

The Wrong Way to Greatness

“46 An argument arose among them as to which of them was the greatest. 47 But Jesus, knowing the reasoning of their hearts, took a child and put him by his side 48 and said to them, ‘Whoever receives this child in my name receives me, and whoever receives me receives him who sent me. For he who is least among you all is the one who is great’” Luke 9:46-48

Detours

- let's open up in our Bibles to the book of Luke
- we're in a mini-series called Detours
- ways we can get distracted, and wander off the path of Jesus
- this morning, we are learning how to follow Jesus to Greatness
 - we come across a very common detour, and Jesus graciously warns us about it this morning
 - let's read Luke 9:46-48

Intro

- who doesn't want to be great?
 - even the disciples, some of the most godly men wanted to be great!

“An argument arose among them as to which of them was the greatest” vs 46

- we have these debates still among us
 - who doesn't want to be successful & important?
 - who doesn't long for status, wealth, power, popularity, success at our job
- in culture these debates go on about who is the greatest
 - Kobe or LeBron, no obviously Jordan
- **the humble and gracious Kanye West has said of himself:**

- “I am the number 1 most impactful artist of our generation. I am Shakespeare in the flesh. Walt Disney. Nike. Google”
- **the humble and gracious fighter Conor McGregor has said of himself**
 - “I am the greatest of all time. I feel confident going against any man, any man God made, and not only that, I will whoop God as well”
- as verse 46 says, this argument arose **“among them”**
 - even among Christians, this is desired
 - who’s the greatest disciple
 - who’s the greatest servant of Jesus
 - who’s the most gifted
 - competition even arises as to what church is greater than what church
 - not just ministry, but life
 - want to be the greatest at my job
 - want to be the greatest parent
 - want to be the best looking
- **on the path to following Jesus, maybe the most appealing detour we can take is the one called selfish ambition**
 - seeking to make a name for yourself, seeking your own glory and greatness

“But Jesus, knowing the reasoning of their hearts” vs 47

- thankfully, Jesus knows us, and wants to lovingly lead us back on the right road to true greatness
- **verse 47 points out that Jesus knew the reasoning of their hearts**
 - this is because, the key to true greatness begins in the heart, in your motivation, in who’s glory you are seeking
 - **when the desire of our hearts is for our own glory and fame, we have taken the deadly detour of pride and selfish ambition**
- Jesus has already warned us of this foolish and dangerous road when he said earlier in Luke:

- “For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself?” Luke 9:25

- this is like spending our days climbing the ladder of success and greatness only to realize the ladder is leaning against the wrong building
- this type of greatness is a trap, it is not actually greatness

- **Dodger Story “The Fray”**

- I was a fraud
- to achieve earthly greatness for the few short years of life, only to lose it for eternity, is a tragedy, and is no true greatness at all, but a fraud
- “Unless the LORD builds the house, those who build it labor in vain. Unless the LORD watches over the city, the watchman stays awake in vain” Psalm 127:1

**so Jesus leads us to a better way to greatness...*

“But Jesus took a child and put him by his side and said to them, ‘Whoever receives this child in my name receives me, and whoever receives me receives him who sent me.’ vs 47-48

- Jesus takes what would be the lowest in that society, a child
 - and he does this because he knows that **in our selfish and ambitious pursuits, we often neglect those who need our care and love and consideration**
- **Jesus is reshaping the way our desire to be great affects our relationships**
 - lest we forget that if Jesus himself had not modeled this, we would have been forgotten and left by him
 - but he came for us It’s important to point out that Jesus isn’t saying - “don’t seek greatness”
- **relationships**
 - “Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others” Philippians 2:3-4
- **work**
 - “And he said to them, “The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those in authority over them are called benefactors. But not so with you. Rather, let the greatest among you become as the youngest, **and the leader as one who serves.**” Luke 22:25-26

- **church**

- “Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.” 1 Peter 5:5
- Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight.

“For he who is least among you all is the one who is great” vs 48

Jesus Says Something Seemingly Absurd

- “he who is least among you all is the one who is great” vs 48
 - “**great**” = “**megas**” - much in degree, great in size, important, status
 - “**least**” = “**mikros**” - small, little, insignificant, low status
 - one of those times when following Jesus really seems crazy
 - only supernatural, only a new heart will like this
 - Jesus is useful, to a point
 - but there are points, when there’s a fork in the road - you can take a detour, or go the way of Jesus

Jesus Models This Greatness More than Anyone Else

- Jesus, the second member of the Godhead, was also the greatest human to ever live
 - and he displays to us what a truly great person is like

- **his life**

- “For who is the greater, one who reclines at table or one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at table? But I am among you as the one who serves” Luke 22:27
- Jesus serving, washing feet

- **his death**

- “Have this mind among yourselves which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he hurled himself by becoming obedient to the point

of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name” Philippians 2:5-9

- **Jesus shows us the way to true greatness is not the way of the world, but rather is to be modeled after him - the greatest man who has ever lived.**
 - Jesus is not saying “suck at life”, “be miserable” and follow me
 - rather, he is pointing out that there’s a better way to be great, a right way to be great, a way to be great that lasts for eternity
- **and yet true greatness is to bend all your capacities and efforts to serve Jesus and others**
 - true greatness is to do all that you do for the glory of God, and the good of others
- **some of us need our hearts stirred again to pursue true greatness!**
 - what gifts and abilities has Jesus given you?
 - what unique opportunities and desires has he given you?
 - where has Jesus placed you?
 - what jobs has Jesus given you - at home, at work, at the church?
 - what resources has Jesus entrusted to you?
- “And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him” Colossians 3:17
- “and thus I make it my ambition to preach the gospel, not where Christ has already been named, lest I build on someone else’s foundation” Romans 15:20
- “Therefore we also have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him” 2 Corinthians 5:9 NASB

The Gospel

- and yet there’s something more important than all of this
 - this is not just “how to become great”
 - these are not just tips
- **the most important way greatness is given and not gained is by the blood of Jesus**
 - we have all pursued greatness the wrong ways

- selfish ambition
- serving ourselves not others
- we have all failed to pursue greatness in a godly way
 - laziness
 - fear

The Cross

- and the cross is where Jesus, the only one who is truly great, lays down his heavenly crown and takes on a crown of thorns
- where Jesus strips himself of his heavenly glory and wears a cross
- where Jesus suffers for the pride and sin of a fallen people
- and where Jesus in turn bestows on them who would trust in him grace, forgiveness, and true greatness
- the kind of greatness that can only be given by Jesus
- the kind of greatness that can only be received as a child of God, never earned

This is Why We Must Become Like Little Children

- we must have the issue of our identity and worth dealt with at the cross
- the only way to receive the cross is to receive it, never to earn it
- like a child, it must be received
- as a child receives care and love from their parents, the cross is where we receive the love of our heavenly father
 - one of the reasons we get so off track, seek our own glory, selfish ambition, is because we don't have the issue of our identity settled
 - we're trying to earn, trying to prove ourselves
- when we come to the cross, and hear the Father say "you are my beloved son and daughter, with whom I am well pleased" we don't need the approval of others anymore
 - our parents
 - our bosses
 - our coworkers
 - even our spouses
 - people become opportunity to serve and love, and not a source of worth and identity

Call to Worship

- **prayer**
 - confess our selfish ambition
 - confess our lack of ambition for Jesus and his kingdom
- **communion**
 - cling to Jesus who bore our sins and failures
- **carpets**
 - *Read Revelation 4*
 - lay our crowns
 - our ultimate part in the story is not to be the great one, the star
 - there already is one who is great
 - our deepest satisfaction comes when we live for his greatness, his name, his glory, his fame
 - I want to become least - that he can be great
 - "I must decrease, he must increase"
 - and here, Jesus says, we become truly great