

The title for today's message is: **The Measure Of Greatness**

Jesus said: ***"If anyone wants to be first, he must be the very last, and the servant of all."***

The grace and peace of our Lord Jesus Christ, be in abide with you always, amen.

Let us pray. Dear heavenly Father, you have set fourth the true measure of greatness through this, Your Holy Gospel. I pray that You will help each one of us here today, and all peoples in the world to seek this greatness, by serving others, grant us the strength and the wisdom to show the world Your greatness, by and through our life. Father we thank You for this message were about to hear. In Jesus name we pray, amen.

In verse 32 we read a not so complimentary report on the disciples, Mark said: ***But they did not understand what he meant and were afraid to ask him about it.***

That's a picture that can be hung in the halls of the museum of mankind. When confronted by true greatness, were simply blind to it.

Here's what happened with Jesus' 12 disciples. One day as Jesus, and His disciples were passing through Galilee, Jesus made it very clear.

That He didn't want anyone in the area to know where they were, because He had something very important to tell His disciples.

And what He had to say to them, was very hard for them to understand. He said; ***"The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men. They will kill him,***

Now, here comes the part the disciples didn't understand. Jesus also said: ***and after three days he will rise."*** You see the disciples stopped listening to Jesus after he used the word **"Kill"**.

There it is! Do you understand it? The whole reason for Jesus to live in the flesh, was to be crucified, die, buried, and then on the third day rise again.

Here, Jesus was giving them the whole story of His life. The whole story. But sadly, they couldn't do anything but give Him a blank stare.

And rightly so, they were just given words that just didn't fit their vision of Jesus. Words they couldn't or wouldn't understand.

You see, they believed that Jesus was greatness, and death certainly wasn't a true measure of greatness.

And still today, the same is true, we too, measure greatness by ones wealth, fame, and most of all, their power.

Yet, sadly today we don't measure greatness by ones service to God and others, and by the sacrifices we make to follow God.

But what exactly is greatness in the kingdom of God? Now remember true greatness today is hardly recognized.

So, the question is; How can we know greatness, even when it stares us in the face.

Take J. C. Penny he had a way of recognizing greatness. He said, "Give me a stock clerk with a goal, and I'll give you a man who will make history.

But give me a man with no goals, and I'll give you a stock clerk." Well that's clear enough, right? Surely we all can understand that.

What he was saying is: A dream, though, hidden in a common man, can bring about greatness in the man.

But a common man, without a dream is just that, a common man. Today, many say, greatness is ones "Intellect," such as Albert Einstein.

To think, Albert Einstein, developed the theory of relativity, when he was only twenty-six years old. And the world says he had greatness.

Some say what makes for greatness, is “courage.” One that comes to mind would be Clara Barton.

During the Civil War, Clara Barton earned the honorable name of “Angel of the Battlefield.”

Because of her work with the wounded, she ultimately create a world-wide organization, known today as the “Red Cross.”

Yet, still others say, that it’s ones “spirit” that brings about greatness, and many point to Jackie Robinson.

The first professional black baseball player, his greatness was the triumph of the human spirit over adversity.

And finally, some say what makes for greatness is ones “contribution to humanity.”

Now, if that were the case, very few of us, could argue with naming Jonas Salk, the inventor of the polio vaccine, as one of greatness.

You know its difficult for some of us today, to imagine the terror that the word “polio” must have struck in the hearts of people, especially parents.

I myself can remember, when I was a child having the polio vaccine given to me in grade school. The polio vaccine was given on a mass scale.

This vaccine saved many people, adults as well as children, from contracting polio.

Or perhaps its those who work for peace in the councils of nations, or those who fight for justice, as did Martin Luther King.

Yet there's one thing that's very clear to each one of us today, and that is we all have a deep desire to be great.

We have a desire to be the best at what we do. To excel. No one wants to be, known as common, a no one.

But what is it, that measures greatness? And how can we recognize it when we see it?

Well, let's leave this question for a few moments and look at our second point which is; "Greatness is never about self-promotion."

Mark tells us that Jesus and His disciples left the North country where He was safe, and was taking the first step to Jerusalem and the cross.

Jesus didn't want to be disturbed by the people along the way, so He didn't want anyone to know where they were.

Were also told that while they walked toward Capernaum, Jesus told them, for the second time, about His death and resurrection.

And after Jesus said these things, the disciples continued on walking and talking among themselves. Again they didn't understand.

At the time, they didn't realize Jesus had overheard them, but when they arrived at the house in Capernaum, Jesus questions them about it.

And with that question the disciples were stunned, they were strangely quiet. It seems they were embarrassed that Jesus heard them.

Here Jesus tells His disciples and you and I today, what it is that makes for true greatness, that is in the eyes of God.

Jesus said; ***"If anyone wants to be first, he must be the very last, and the servant of all."***

Not exactly what the disciples believed about greatness, look, they were very surprised at what Jesus said, “servant of all” no way!

All along, Jesus taught that heaven will hold some surprises. That honor will be granted to those with undistinguished, non-competitive behavior.

Take the simple illustration that Jesus gives of receiving a child. Somewhere Jesus calls over to Him a small child who He stands in front of His disciples.

Now, Its interesting that Mark tells us that Jesus stands the child in front of the disciples, before taking the child into His arms.

Perhaps He was highlighting how small the child was by comparison. But as He takes the child in His arms Jesus says to them:

***"Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me does not welcome me but the one who sent me."***

Okay, what was Jesus saying here? Jesus is talking about having a humble servant attitude.

Being willing to reach out and help the smallest of people so that they too are loved by Him, yes these simple acts will be rewarded.

And many of God's children will be surprised to find that their faithful service to others, will bring them top honors. Yes greatness.

The last shall be first. And if there is one thing in this world, that can short circuit such a simple act, it is self-promotion.

You cannot both, serve and conquer. This leads us into our final point: Greatness is found in service to all.

After a presidential debate, a reporter for a news magazine asked a young woman, "What do you think of the candidates?"

She didn't say a word about their positions on the issues or their skill at debate. She simply said, "None of them seems to have any humility."

Today humility is an elusive quality. Most people do great with showing greatness, that is until they get to humility.

You see Jesus had to be dead last in order to be first, making Him the greatest of all mankind.

Look, Jesus was about to serve in the most radical of ways, by sacrificing Himself on the cross, and even as a criminal.

In doing so, Jesus was sacrificing Himself for our sins, and the sins of the world.

Jesus offered to all His followers past, present and in the future, a model for greatness.

My friends, You will recognize greatness, when you look for it in the humble acts of love by people who are not interested in self-promotion.

And when we fail to recognize this as the measure for greatness we may see ourselves in first place, but spiritually we will find ourselves in last place.

Amen.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all. Amen.