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And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came up to him and said to him, "Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you." [36] And he said to them, "What do you want me to do for you?" [37] And they said to him, "Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory." [38] Jesus said to them, "You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?" [39] And they said to him, "We are able." And Jesus said to them, "The cup that I drink you will drink, and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized, [40] but to sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared." [41] And when the ten heard it, they began to be indignant at James and John. [42] And Jesus called them to him and said to them, "You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. [43] But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, [44] and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. [45] For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."  
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## ***"The JAGATA Syndrome"***

A syndrome is a term used in medical circles to characterize a series of symptoms associated with a disease and forming a clinical picture. They are normally correctable. For example, when partial or complete blockage of the heart occurs so that the heart chambers suddenly stop beating or beat independently for a few seconds or minutes—that is known as the Adam-Stokes syndrome. When a person has a problem assimilating

carbohydrates or fats and is underweight and pale and languid—that is known as the Celiac Syndrome.

Now obviously none of the syndromes mentioned, nor any others known, are common to all people. But there is one syndrome that has made an appearance in every human being of every generation, every race, of every culture, since Cain slew Abel. That is a syndrome that is known as the JAGATA syndrome.

The JAGATA syndrome is characterized by the following symptoms. Sometimes there is an elevation of the pulse rate, a hardening of the eyes, a closing of the hands into a fist, a rise in temperature near the person displaying the symptoms, followed in the afflicted person by a sudden compulsion to communicate and to say to another, "I Am Just-As-Good-As-They-Are." The symptoms inevitably develop when another person is about to be elevated, or seemingly elevated, to a superior position. Hence the term JAGATA syndrome, an acronym made up of the first letters

of the phrase, "Just-As-Good-As-They-Are." I must confess that I made up the acronym myself because it seemed the easiest way to communicate a condition which has existed for all time and which always gets in the way of God's grace to us in Jesus Christ.

It is demonstrated for us in the Word of God for today which forms the basis for this morning's sermon. It is found in the verse which says, "And when the ten heard it, they were indignant at the two brothers" (v. 41).

What had been going on? James and John, had made an appeal to Jesus, "Grant us that we may sit, one on your right hand and the other on your left, in Your glory." Jesus, in reply, informs them such places are for those for whom they have been prepared by God the Father.

### **Who Has The Syndrome?**

Either the other ten overheard the discussion, or the affair got back to them somehow, and immediately the symptoms of the JAGATA syndrome became apparent. They were indignant!

Imagine the gall of James and John and their mother (maybe they even used their mother, maybe it wasn't her idea)—the unmitigated gall to request places of honor on either side of Christ when His kingdom was established! The ten said within themselves, "We are 'just-as-good-as-they-are.'"

But the JAGATA syndrome is also evident in the brothers, James and John, and in their mother, Salome (cf. Matthew 20:20-28). They would not have come together with their mother to Jesus to watch her kneel before Him and make that kind of request unless they thought they were just as good, if not better, than anyone else and so ought to have the position of honor. And mother Salome would not have been that bold unless she felt the same. The JAGATA syndrome was hers as well.

### **Where Does It Come From?**

The syndrome's symptoms are obviously not the products of the Holy Spirit. They are certainly not the fruits of faith. Even though James and John were in the "inner circle" of Christ's

disciples and were intimate friends of the Savior; and even though He loved them and they loved Him; and even though both of their parents were loved by the Lord and John calls himself the disciple whom Jesus loved—still they come up with symptoms that are not indicative of humbleness and love and servanthood, but of pride.

The ten other disciples had been with Christ just as long; they had seen His example of servanthood and humility—and yet they too demonstrate the same symptoms of pride, together with envy and jealousy.

And pride and envy and jealousy are implanted in our sinful flesh and blood. They are the products of the original sin we carry in us from conception until death. The JAGATA syndrome began really with the devil who wanted to be as God and who passed that sinful stupidity on to Eve and to Adam who also wanted to be as God, knowing good and evil.

## **And It Is Still Around**

We see it in others, that is in other Christians, for you would expect to see it in unbelievers. Yes, it is seen in other Christians, sometimes in the home, sometimes in the office and business, sometimes in school, sometimes on the playground, sometimes in the congregation, sometimes in the church at large. Satan delights to set up situations where we can prod that old JAGATA syndrome to flare up and separate that which ought to be one.

## **Watch It At Home**

When a child feels repulsed or neglected, when things don't go his way, and when he doesn't get what he wants, then watch the JAGATA syndrome at work. He gets incensed like the ten disciples and starts a comparison that sets up his brothers and sisters as being more favored than he is and more loved, who get all the good things while he gets nothing. And he starts to get

more demanding and insulting; he likes to pout and brood and make things miserable for everyone.

Or watch it in a marriage when the spouse's sense of neglect piles up evidence upon evidence of things in the past that now prove the partner doesn't think as highly of the spouse, or love in the same measure as before, because it isn't demonstrated the way it is in other marriages.

### **Watch It In The Congregation**

... or the church at large when people vie for honors and recognition and get miffed when they are not given public credit and praise for doing something which was supposedly done for love of the Savior and their fellowmen.

Unfortunately, that kind of strife provoked envy and jealousy can lead people to do horrible things to one another in the name of the Savior and for the sake of the church. And outsiders looking in wonder what love for the brethren means, and whether or not these so-called Christians are really serious

about following Christ, who is the world's greatest example of love and humility. How happy the devil must be when the example set by Christians wipes out completely the witness of the Gospel message of salvation by God's love and grace.

### **What's The Vaccine**

. . . that helps the Christian ward off the JAGATA syndrome? Well, to James and John, Christ talked about the cup of sorrow and sweat of Gethsemane, the horror and hell of the cross on Calvary. That cup of suffering was to be theirs as well. They would lose their lives for the sake of the Gospel. That was their high calling. The sitting at the right hand and left hand of God was God's business, not theirs.

To the ten Jesus talked in terms quite similar. Greatness in God's eyes does not consist in having authority and position over others, not wielding the big stick, but greatness in Jesus' eyes consists of service, humble service to God through service to others.



## **And He Is The Example**

... for all of us. Listen to how we should act and be to each other in the Kingdom. "Even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many" (v. 45).

Jesus inverts the desire in His disciples to be great by taking man's opinion of greatness and turning it upside down. The greatness of anyone can only be measured in terms of service. And the type of service must be measured in terms of selfless, self-giving, sacrificial service demonstrated by Jesus Himself in His self-expending love, love which spent a lifetime in keeping God's commandments in our place. This life spent itself in selfless death, suffered hell for us upon the cross, died the excruciating, suffocating death of crucifixion, making Him the greatest criminal the world would ever see because He bore the sins of all.

In the face of that kind of love and service for us, the JAGATA syndrome must fade away. The place of that envious, jealous, splintering question of "Who is the greatest in the Kingdom of God" is replaced with the soul-searching question of "Are we in the Kingdom?" If so, the forgiveness of sins He has granted us (also for our sin of envy and jealousy) will lead us to thanksgiving. And that in turn by the power of the Spirit will lead us to humble service to His glory through serving one another.

And when the Holy Spirit gets hold of us that way—leading us to humility to demonstrate our love to God for His love to us—and doing that by serving one another—the question of "Who is the greatest?" fades into insignificance.

You really don't need to ask! The answer is so obvious! It is the God of love in Christ Jesus who is the greatest. He accepts me as His own through Christ! I don't have to prove to myself that I am "Just-As-Good-As-They-Are!" And I don't have to prove it to anyone else either. I am now free in Christ Jesus,

free to be His own, free to live the abundant life, free to serve others, free from self-justifying, free to be self-forgetful while at the same time remembering who I really am, one of His own!

The JAGATA syndrome will still make its frightening appearance from time to time in all of us. But thanks be to God—the cure is here—it's known as amazing grace! It will take more than one injection, yes, constant and regular exposure before the symptoms disappear forever. But that day is coming soon. And when it comes, it will be good to hear Him say, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant!" Amen.