

The Measure of True Greatness

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I. Introduction.

- A. Text: Matthew 20.
- B. What greatness is depends upon whom you ask.

II. The suffering of Christ.

- A. This is the fifth prediction of Jesus' death. (Matthew 16:21, 17:12)
- B. Jesus' sufferings: betrayal, injustice, and the shame of a criminal's death.
- C. Jesus compares the disciple's pursuit of glory with His own self-degradation.

III. The selfishness of the disciples.

- A. James and John hide behind their mother who asks Jesus for a special position for them in the kingdom.
- B. This woman was the aunt of Jesus, so perhaps James and John thought Jesus would respect her request.
- C. James and John had genuine faith, but their faith was mixed with selfish motives--they wanted greatness according to man.
- D. James was the first apostolic martyr. John lived long but suffered by persecution.
- E. Peter, James and John were looking forward to a political kingdom. Jesus does not deny this kingdom, but the means of being great in that kingdom.
- F. The other Apostles were indignant at James and John because of jealousy.
- G. Self-seeking causes ambition. Do not seek position.

IV. The expectations of greatness.

- A. True greatness is service and slavery to others.
- B. Christ is the supreme example--although He was God, He came as a pauper.
- C. Christ gave His life as a ransom that men might be set free.

V. Principles.

- A. People who want to rule must first learn to serve.

B. People need to spend more time becoming involved with other people than worrying about their own causes.

C. Service to God begins with a right relationship to Jesus Christ.

Application questions:

1. Why should one not seek position in Christianity? Explain.

2. How did Christ offer an alternative path to greatness?

3. What are you doing to serve your church and community? How can you better use your talents and gifts for Christ?
