



WELL PLEASED

EPIPHANY/BAPTISM OF THE LORD

Devotionals: 9-15 January 2022

CLIMBING THE LADDER TO GREATNESS

Scripture Readings"

Isaiah 43:1-7

Psalms 29

Acts 8:14-17

Luke 3:15-17, 21-22

"Who is the greatest?"

Sports team? Sports player? Business? Finance? Education? Medicine? In all these different areas and so many more, people look for greatness. Perhaps even we get caught up in the desire to attain greatness at our job or in school or among our loved ones.

That kind of greatness, however, is fleeting. You may cheer for a great team, but they don't win every year. You may be "great" in business or education or politics, but eventually someone comes along who is greater. In spite of that, we still strive for earthly greatness. So, Jesus' words are rather eye-opening. Our definition of greatness is not his definition of greatness. True greatness to the Lord is not prestige or power or wealth or glory, but lowliness and weakness and service and humility. Our Savior turns his eyes to the cross and in doing so he reminds us **TRUE GREATNESS IS ONLY FOUND IN TRUE SERVICE.**

God of our Baptism, we come to that same river where you were baptized, and we stand next to you, waiting to be washed. But we confess that we often wish to do so without going through the messiness of repentance. We want your grace but act as we did before receiving it. Help us to truly be baptized by your Good News, by hearing it, touching it, tasting it, and then reflecting it as the sunrise over the river's horizon. In Jesus precious name. Amen.

Jesus wanted his disciples to understand true greatness. Now Jesus could've had glory and greatness in the eyes of the world, but he willingly set it all aside to become a servant. For a moment consider how great Jesus could have been. He was true God. He had power over all things in heaven and on earth. He could cast out demons, heal the sick, feed thousands and raise the dead. He had wealth beyond imagination because he had created it all. He was popular with the crowds and could've ruled the world for eternity from any ornate throne in any city of his choosing, but in his eyes, there was no greatness in all that.

Don't forget! Christ left behind far greater glory in heaven to become a servant. The King of kings became the servant of all. He wasn't born to a wealthy royal family in a top-notch hospital in Rome or Jerusalem, but to a miserably poor and outcast family amidst the stench of animals in a barn. He didn't

surround himself with the scholars and the wealthy and the popular, but with the uneducated and the poor and the “sinner”. He didn’t climb his way up the corporate or political ladder, but climbed down to the sick and the weak, the guilty and the little children. He didn’t even get to pass away comfortably in his bed, but had to endure betrayal, ridicule, beatings, floggings and the most excruciating form of execution in human history, reserved only for the worst criminals and political rebels. The King of kings gave it all up to become the servant of all.

Why did he do that? It wasn’t for the prestige or the power or the wealth. He did it for you, though we don’t deserve it. You and I think we’re great in the eyes of God when we help out a neighbor or participate here at church, yet Isaiah reminds us, “All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags.” Not by any stretch of the Lord’s imagination are we “great” in his eyes. “Condemned”, yes. “Great”, no! But that’s when the Servant of all comes to your rescue with his overwhelming love. “This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him.” Out of undying love for you, Christ Jesus “who, being in nature with God, did not consider equality with God, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross!” Jesus showed true greatness through his true service for you and me.

True greatness is only found in true service. What does that mean for you, followers of Christ? It means you need to listen to your Savior, even when you don’t want to listen. You and I might chuckle about the disciples arguing over greatness, but who of us wouldn’t be caught in the same debate? Who of us isn’t guilty of buying into our world’s idea of greatness and quick to pat ourselves on our self-righteous backs? Who of us in our heart of hearts really wants to hear how difficult true greatness in the eyes of God is with no prestige, no power, and no popularity? Like Jesus’ disciples, we don’t want to listen, but we need to hear what he has to say: “If anyone wants to be first, they must be the very last, and the servant of all.

True greatness is found only true service. Witness the greatness of your Savior’s love as he embraces the cross he is about to bear for you. See the greatness of your Savior’s love as he willingly sacrifices everything to forgive his servants, even when they selfishly seek earthly greatness. See the greatness of your Savior’s love in his victory over death for you because he knew you desperately needed it more than anything else. See, then, how the love of Christ motivates you to humbly serve your neighbor, as your service flows from Christ’s service for you. Debates will continue to rage over greatness – favorite sports team, player or hobby. But as servants of the Lord, there is no debate. By humble service that took him to the cross for you and me, our Savior has shown us the true meaning of greatness. What else can we do than respond with humble, thankful praise? Give Jesus flowing ceaselessly, constant praise, and thanksgiving.

SCRIPTURE REFERENCES:

- Mark 10:35–45
- Matthew 19:23–30; 20:20–28
- Luke 22:24–30
- Galatians 5:13–14
- Colossians 3:23–24
- 1 Peter 4:10–11
- Revelation 22:1–5

DEVOTIONAL STUDY QUESTIONS:

1. What are my spiritual aspirations for 2022 (Mark 10:35–37)? Have I shared with Jesus what I’d like Him to accomplish in my life and ministry? Am I asking Him to do great things in and through me? Why or why not? Who have I shared my goals and desires with? If I haven’t done so, find a brother or sister to share with?

2. Am I prepared to take on Christ's suffering (Mark 10:38–41)? How have I suffered for Christ in the past? What was my attitude in the midst of my suffering? In what ways am I presently suffering? How can I see my suffering as an opportunity to honor God?

3. How does servanthood result in greatness (Mark 10:42–44)? When have I seen a servant exalted at work, home, school, neighborhood, or church? How did this inspire and challenge me? How does temporal exaltation illustrate the eternal exaltation that will occur at the judgment seat of Christ?

4. How does Jesus' model of servanthood inspire me (Mark 10:45)? What impresses me most about Jesus' willingness to serve others? What are key "take away" principles and applications from Jesus' example of servanthood that I can utilize in my personal life and ministry?

5. Who are some outstanding servants that need my encouragement? How can I affirm these individuals? Today, will I write an email or hand-written card of appreciation to a servant? On a weekly basis, will I look for servants at my church that I can verbally encourage?

This week's prayer focus is about serving others. While many people put much time and effort into climbing their version of the ladder of success, few take time to understand God's instructions for becoming great. Not only did Jesus serve others as He walked this earth, that was His purpose in coming. He made it clear through His teaching and His example that true success is found by climbing down the ladder to be with those who need served rather than climbing up the ladder away from them. Any level of greatness that we might achieve will only be found as we view ourselves accurately according to God's perspective and serve others as Jesus did. As you pray this week, ask God to help you live with the humility that sees yourself as He sees you. Pray for the courage to serve others when your flesh desires to be served. Pray for the wisdom to serve others according to their need. Pray for the desire to be more Christ-like in the way you serve. Pray that your greatness would be measured by your sacrificial acts of service to others. Pray each day for each person of 5th Avenue United Methodist Church to hear the voice of God; calling them to their purpose and place of service. Will you say "Yes?"

Creator God,
you have formed us from the dust,
redeemed us from our brokenness,
and led us through the waters of the Red Sea,
and we have arrived safely on the other side.
May our lives reflect the awe we have at your watery grace,
the grace that sustains us when the waves rise around us. Amen.

Prayer to be a servant of God

~~~~~  
Dear almighty Lord,  
Yes, I have my problems.  
My life is far from perfect.  
You're not done with me yet.  
Still, I am also your servant.  
So send me.  
Send me to where you need me  
To represent the Body.  
Let me bring your Good News  
And the Holy Spirit to  
The people that hunger  
For your mercy, for your love.  
Let me give my money, my time,  
My talents and my heart  
Until it hurts.  
In this way, I imitate my Master.  
Giving of myself until it hurts.  
If it's not yet time, then get me ready.  
Prepare me, form me.  
And when the time comes  
Fill me with your Spirit  
Clear away the obstacles  
And let me move forward  
In obedience and in love,  
Serving you and my neighbor  
Gives meaning to my life.  
May it all honor and glorify you,  
Oh merciful loving Lord,  
In the name of Jesus Christ,  
Amen.

[prayerforanxiety.com](http://prayerforanxiety.com)

*With God as our Leader, may we be prepared to live another year under His guidance.*

*Happy New Year!*

**You're Not Alone, Let Us Pray with You & For You**

- Fifth Avenue UMC's Laity, Accountable Leadership Board ALB). As of 1 January 2022, we do not have a Chair for our Accountable Leadership Board. We cannot proceed with the ministry of Fifth Ave. UMC without an ALB chair. We are praying ceasing that a Leader will come forward. Lord in your mercy, please hear our prayer.
- Praise God! Mr. Ted Meilahn, has returned home. The blessings continue as his brother has moved from Illinois to Wisconsin to care for him. It is truly wonderful when relatives live together in peace. (Psalm 133:1) Please send cards or notes of joy and encouragement to: Mr. Ted Meilahn, 1085 Fond du Lac Avenue, Box 23, Kewaskum, WI 53040. He would also appreciate a phone call: 262-626-2535.
- We send up consistence prayers of miraculous healing for our Lay Leader, Mr. Dale Zarling, as he recovers from spinal surgery done on 15 December 2021. Please send cards of support and restoration to him and his wife, Ms. Rita, to: Mr. Dale and Ms. Rita Zarling, 5464 Moraine Drive, E., West Bend, WI 53095.
- Ms. Linda Green, sister of Ms. Debra Matthies, needs our prayers for strength and courage as her cancer has returned. Cards and notes to let Ms. Linda know we are present in this journey can be mailed to: Ms. Linda Green, c/o Ms. Debra Matthies, 1466 North 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue, West Bend, WI 53090.
- Bro. Bob Krell, prayers for strength and healing. Please mail cards and notes of prayer and encouragement to: Bro. Bob Krell, 804 Lenora Drive, West Bend, WI 53090
- Mr. Len McGinnis, Jr., was recently hospitalized for cardiac concerns. After heart procedures and changes in medication he has returned home. Cards and notes of cheer and well wishes for Mr. Len and Ms. Shelia McGinnis can be mailed to: 1230 Vogt Drive, West Bend, WI 53095
- Ms. Trisha Funke, daughter of Mr. Ralph & Ms. Bonnie Hensel. Ms. Trisha has returned home and is discerning her return to her vocation as a teacher. Ms. Trishia is still awaiting further diagnosis. Cards of encouragement and prayers for continued healing and diagnosis can be sent to her parents: Mr. Ralph & Ms. Bonnie Hensel, 629 Highland View Drive, West Bend WI 53095
- Mr. Roger Sacia, is requesting prayers for healing; Mrs. Nobi Sacia words of encouragement and prayers for healing. Mr. Roger and Ms. Nobi have permanently relocated to Madison with their daughter. Their new address is: 1626 Jefferson Street, Madison WI 53711
- Mr. William (Bill) & Mrs. Ginger Hornung would love to hear from you! Cards or notes of encouragement or "just thinking of you" can be mailed to: W194N16744 Eagle Dr. Room 3, Jackson, WI 53037
- Mrs. Janice Liepert-Kempf, continued healing; [alankempf33@gmail.com](mailto:alankempf33@gmail.com); 414B. South Pleasantview Road, Plymouth, WI 53073; phone number: 920.838.1830.
- Ms. Nancy Whitson, healing and strength; 922 Hickory Street, West Bend, WI 53095
- Mr. Phil Heimerl, son-in-law of Mike & Fay Lewis. He was just diagnosed with ALS.

Psalm 51:12 says, "Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit."

Your humble Pastor & Servant Leaders,

*Pastor Clarissa & Bro. Martin*