

## The Story of Jesus

### Part 23: 3 Steps to Discovering True Greatness.

Mark 9:30-37 | [watch online](#)

#### Summary:

God wants you to be great and Jesus gave us 3 simple, but counterintuitive, steps to get there.

#### Main Ideas:

God wants you to be great.

We usually base our “greatness” on who we are better than.

Jesus modeled and taught what it truly means to be great.

Jesus redefined greatness.

True greatness doesn't need to be advertised or proven.

The path to greatness leads down not up.

True greatness comes out of true humility.

Humility- Freedom from needing to feel important or recognized.

Greatness is available to anyone willing to accept it.

The life Jesus offers is a life of true greatness.

#### 3 Steps to True Greatness:

1st: Redefine greatness by looking at Jesus

2nd: Stop fighting to climb higher and serve at the bottom by asking, “Who can I serve?”

3rd: Practice true humility by accepting your true worth.

#### Discussion Questions:

1. Reread Mark 9:30-37 and the main ideas from the message. What stands out to you most? What questions or thoughts do you have?
2. Can you think of any examples from your own life of someone who exemplifies the type of greatness described in this passage and message?
3. Read Philippians 2:1-11. How do you think understanding our worth in God's eyes affects our ability to serve others?
4. How could redefining greatness impact your daily interactions and relationships?
  - In which areas of your life could you redefine greatness?
5. How can your group pray with you this week?

---

#### Transcript:

**IN:** God wants you to be great.

“What?! I just thought he wanted me to stop being such a dirty sinner.”

Nope... he wants you to be great. Truly great... the greatest you can be... and have a great life.

And you really can be great... It's a lot simpler than most people think.

It's not easy... but if you're willing to take 3 simple, but counter-intuitive, steps... you can be truly great.

AND the best part?... it has nothing to do with being religious.

So let's talk about it together.

**WE:** God wants you to be great.

I'm serious... he's cheering you on... wants you to be the greatest accountant, parent, teacher, spouse, student, friend, boss, CEO, nurse, lawyer... you can be.

But when we think about being "The Greatest" what are we usually thinking?

The best of the best... the one that is better than everyone else right?

And the more people we are better than/richer/more powerful/more talented/harder worker/etc... the greater we are

We usually base our "greatness" on who we are better than.

Is that really greatness?

We've all heard the stories... once someone gets to the top they look around and ask... is this all?

Or worse, on their quest to greatness they lose something about themselves... and become not great people.

So what does it mean to TRULY be great...

Great question... and whether you believe he was God, whether you believe he rose from the dead... can't deny Jesus of Nazareth was one of the greatest people to ever live...

In fact... Jesus modeled and taught what it truly means to be great.

So if you stick around for the next few minutes we'll look at a particular scene from Jesus' life and discover 3 steps to true greatness...

**GOD:** Mark stuff... 70 AD. Peter. Etc.

At this point of the story... Jesus is slowly making his way to Jerusalem... and keeps explaining to his disciples what's going to happen there...

**V. 30-32** So easy to make fun of disciples... "What does he mean by dying and rising again? It's so confusing"

But let's go easy on them... they don't get to read the story they had to live it.

Can't really blame them for being confused...

For the 1st part of Mark's account Jesus was always teaching in parables

- Telling stories that had hidden spiritual/life meanings.

And now he's being straightforward... and it's confusing.

Disciples are thinking..."This obviously has to be some kind of parable"

- If he's the Messiah then he's the greatest leader they have ever had... how could he be great if he loses to his enemies?

They are looking for a hidden meaning that isn't there

But Jesus is trying to prepare them for what's about to happen

- And he's saying... "I need you guys to get this. B/c when I'm gone you're going to be leading this thing."

"Yes I am the Messiah...the Son of Man Daniel talked about in Daniel 7... but here is what that greatness actually looks like..."

I'm going to die and rise again...FOR YOU. Saving humanity from sin and death...

I'm going to show you true greatness by choosing to lose, by choosing to be mocked, by not fighting back... choosing to die.

When you see me at what everyone else would see as the lowest, weakest, most humiliating moment... I will show you the true definition of great.

### Jesus redefined greatness.

And if we want to discover the greatness God has for us we need to start thinking of greatness through Jesus' definition....

So **Step 1** of being the great God wants for you... **Redefine greatness.**

- But that's only the beginning...

Now, the disciples don't get what he's talking about but...

- Don't want to look stupid
- Get called Satan like Peter when he didn't understand and told Jesus he was wrong
- Or make it look like they don't have enough faith like when they couldn't heal the boy....

So they drop the D&R part and start talking about... if Jesus is going to be king that means... they'll be helping him rule!

**V. 33-34** Arguing about who's the greatest?

If Jesus is the Messiah and we get to rule with him... who's going to be the greatest?

- Maybe Peter, James, John start making fun of guys that couldn't heal boy from earlier scene?

Now for us this seems silly right... We don't argue about how great we are with people (unless we're a politician)...

But we definitely try to prove to ourselves and others we are the greatest...

- Social Media
- I'm better. Give me the promotion, attention, awards, clicks, likes.
- I'm better. Look at my car, house, clothes, things, family

I even do it with other pastors/churches... it's gross.

True greatness doesn't need to be advertised or proven.

Now, Jesus knows these guys need a redefinition of Greatness...

So he calls them on it... and they react like the teenagers they are...

- "Uh nothing Jesus." Not making eye-contact. Awkward.

He doesn't let them off the hook... if they are really going to be leading this thing they need to understand that his kingdom is going to be different...

**V. 35** Jesus didn't say... "Stop trying to be great. God wants you to think of yourselves as horrible sinners and hate everything about yourself. You are nothing so stop seeing yourself as something special."

He's saying... "You want to be great? Awesome! Be great. God wants you to be great... but truly great..."

And the path to greatness is not what you've been told...

- it isn't climbing as high as you can so you're above everyone else."

The path to greatness leads down not up.

Might seem counterintuitive at 1st... but it's actually something we all know deep down...

A great boss... supports YOU and tries to bring out the best in you

A great friend and spouse isn't about getting what they can from you but adding to your life and lifting you up

A great employee/coworker isn't just trying to get ahead, no matter who they step on... they look out for their co-workers, they care that the team succeeds.

Greatness isn't measured by how many people serve you but by how well you serve other people.

**Step 2: Stop fighting to climb higher and serve at the bottom.**

But we're still not all the way there yet...

And disciples might be thinking... "Not a fan of this... what does he mean by "be the servant of everyone" like that's really really inclusive"

"Sure, we should be humble and know our place and serve those who deserve it and are above us... that's what you mean right Jesus... Become great by serving (buttering up) those to whom you owe service right?"

Jesus sighs... **V. 36-37** "Taking child in arms" = embracing

- Tender picture.
- Has the power/strength to cast out any demon or armies of demons yet gentle enough to embrace this child

"If you welcome them"... if you treat them as important.

- If you celebrate them, go out of your way to honor them, and serve them

Jesus is saying... true greatness... the greatness God has for you... comes from serving/honoring when you will get nothing out of it...

Jesus uses the child as an example... not b/c they're cute or innocent or say funny things...

Children were the lowest on the social scale.

- Except for the natural love parents have for kids... No status, no privilege.

In that culture, helping a child would do nothing for you or your reputation, wallet, status.

Kids can't repay or reward... shoot often when you serve a kid **they** don't even give you recognition or thanks.

Serving a child means serving someone who can do nothing for you in return.

In other words... True greatness comes out of true humility.

Humility- Freedom from needing to feel important or recognized.

Freedom from having to prove our worth to anyone.

Knowing our worth doesn't come from what we can do, get... It comes from knowing we are loved and important to our Heavenly Father.

**Step 3 to greatness: Practice Humility.**

"If you welcome them on my behalf... you are welcoming me, and you are welcoming God the Father."

Did you catch that? How do we honor God?

- There's nothing there about being pious or religious

God doesn't measure greatness by how religious we are... but by who we serve.

Greatness isn't based on a vertical relationship between us and God... greatness is based on how we serve those around us.

- Out and around instead of just up and down.

Now look how he started his sentence there... **v. 37**

This greatness is available to ANYONE not just some special select few.

Not just those with resources, education, privilege, retired, perfect church attendance... Greatness is available to anyone willing to accept it.

**YOU:** See anyone can follow these 3 steps to true greatness

1st: Redefine greatness by looking at Jesus

- Read the stories of his life
- Come back to hear more of the story

If Jesus really is God as he claimed to be... then no one in the history of the world deserved to have others serve him more than Jesus.

But He was the greatest servant of all time.

- Served the rich, the poor, the nice, the mean, the pretty and the ugly.
- He served everyone, to the point of death.

Jesus showed us what true greatness is... He modeled it with his D&R.

- The ultimate service of the great for the least.

What could we offer him that he didn't already have?

- He loved us so much that sacrificing himself to rescue us from sin and death was all the reward he wanted.

2nd: Stop fighting to climb higher and serve at the bottom by asking, "Who can I serve?"

Maybe it's immediate family members. Co-workers. Friends.

Maybe it's the weak, marginalized, vulnerable around you.

- Take the political labels off of actual people and look for the needs you can serve.

For most of us it's going to be a combination of all the above.

Serve 1 different person in a small way everyday? 365 a year.

Remember...

- The path to greatness leads down not up.
- Greatness isn't measured by how many people serve you but by how well you serve other people.

But these 1st two steps don't really happen unless we are willing to embrace the 3rd step...

**3rd: Practice true humility by accepting your true worth.**

The key to all of this... we can't truly be humble until we accept our true worth...

You were created in the image of God.

But that image has been misshapen by sin (choosing what we want above loving others).

God saw the mess sin makes in our lives and world...

So he entered into our mess and our world... lived a life of true/perfect love

And sacrificed himself to free us from the chains of sin and conquered death by rising again...

- Promising to give us new/eternal life through him the moment we choose to trust him to give it to us.

And when we realize how much we are worth to the infinitely powerful and loving God... we don't need to prove anything to anyone/even ourselves...

We are free to truly and humbly serve... b/c we are content and confident in our worth to our Heavenly Father.

And are allowing him to make us more and more like him... the image we were first created to reflect.

Maybe time to accept for the first time

- "Thank you for loving me. Forgive me and free me from this brokenness. I accept you as my king and accept my worth as your loved child."

Continue to remind self... you don't have to prove anything b/c God has already proven his love for you.

**WE:** Our community/world doesn't need more people shouting trying to prove to themselves and others how great they are.

Jesus showed us that it is actually empty, weak brokenness.

It does nothing except cause division, chaos, war.

True greatness isn't trying to prove we're better than, greater than.

True greatness comes from the humility of knowing we are loved by God. And tuning our lives to live out Jesus' example.

That is the greatness our world desperately needs. That is the greatness our community/neighbors need.

That is the greatness your friends, spouse, kids, grandkids need.

It is the greatness that Jesus offers every single one of us.

The life Jesus offers is a life of true greatness.