

Life and Ministry of Jesus Christ

Christ-likeness

Last time...Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?

That was the “innocent” question masking their real question

The real question was “Which of us is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?”

An additional thought this week...

After Jesus told them twice He was going to be betrayed to be arrested, suffer, and die (they did not understand the “rise again on the 3rd day), it is as if they are discussing/arguing among themselves who was going to take over after Jesus died!

Then Jesus answered their real question by teaching them about “greatness” in God’s eyes...diametrically opposed to the world’s teaching on greatness

- humble
- least
- last/lowest
- servant of all

His object lesson to illustrate the teaching: a little/young boy

“Greatness” in the kingdom of heaven

1. Jesus Christ, the King
2. all who choose to become like little children...His character/likeness
 - trusting/believing
 - humble
 - dependent
 - submissive
 - innocent
 - pure
 - care-free
 - respectful
 - obedient
 - thankful
 - teachable

“Great” in the kingdom of God is: Christ and Christ-likeness

This time...the blessing for being like Christ and the curse for not being like Christ

We will be in Luke 9, Mark 9, and Matt 18

Luke 9

v49-50 one casting out devils...Forbid not:

John the Apostle reacts to Jesus' teaching on "greatness in the kingdom of heaven" with a zealous outburst

We saw...the 12 on the way through Galilee (in context)

one...an unknown and unnamed man

casting out devils in Your name (authority)...

as did the 12 when Jesus sent them out 2x2 (v1)

we forbid him...withstood, hindered, forced him to stop

because he followed not with us...his is not a part of our little group

Jesus tells John and the others that they were...wrong to do that

The man is

- not a foe, so he is a friend
- not an enemy or a neutral, so he is an ally
- fruit of Jesus' ministry in the Galilee
 - seen Jesus' miracles or heard Jesus' teaching
 - believes
 - provoked to action by faith

The 12 do not have a monopoly on Jesus or the work of God

Later, Jesus will send 70 disciples 2x2!

John

- was not speaking humbly, self-lastly, as the least
 - as a little child
 - in Jesus' name/character (v47-48)
- was speaking pridefully, selfishly, desiring to be first/chief
 - threatened by the man
 - comparing and competing with the man whom he sees as a challenge to their importance/exclusivity
 - zealously, in a jealous (self-centered, Matt 7:22-23) vs righteous (God-centered, John 12:26) way
- needs to be converted and become as a little child (Matt 18:3)

Jesus corrects the self-important and ambitious attitude of the 12

We get a few more details of this part of Jesus' teaching moment in Mark 9

Mark 9

v38-40 not us...do a miracle...lightly speak evil of Me:
Jesus corrects John's jealous zeal:

Forbid him not...do not interfere with the work of God

no man do a miracle in My name...casting out a devil is a miracle and can
only be done in Jesus' name/authority

can lightly speak evil of Me...be devoted to Me and quickly/easily betray
Me (devotion/love and treason/hate cannot co-exist)

not against us is on our part...Jesus is the Lord, the 12 are not...
the work is His and the fruit is pleasing to the Father

John's attitude (mindset and heart-set) and behavior is a problem then...and now
Gal 3:3 having begun, are now made perfect
Godly organism (Body with Son of God as Head) and a movement of the
Holy Spirit becomes a human organization and a method of man
(Church-ianity led by men)

People opposed to the organization and
do not bow to the human authority

- are oppressed, excommunicated, persecuted
- work apart from the organization as servants of God

People who revere the organization and
bow to the human authority

- serve the organization rather than the Lord
(Supreme Authority)
- put a man-made religious entity between themselves
and the Lord Jesus Christ

Every movement of the Holy Spirit in the history of the Church has ended
this way...a work of the flesh that ceases to be Spirit-filled/led

Jesus then continues His "greatest in the kingdom of heaven" teaching moment,
and His correction of the attitude of the 12, by declaring

- a Blessing for obedience (being Christ-like)
- a Curse for disobedience (not being Christ-like)

First, the blessing for obedience, for being Christ-like

v41 cup of water to drink in My name...not lose his reward:
With the unknown and unnamed man in mind...

whosoever shall...like the man casting out devils in Jesus' name

give you...Jesus' 12 disciples then and us now

a cup of water to drink...Israel is like AZ – what a blessing is a cup of
water!

in My name...character – Christ-like (humble, least, last, servant of all)

because ye belong to Christ...to love Mine is to love Me (Matt 25:31-40)

verily I say unto you...Thus says the LORD

he...like the unknown and unnamed man serving the Lord

shall not lose his reward...the kingdom of heaven, Eternal Life!

Ps 24:3-5 who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord, who shall
stand in His holy place? He who has clean hands
and a pure heart...receive the blessing from the
Lord and righteousness from God of his salvation

Matt 10:40-42 reward: righteousness (req'd for Kingdom entry)

Now, the curse for disobedience, for not being Christ-like

v42 offend one of these little ones:

Still in their midst is the little boy Jesus used as an unmistakable illustration of
His teaching on "greatest"

The little boy is again the Lord's illustration, this time for disobedience,
for not being Christ-like, for not being "great" in the kingdom

whosoever shall...a warning with a very broad swath

offend one of these little ones...cause to stumble and fall any like these
little children

that believe in Me...thus are the children of God (John 1:12)

it is better...for them that a millstone be hanged about his neck and to be
cast into the sea than for them to fall into the hands of the
living God (Heb 10:31)

2 millstones were used to mill/grind grains like wheat or barley such that the grains can be used for human consumption

The lower millstone remained stationary, the 300-400 pound upper stone was turned by an ox or a donkey

God views the un-Christ-like, deliberate destruction of an innocent child's faith in Him as a heinous crime...

better for such a criminal to hang a millstone around his neck and drowned in the depth of the sea than to face His wrath for such a crime

Who can tread water with a 300-400 pound necklace?

Let's go to Matt 18 for more details

Matt 18

v6-7 offend one of these little ones...millstone...drowned:

Jesus' teaching moment regarding "greatest in the kingdom of heaven"

- makes no mention of the
 - unknown/unnamed man serving the Lord by casting our devils in Jesus' name
 - His correction of John's/the 12's jealous attitude
 - the blessing of being Christ-like
- speaks only of the curse of disobedience for not being Christ-like – "least, last, humble, servant of all"

With the curse comes "Woe"

1. Woe unto the world for offenses (sin) against a holy God
 - Gen 3 the curses of God
 - sin is now unavoidable in Adam's race
 - Rom 5:12 by one man sin entered the world and death by sin
 - and so death is passed upon all men, for that all have sinned

2. Woe unto that man (individual) by whom offence/sin comes
 - Woe to the sinner, the cause of an offence to God...
 - the consequences are horrific

The offense in view here: deliberate destruction of an innocent child's faith in Jesus

v8-9 everlasting fire...hell fire:

This is a shocking statement by Jesus Christ...and it is meant to be shocking.
To communicate to sinful people the seriousness, the gravity of sin
(offense) to a holy God

The Creator Who wants us to be good stewards of the tent (body of clay) He has
given us is not literally telling us to cut off or pluck out very needful and
precious body parts

He is telling us that the temporary (for all men die) precious body parts are
worthless compared to eternal life

From God's eternal perspective, it is better for us to be maimed and enter
into eternal life than to hold onto our sin and be thrown into
everlasting hell fire

The offense/sin resides in...our heart

Sin is manifested in our hands (do), feet (go) and eyes (covet)
Man's eternal problem is hands/feet/eyes...or heart?

Let's go back to Mark 9 to get his account of this very serious teaching

Mark 9

v43-48 into life...into hell...into the kingdom of God...into hell fire:

Sin is a darkness in us that offends the Light (John 11:9b-10)

Therefore it is better for the offending part to be removed and to enter into

- life...eternal life of God (v43, 45) \ equated
- the kingdom of God (v47) /

than it is to keep the offending part, keep sinning, and enter into

- hell (v43, 45) \ equated
- hell fire (v47) /

Radically different rewards for Christ-likeness vs un-Christ-likeness!

Jesus clearly teaches of hell, quoting the last verse in Isaiah (Is 66:24)

- *gehenna*
 - the garbage dump, the valley south of Jerusalem
 - where garbage and refuse were continually burning
 - where the Jews sacrificed their children to Molech and Baal in the fire
- where their worm, the maggot infesting their body, never dies
- where the fire of eternal judgment is never quenched/extinguished, is forever

Does God judge men and is hell a real place and the torment there forever?

Yes!

Otherwise Jesus Christ is a liar and a deceiver for He spoke of hell 17x

Who is the liar and deceiver that teaches man that hell is not real?

Satan via his spokesmen in every religion (like Rob Bell, 2 Cor 11:13-15)

v49 salted with fire...salted with salt:

Salt preserves

Every person will be “preserved” (for all eternity) with fire

A. Refining Fire now to purify for those who believe (Christ-like)

B. Judgment to punish forever those who don’t believe (un-Christ-like)

Every sacrifice will be salted with salt (Lev 2:13)

A. Living sacrifice (Rom 12:1-2) by sacrificing Self-will and the love of the world in favor of Jesus Christ’s substitutionary sacrifice for sin

B. Eternal sacrifice in hell/LoF by rejecting Jesus’ sacrifice for their sin

v50 Salt is good:

Not only does salt preserve, it flavors

Job 6:6 Can that which is unsavoury be eaten without salt?
or is there *any* taste in the white of an egg

Matt 5:13 Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his
savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good
for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot
of men

But if salt loses its saltiness, with what will you season that salt?

Salt (sodium chloride) loses its essence (saltiness) if the molecular bond is broken

How do you restore saltiness (the molecular bond) to salt?

Jesus is telling us to have salt in ourselves...resulting in peace

- that which preserves, prevents rottenness/corruption
- that which flavors/seasons/spices

is Him in us!

- Unbreakable bond of God Man Who is perfect
- restoring the broken bond/peace between God and man
- once man is converted to become like a little child
humble, least, last, servant of all...
Christ-like, the essence of Christ
Ps 51

Therefore...going back to Matt 18

Matt 18

v10 Take heed that ye despise not...little ones:

Given the realities of the kingdom of God/eternal life and hell/eternal death...
beware of

- despising/scorning a little child that believes in Jesus (Mark 9:42)
- training up a child in the ways of the world vs the ways of God
- leading an innocent child to hell vs heaven

This grave warning is given to

- parents
- grandparents
- teachers
- pastors (Ezk 34, James 3:1)

The holy God is watching and listening...and using angels to care for, protect
the little children (who are Christ-like)

Ps 91:11 give His angels charge over you to keep you in all your
ways (e.g. Jesus in Garden of Gethsemane)

Heb 1:14 ministering spirits sent forth to minister to them who shall
be heirs of salvation

Acts 12:15 "It is his angel"

In view of v8-9...hand/foot/eye

The gravity of sin to God...the wages of sin is death

We must get sin out of our lives/heart or face an eternity of hell fire

How, given another reality...Rom 3:10, 23 and James 2:10?!

Rom 6:23

v11 is come to save...lost:

Jesus, the Christ, the Son of the Living God, to the rescue!

To save the lost (dead in sin) from

- the wrath of the offended God
- hell fire, everlasting fire, the fire that is not quenched

Ezk 34:11, 16a

I will search my sheep, seek that which was lost

John 1:29

came to take away the sin of the world

John 3:16-17

sent not to condemn (already), might be saved

Rom 5:12-21

sin/offence by one man, God's gift of grace by one
Man...sin abounded, grace did much more abound

v12-14 hundred...ninety nine:

Our Good Shepherd, the Lord our Shepherd, loves each of us so much that He will leave 99 safely in the sheepfold to go search for the 1 that is lost, has wandered and strayed (us, Is 53:6a; 1 Peter 2:25; Ps 119:67, 176)

vs heart of man: stay with the 99, the 1 is “cost of doing business”

And **IF** He finds the lost sheep, the Good Shepherd rejoices!!!

For it is not the will of God the Father that one...ANY...should perish
(hell fire, everlasting fire, 2nd death, eternal death)
2 Peter 3:9
1 Tim 2:4

The heart of God the Father:
that all His beloved creatures would be Christ-like,
but all are corrupted by sin, so He sent **His Son to pay** for their sin
and offered the **gift** of eternal life in the risen Jesus Christ

The heart of a child (Christ-like): Thank you, Daddy! I accept Your gift
(by faith), I love you!

The heart of lost man (Jer 17:9): No thanks! I will not accept Your gift.

Thus, Man must be converted to become like his little children (v3)...
The Father's desire/will,
he must agree with the Father's will (faith, Heb 12:2, Rom 12:3),
God does the work of conversion (grace thru faith)

Note: If Calvinism were true,

1. there is no possibility for “if” in v13...for God cannot fail
2. why would God rejoice over His choice, man having no choice?
3. God did not prepare hell for man (Matt 25:41, Jude 6, 2 Peter 2:4)
But if He has chosen some men to damnation,
He would have created hell for the demons AND man

Thus, an unconverted, stubborn, un-Christ-like man can refuse the
searching Shepherd (2 Peter 2:10-15)...
not all yield to/agree with the will of God the Father to be
Christ-like (humble, least, last, servant of all)
most refuse to be Christ-like (Matt 7:13-14) because they refuse to
v3 and Matt 16:24, thereby refusing God's gift of
eternal life in His Son Jesus Christ
John 5:24
1 John 5:11-13

Application

Christ-likeness: least, last, humble, servant of all (lifestyle vs event)

Reward for obedience/submission: kingdom of heaven, eternal life

Reward for disobedience/defiance: everlasting fire, hell fire, eternal death

Matt 25:31-46

Jude 23-24

Our choice, starting now and forever

A. This is as bad as it gets (Rom 8:28, 31)

B. This is as good s it gets (Heb 9:27, Heb 10:31)

What say ye?

James 4:1-4

1 John 2:15-17