

How many of you remember back to your high school days of arguing over who was the greatest? Especially during football and basketball seasons, rival schools would go back and forth about who's the greatest. And they would shout "We're number one!" How many of us thought of ourselves as the greatest at something among our peers? What bragging rights did we own? How long did that last?

In the world around us, there are a lot of views about what it means to be great. Most businesses, organizations, and institutions measure greatness by high personal achievement.

However, what we will learn today in God's Word is that in Christ's kingdom work, being a servant to others is being the greatest. Many servant people have learned that being at the top can be a lonely, stressful, and a cumbersome thing. However, when it comes to being a servant, for Christ's sake, the rewards are numerous. Rather than focusing on what you want, as a servant, you look for ways that you can minister to the needs of others.

When it comes to achievements in life, a servant of Christ would give glory to God in all they do. In **Mt. 19:26** Jesus taught that **"with God all things are possible."** The Apostle Paul said in **Phil. 4:13** **"I can do everything through him who gives me strength."** Everything a servant of Christ does they do it to **the glory of God.**

Let's take a brief look at our text, as you heard read in **Mark 10:43-44**

“whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all.”

GREATNESS. Who is the greatest? We have on record in this Gospel account the selfishness of the disciples. The most important event in human history was about to take place, and the disciples were arguing over who's the greatest. The disciples were so wrapped up in themselves, they did not perceive what Jesus had been trying to tell them about His approaching the cross to suffer, die, and rise again on the third day. The disciples did not fully grasp the thought that the only greatness that mattered – was Jesus' kind of greatness, the greatness of self-giving, sacrificial ministry. A servant ministry. Instead, these men appeared to be more focused on their weakness of self-centered pursuits.

Jesus explains to us, over and over again, that greatness is NOT won by the upward reach for power, authority, and achievement, but on the humble way of self-denying service — the role of a servant. **Deny yourself, pick up your cross and follow Me.** Following in the footsteps of Jesus means drinking the cup He drinks and being baptized with the baptism Jesus is baptized with – suffering for the sake of Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Greatness is not won by any of us at all. Greatness comes to the followers of Jesus, focusing on His greatness that is beyond all deserving. The **Psalmist**

reminds us in chapter 145: **Great is the LORD and most worthy of praise; his greatness no one can fathom.** And in chapter 150, he writes, **Praise him for his acts of power; praise him for his surpassing greatness.**

How are we like the disciples who argued over who was the greatest? How many of you have ever been jealous, because of the successes of others? How many of you experienced the time when your pride was hurt when someone else succeeded in something you failed at? Our greatest failure is sinning against God.

What is so great about being a sinner? Nothing. The prophet **Isaiah** said, in chapter 64:6 **All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags.** On the outside, the world around us thinks we are so great, but on the inside, our sinfulness makes us useless – like filthy rags. [Show what is under the robe.] **REPENT** of your sinful pride and arrogance! And if you repent, God, in His infinite grace and mercy, will see us repentant sinners differently. Even though we are sinners, we will be of great service to Him as His baptized children. Even rags can be of some service? How so? When you think about it, it can be used to dust furniture or wash windows. It can be used to polish shoes, wipe smudges from the wall, polish the car. We can serve the Lord in a lot of ways.

God can and does use us for something GREAT. He has given us the

power of the Holy Spirit through the Word. With His help, we can wipe away the tears of hurting people by telling them of Jesus' love and forgiveness. We can wipe away the fears of frightened, lost people by telling them that Jesus made them His very own through the cross. We are to serve others the same way the great Servant did. Who is this great servant?

Come to think of it, we learn of Him in **Mk. 10:45**. For it says, **"For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."** What did Jesus mean by this statement? His service for us led Him to the cross. He became rags for us. In **2 Cor. 8:9**, the Apostle Paul describes what Jesus did. **For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich.** Like a rag, He was torn, pierced, and shredded. There, at the cross, Jesus completely wiped away the grime that sin smears on us. He cleaned us up completely with His blood, so we can live as God's children – redeemed, forgiven and have eternal life. That is GREATNESS!

What is greatness for us? Jesus teaches us that there is no room for jealousy and pride; feeling alone or afraid. We are not to desire positions of influence or importance, but rather have a heart of a servant. And don't confuse servant with slave. There is a difference. A slave does what others want, and servants does what others need. Being a servant of Christ Jesus means

understanding service and sacrifice. A servant of Christ understands the difference between being involved and being committed. What is the difference between being involved and being committed? Someone once said, “Next time you sit down for breakfast and eat eggs and bacon remember this — the chicken was ‘involved’ but the pig was ‘committed’.” Being a servant is being committed to drinking the cup Jesus drank and being baptized with the baptism He is baptized with. What does this mean to drink the cup Jesus drank? It means to suffer with Jesus. The Apostles suffered martyrdom, John suffered exile. The Apostle Paul put up with being flogged, beaten with rods, stoned and left for dead, three times shipped wreck at sea, threatened with his life, thrown in prison several times, having gone hungry and thirsty, experienced being in the cold and naked. Paul endured all this for the sake of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

As we face the world around us, we often face anxiety, temptation, disappointment, and envy. And in the spiritual arena to ask for great usefulness and reward is often to ask for great suffering. As servants of Jesus Christ, we are to be obedient to God’s Word – continuing to grow in the grace and knowledge of the Savior, Jesus Christ, and sharing His love with others. The more a servant of Christ breaks down their self-centeredness, pride and ego, denying one’s self, picking up their cross, following Christ, the more joy there will be in life that God gives.

What is the greatness? Let me close with words of the Apostle Paul to the

Philippians, in chapter three. (Phil. 3:7-11) But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ--the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith. I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead.