

LOOKING AT LUKE
WHO'S THE GREATEST

Thursday, September 3

Reading: Luke 22

Luke 22:24 *A dispute also arose among them as to which of them was considered to be greatest. 25 Jesus said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who exercise authority over them call themselves Benefactors. 26 But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves. 27 For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as one who serves.*

Muhammad Ali was never known for his humility. Before his fight with Sonny Liston in 1964, which made him the superstar of boxing, he is quoted as saying, "I'm the greatest thing that ever lived! I'm the king of the world! I'm a bad man. I'm the prettiest thing that ever lived." This attitude would become his catchphrase - "I'm the greatest!"¹

Jesus' disciples had a similar attitude. Several times in the gospels we find them arguing over who will be the greatest in the kingdom. Jesus had tried to explain that being great in His kingdom required having the simple trust of a little child (Luke 9:46-48; Matthew 18:1-4). He had told them that "he who is greatest among you shall be your servant" and "whoever humbles himself will be exalted" (Matthew 23:11-12). But they just didn't seem to get the point. James and John had even gotten their mother involved to try and get the "best seats" in the kingdom (Matthew 20:20-28).

This final debate at the Last Supper is especially disturbing. Jesus has just instituted Communion to help them remember His coming sacrifice for them. He has also just revealed that one of them will betray Him. It is probably this revelation that led to the debate. Surely those who were greatest would not betray the Savior! It is most likely at this point that Jesus takes the role of a servant and washes His disciples' feet (see John 13:3-17).

We all like to be in the spotlight. We all like to be the center of attention. That's just human nature. But Jesus not only tells us what true greatness is, He displayed it for all to see.

"...the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve,
and to give His life as a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:28)

Always putting ourselves first and wanting it our way is the attitude of the world ("kings of the Gentiles"). It should not be the attitude of Christians. We are to resemble our Lord Jesus who was willing to take up the job of the lowest slave (washing feet) and to die the death of a common slave on the cross.

We can base our life on either giving or getting! The rewards of "getting" are earthly and temporary. The rewards of "giving" are heavenly and eternal (cf. Luke 22:27-30; Matthew 6:19-21, 33).

¹ <https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/quotes/m/muhammal643412.html>