
2. Jesus had already condemned their "me first" spirit (9:33-37), but they were slow to learn, as men still seem to be.

II. THE LORD'S REPLY (10:38-40).

A. A charge of ignorance and a searching question: "But Jesus said unto them, Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink the cup that I drink? or to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with (38)?

1. Luke says they understood none of the things Jesus had said about his suffering and death (18:34).
2. Nor did they now understand what they requested, the nature of his kingdom or the nature of true greatness in it, that service and self-sacrifice

are the path to eminence in his kingdom, or that in a few days he would be crucified between two thieves.

3. Some of our requests of God may be based upon similar ignorance. If God granted all petitions made by such worldly minded, self-seeking disciples, great injury and sorrow would be the result.

B. "We are able" is the expression of their confidence (39a). And, "If they were a little rash and overconfident in their avowal, too many today are lacking in confidence. One grows weary of hearing, 'We are not able,' 'It cannot be done,' etc."--R. L. Whiteside, A. L. Commentary, 1-2-38. Knowing when to say what we are able or not is the mark of wisdom.

C. Not mine to give: "And Jesus said unto them, The cup that I drink ye shall drink; and with the baptism that I am baptized withal shall ye be baptized: but to sit on my right hand or on my left hand is not mine to give; but it is for them for whom it hath been prepared" (39b,40).

1. Jesus does have something to do with rewards in the kingdom (2 Tim. 4:8; Rev. 2:10,17,26; 3:12,21). But he cannot arbitrarily dispense such honors on the basis of personal favoritism.
2. Such places in God's kingdom are to be impartially given out according to the clearly revealed law of God: The fitness of the receiver. Chappell, p. 150.
3. Only those who have properly responded to God's will may enter and be thus rewarded (Matt. 7:21; 16:25; 25:10). Preparedness is the key.

III. THE INDIGNANT TEN (10:41).

A. Moved with indignation: "And when the ten heard it, they began to be moved with indignation concerning James and John" (41).

They thought James and John were seeking an unfair advantage over them. The truth is they were all about as ambitious as the two (9:33-37).

B. But such attempts to be "head man" in the church were not confined to the twelve, nor to the first century (2 John 9,10).

1. Improper scheming for the preeminence in the church still has the same effect upon our fellows, to the injury of the body of Christ.