
"At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, 'Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?'" (Matthew 18:1)

I. The Question

- a. Blue ribbons, trophies, winner take all, the last one is a rotten egg, keeping score.
- b. Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? or Who is the most important in the kingdom of heaven? Who gets the highest rank in the kingdom of heaven? Who is the top disciple?
- c. According to the Gospel record, this was a repeated discussion among the disciples. Was it enough to follow Jesus and to be in His presence? (Luke 9:46)
- d. Peter walked on water and had been on the mountaintop. Was he the greatest disciple?
- e. By nature, we want to be first, not last. Most of us want to be celebrities instead of servants.
- f. Did the disciples want to be noticed more by Jesus, by others, or did they just want to be *on top*?

II. The Example

- a. Jesus answers the question by calling a child and placing him in front of the disciples to see.
- b. He answers, *unless you turn*. There is a need for every believer to turn (change).
- c. The lesson here is that no one enters the kingdom as they are.
- d. There are three absolutes for greatness that Jesus mentions: 1) You must turn 2) become like a child; 3) you must humble yourself
- e. Can an adult turn back time? What did Jesus mean to be child-like for greatness?
- f. Humility is not thinking of mainly oneself; it is simply not thinking of oneself at all.
- g. True humility means knowing yourself and accepting yourself to the glory of God.
- h. An "unspoiled child" has the characteristics of a kingdom servant that brings glory to God:
 1. Trust (Matt 18:6); dependence; the desire to make others happy; an absence of boasting
- i. The Church should always be a place where children matter. They need to be encouraged, supported, understood and taught.
- j. "Little ones" means those people who society often forgets (strangers, the poor, the elderly, people who are considered different).

III. Practical Application of the Text

- a. What kind of example would we set for a new Christian who witnessed everyone in the church trying to be noticed, trying to be first, and seeking a title?
- b. Real greatness is not to be found in seeking praise from others, but seeking others to serve.
- c. Humility does not mean suppressing our drive or hiding our gifts. We should never deny positions of responsibility when we accept them with humility.
- d. Greatness exists in all those who are in Christ. However, that greatness manifests itself outwardly as we choose to humble ourselves and be our Master's servants.
- e. Think about it, the Lord expects you to be humble enough to receive those the world does not want. And as you receive others, be careful that your character does not cause them to stumble.