

MIDWEEK OF LENT 1: LEADER
 WEEK 2: WEEK OF MARCH 10
THE UPPER ROOM
Luke 22:24–38

OPENING

- L In the name of Jesus, our humble Savior.
 C **Amen.**
 L To You, I lift up my eyes,
 C **O You who are enthroned in the heavens!**
 L Behold, as the eyes of servants look to the hand of their master,
 C **as the eyes of a maidservant to the hand of her mistress,**
 L so our eyes look to the LORD our God,
 C **till He has mercy upon us.**
 L Have mercy upon us, O LORD, have mercy upon us,
 C **for we have more than enough of contempt.**
 L Our soul has had more than enough of the scorn of those who are at ease,
 C **of the contempt of the proud.**
**All: Glory be the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit; as it was in the beginning,
 is now, and will be forever. Amen.**

—Psalm 123

INTRODUCTION

In this section of the Passion Narrative, Luke takes us to the Upper Room, where Jesus celebrated the Passover with His disciples. The Upper Room is filled with powerful memories. In John's Passion Narrative, we remember that moment in the Upper Room when Jesus stripped Himself for service and washed His disciples' feet (John 13:1–20). There, we see Jesus kneeling and washing the feet of disciples who would desert Him and of one who would betray Him.

Luke does not include that event in his account of the Upper Room. He does, however, offer us the teaching that Jesus embodies in that act of selfless service.

After Jesus had celebrated the Passover with His disciples, an argument arose among them about which of them was the greatest. Faced with the prediction that one of them would betray Jesus (22:21–22), the disciples responded by arguing about their greatness (vv. 23–24). How easily we turn to our own good works as a way of defending ourselves from any accusation of sin!

Our truest defense, however, lies in Jesus. He is the one who gave His sinless life that we might be forgiven. So, we stand before God and the world in His righteousness rather than our own.

In this passage, Jesus invites us to follow Him in lives of self-sacrificial service. Jesus uses this strife about glory to teach the glory of service. He invites His disciples then and now to live in humble, self-sacrificial service as they stand in His righteousness and serve in His love.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

1. Throughout the Gospel of Luke, Jesus has taught His disciples about greatness (Luke 9:46–48; 14:7–14; and 18:9–14). In doing so, He gave them a radically different view from the world. In this text (22:24–30), how does the radical greatness of God differ from the ways of the world?

According to Jesus, the ways of the world involve systems of comparison, power, and exchange. The disciples are arguing about which one is to be regarded as greatest, certainly in comparison with one another and possibly in contrast to the one who would betray Him (v. 22). For the Gentiles, greatness is linked to power (v. 25) and to a system of exchange. Individuals gained the title “benefactor” by using their wealth and power to do civic good for the purpose of receiving public honor and praise.

The greatness of God, however, is different. It involves being regarded as the youngest (recalling the example of the child in Luke 9:46–48), and choosing to fulfill the role of the servant (recalling the radical renunciation of any claim to greatness in 14:7–14 and 18:9–14). Such radical humility defies the ways of the world and trusts in the judgment of God. Even though one does not see it now, God honors those who serve Him (22:28–29, recalling 14:11 and 18:14).

2. How does this teaching prepare the disciples to understand what Jesus is about to do? (cf. Philippians 2:5–11).

Jesus is about to pursue His Father’s mission of saving, self-sacrificial service. Putting His own interests aside (Philippians 2:5–7), Jesus will offer His life for the world. Crucifixion will bring dishonor upon Jesus, degrading and dehumanizing Him in the eyes of this world, so that it would be impossible for Him to be considered a leader in any of the social systems of that day.

This radical renunciation of any claim to greatness in the eyes of the world, however, demonstrates a radical trust in the work of God. Through this act of self-sacrifice, Jesus will redeem the fallen world, and God the Father will exalt Him, giving Him the name which is above every name, as Jesus rises from the dead and ascends into heaven to rule over all (Philippians 2:8–11).

3. How does this teaching prepare the disciples for their future service? (See Luke 22:35–37 and compare with Romans 8:16–25 and 2 Corinthians 4:7–18.)

Jesus prepares His disciples for lives of self-sacrifice and humble service, trusting that the ways of God are different from the ways of the world and that those who remain with Him in His trials will reign with Him in His glory (Luke 22:28–30).

Whereas before, when the disciples went out in mission, they were received with hospitality because they bore Jesus' name, now they will be rejected because Jesus was numbered with transgressors (22:35–37). Those who follow Jesus will suffer like Jesus, be rejected, and need even the basic necessities of life (v. 36). Yet, sharing His sufferings now, they live in hope of His future glory (Romans 8:17).

4. How does this teaching prepare us for service in God's kingdom?

Living in a world that measures greatness by accomplishment and public praise (even for acts that are not praiseworthy), it is easy to begin to look at our lives to measure our value. Such measuring pits us against one another and leads to arguments about greatness rather than to lives of self-sacrificial service.

Jesus turns our eyes from ourselves to Him. He is among us "as one who serves" (Luke 22:27), being obedient unto death, even death on a cross. Because of His dying service, we are forgiven of our sins. We no longer need to look to ourselves or to the praise of others to find value before God. Instead, we stand before God in the righteousness of Christ.

Confident that we are God's children because of Jesus' gracious work, we are free to follow Jesus in lives of hope and humble service. We do the things of God, sure of our Father's blessing, even when we suffer the rejection of our world.

CONCLUSION

Every age has its ways of glory. For us, magazines anoint men and women of the year with the glory of fame, and markets crown new rulers with the glory of wealth.

Jesus, however, comes into a world filled with arguments about greatness and reveals the true glory of God. God's glory is found in self-sacrificial love for the least. By humbling Himself as a servant, offering His life for the forgiveness of sin, Jesus revealed the glory of God.

Forgiven by Him, we now live in Him. He calls us, His disciples, to follow the servant's way, walking with God in self-sacrificial love for the least.

CLOSING PRAYER

Almighty God, You rule the heavens and the earth, and earthly temples made with human hands cannot contain Your glory. Yet, on that night when He was betrayed, Your Son stretched forth His hands and brought Your saving glory to our world, revealing Your love in His suffering service for the least.

Visit us now, we humbly pray, that we might repent of our vain attempts at glory. Forgive us our sins and renew our humble service, that we might live as Your children, brought by grace into Your glorious kingdom and sharing Your gifts in self-sacrificial love with the world.

Through Your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and ever. Amen.