



Key Phrase #8 THE GREATEST IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS SERVANT OF ALL

Matthew 20:26 (NIV) "...Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant..."

It was a question that always seemed to be lurking in the minds of Jesus' disciples. "Who would be the greatest in the Kingdom of God?" At this time in Christ's ministry he was extremely popular. The more he taught, healed people, and performed miracles the more the crowds grew. Jesus was becoming a celebrity and the people were clamoring about him becoming a king and overthrowing the current political structure. We see several instances where his disciples are jockeying for position's of prominence alongside of Jesus newfound status. As usual Jesus's answer was not what they were expecting, because in His Kingdom the *path to greatness is always downward!*

One of those instances is found in Matthew 20:20-28 and Mark 10:35-45 where the disciples James, John, and their mother came up to Jesus asking for the two highest positions in the Kingdom of God at Jesus' right and left hands. Mom was getting involved and wanted her boys to be at the top of the ladder. She didn't know what she was asking and if she did she probably wouldn't have asked. Jesus replied "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. It is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave; just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

This clearly was too much for them to grasp because just a few days later, at the Last Supper, just hours before Jesus' Passion and death, we find the Twelve ONCE AGAIN arguing about who would be the greatest in the Kingdom of God. But by washing their filthy feet, Jesus demonstrated what words had failed to convey: The Greatest among you shall be the Servant of all.

Why this emphasis on servanthood being the only path to greatness in the Kingdom of God? To serve can sometimes be seen as an indication of weakness or inferiority. Throughout all of human history, the path to greatness had always been one of exerting strength, of overcoming rivals and enemies through superior wisdom, intelligence, skill or power. And once that position of authority had been attained it was used to force others to conform to your will.

But Jesus' path to greatness, to authority, took the opposite path. And in His path, we see the power of humility. We watch as Jesus, the King of all Kings, lowers Himself to come to earth and serve a people who were attempting to be great in their own little kingdoms of self. By His example we are able to see how His humility breaks down barriers and his serving others catches the attention of the people allowing His unconditional love to be shown strongly in their lives. He asks the same of us...as we then carry around the light of Jesus to the dark and dying world around us.

If you have ever been involved in a service project or in giving of yourself for the good of others then chances are you have already experienced this principle first hand. To give sacrificially to others invokes a sense of becoming like Jesus. As believers in Christ, our way of living should be a reflection of a life surrendered to the will of God, and many of the other truths we have studied this session allow us to do that more when we are walking in them ... when we act as though this world is not our home we are free to serve others, when we remember that God is our Provider and trustworthy Father then the reality that it is more blessed to give than to receive begins to shape us. It creates in us a desire to bless others regardless of the cost or whether or not the favor is returned.

All of this and more is tied up in our service to others and causes us to grow in the knowledge and application of these truths. We become more like Jesus. We become more like what God has created us to be. We become enabled to rule and reign with Christ in His eternal heavenly Kingdom. We ARE CHANGED into actually becoming those who are worthy of being called great in the Kingdom because we have become servants of all. So HOW do we make the radical change from seeking greatness the World's way to seeking it God's way?

As always, Jesus is our example. Mark 10:45, "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many." We will need to humble ourselves, abandon our strategies for accomplishing God's will and ask Him to show us how to truly serve those in desperate need.

Discussion Outline

- Review the Key Phrase
- Take time to ponder, pray, and answer the following questions.
 - If I really believed this (key phrase) how would it change my life?
 - In what ways am I walking in this truth and in what ways do I struggle?
 - What tensions would this solve? What tensions may it create?
 - Find a Scripture or Biblical Principle that reflects this truth.
- Write down any thoughts you need to change and any steps you can take to walk in this truth?
- Pray for one another.

Additional Questions

Is there personal benefit by becoming "servant of all." How do we balance others needs and our own?

Is it wrong to desire to be Great in the Kingdom of God?

What are some of the obstacles to becoming servants of others, especially of those who can be of no benefit to us?

In what ways have you seen the "servant of all" heart demonstrated?

How does this contrast to the "ways and mindset of the world"?