

# Small Steps to Greatness

by Keith Malcomson

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*This sermon focuses on the teachings of Jesus about true greatness in the kingdom of God. It emphasizes the importance of humility, servanthood, and selflessness in leadership, contrasting the world's view of power and authority. Jesus exemplified true leadership by washing the disciples' feet, teaching them to serve one another with humility and love.*

**Scripture:** Matthew 20:16, Luke 22:26, John 13:14, Matthew 16:24, John 13:17

**Topics:** "True Greatness", "Humility in Leadership"

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## Description

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## Transcript

I want you here tonight to turn with me in your Bible to Matthew chapter 20. We're on this series of little things and here in our next message we're going to move on. Last week we dealt with a little member which is the tongue and I hope you fulfilled your homework from last week finishing off that vital chapter.

We didn't have time but moving on here tonight my message, I think it's part eight, is small steps to greatness. Reading from Matthew chapter 20 verse 16 through until verse 28. Verse 16.

So the last shall be first and the first shall be last for many be called but few chosen. And Jesus going up to Jerusalem took the twelve disciples apart in the way and said unto them, behold we go up to Jerusalem and the son of man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and unto the scribes and they shall condemn him to death and shall deliver him up to the Gentiles to mock and to scourge and to crucify and the third day he shall rise again. Then came to him the mother of Zebedee's children with her sons worshipping him and desiring a certain thing of him and he said unto her, what wilt thou? She saith unto him, grant that these my two sons, some mothers have been changed have they, grant that these two my sons may sit the one on thy right hand and the other on the left in thy kingdom.

But Jesus answered and said, ye know not what ye ask? Are ye able to drink of the cup that I drink of and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? They say unto him, we are able. And he saith unto them, ye shall drink indeed of my cup and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with. But to sit

on my right hand and on my left is not mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my father.

And when the ten heard it, they were moved with indignation at the two brethren and Jesus called them unto him and he said, ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you, but whosoever shall be great among you, let him be your minister. And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant.

Even as the son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister and to give his life a ransom for many. Let's pray together. Father, I thank you, Lord God, that our way of operating is not how the world operates.

And Lord God, your ways are not our ways, naturally speaking. And Lord God, you said the first shall be last, the last shall be first, the greatest shall be the least, the least shall be the greatest. Lord God, you've given us all these instructions.

And Father, I pray tonight again, these little commands, these little teachings, these little comments, these little instructions would revolutionize, would turn upside down our entire Christian life that you might receive of the glory and the honor and the praise in Jesus' mighty name. Amen. My message, small steps lead to greatness.

I hope you realize that tonight, that the pathway to greatness is little steps, not big steps, not notable steps, not remarkable steps. But in fact, if you want to reach true greatness, I mean, greatness as God defines it, as the Bible defines it, to reach true greatness, you need to follow small, insignificant, almost unnoticed steps. And yet the Bible teaches those small steps are actually the pathway to true greatness in the name of God.

It says in Acts chapter 17 and verse six, reference the believers in Thessalonica. Remember what we said a week or two ago, how Paul and Silas and Timothy went there to preach the gospel and they stayed a matter of several weeks or months. And at the end of that time, there was a great riot in the city and Paul and his coworkers had to flee for their life.

Well, guess what the locals in that city said about these Christians? Listen, Acts 17 and six, these that have turned the world upside down are come hither also. Notice that when they looked at Paul, he's only in their community a matter of months and he is known as a man who turns the world upside down. These three preachers, they're not preaching radical political issues.

They're not marching on the streets against what the government are doing. They're not trying to ban slavery across the empire. They're not doing any of those things.

These three men come with the simple gospel of regeneration or the new birth. They weren't caught up in social action. You say I'm against slavery, I'm against racism, I'm against abortion, but you don't find me on the high street demonstrating.

And in that first century, you do not see the church at the forefront of trying to ban slavery. The Bible is against slavery. You know what it says, if you can be free, make sure you're free.

But no matter how much people try to make the church social action against racism or a social club or charity to reach the power, I want to tell you that is not the mission of the church. If you move to a social

gospel and say we're here to solve the social issue and the poverty issue and the racial issue, I would actually say you've either swallowed a lie or you've believed a false gospel. Remember what Jesus said.

He said, how do you know the kingdom of God has come? The gospel is preached to the poor. He didn't say we feed the poor, look at the kingdom, demonstrate. He didn't say that.

He said when the gospel is being preached to a poor man, then you know the kingdom of God has come. So in the church, you've got to be very careful. We can actually think it sounds spiritual.

We're feeding the poor. We're against racism and we are against racism. There won't be any racism here.

I can assure you. But you know what, that is not the purpose of the church. That is merely the knock on effect of the real church being anywhere.

Jesus actually said the poor you have with you always, that can never ever be the focus. That problem is going to continue, but we've got to know what the kingdom of God is. You know, the world economic forum and the UN and many other social programs care about the power and care about the racial issue.

Do you realize those institutions? They talk about that a lot, but they do not talk about the new birth and a man's soul. And so in this message tonight, as we look at the small steps to greatness, we see that when the gospel comes anywhere, Paul and his fellow laborers were known as those who turn the world upside down. When they come to Thessalonica, they weren't demonstrating political causes.

They weren't standing outside shops trying to get them closed down. They weren't going and petitioning the government of the local region. They didn't do any of those things.

You know what they're doing? They're preaching the gospel to individuals and individuals were being radically born again in every area of society. And you know what the locals got so disturbed, they're saying these men turn the whole world upside down. Now look at the definition of the effect of the gospel.

It turns the entire world upside down. He who's greatest will be the least. You want to be first, you will be last.

Do you realize the gospel is filled with these comments? If someone asks you to walk a mile, walk two miles. If someone asks for your coat, give them two coats. And don't ask for it back.

The Bible and the teaching of Christ is literally filled with all of these things. Really unusual statements about your Christian life. That if you live out, it's going to be like the world is turned upside down.

How do you believe the teaching of the gospel and the manifestation of the kingdom of God is so contrary to the world out there that when it is lived, it is very noticeable. You live differently than anyone in your school or your workplace or your family or your house and estate. You are utterly different.

And you know what the turning upside down is, is that the gospel turns everything around. It's radically different from the flesh or from the things of society. And so this is my message tonight.

I'm going to show you how the real gospel turns everything on its head, or maybe it turns everything back on its feet and puts it the right way. But I assure you the gospel is radically different than the ways of this world. And so we deal with the small steps to greatness.

I believe the church of this hour, and this is a little teaching, little comments by Christ. And yet it's massive in the church. I believe we have a need to teach in the church, the concept of what true greatness is.

What does it mean to be successful in your Christian life? What does it mean to be successful in ministry? I actually think the church is ignorant. In fact, I'm utterly persuaded when I read the Bible, I know the church of this hour is very ignorant about these things. They don't know what true success is.

They don't know what true riches are. They don't know these concepts. And yet all they do is talk about success and fame and fortune.

And even if they don't speak about, they seek it. We think success is numbers. We think that success is being known.

We think that prosperity is having money and having a house and not having any bills. That means you don't understand the gospel and the things Jesus said. And so I've got five points here that I want to give five small steps to true greatness.

And I'm going to define true greatness. And you're going to find it's the upside down kingdom. Someone many years ago talked about the teachings of Christ and called it the upside down kingdom.

Because it's so radically different from what you're raised with, your culture, your family, your natural way of thinking, even as a Christian. It is the upside down kingdom. It is in contrast to this world's kingdom.

My first point here tonight, being the least in the kingdom. This is the first step I want to deal with, being the least in the kingdom. I believe this is the way to success.

If you're truly going to be successful as a Christian in the kingdom, in the church, you've got to understand what it means to be the least. If you don't understand that concept, you can't even take a step forward in your Christian life. And this teaching about being the least is used by Christ in different ways to try and get a message to real believers.

Listen to what it says in Matthew chapter five and 19. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments. Notice he talks specifically here about the least commandments, the very least.

When he talks about least, he's talking about size, place, or dignity, or maybe something that you think is less relevant, less important, and it's not at the top of your list. And so Christ picks out the least of all of the commandments, not the most important, not the most vital, not the greatest commandments. He pulls out the least commandments and he says, therefore, if one of you breaks them, and the break means to loosen, to destroy, to set aside, to do away with, or to create a teaching to attack it or a new interpretation.

He says, therefore, if you break one of the least, the very least, the very smallest, the very unnoticed of all of the commandments, the ones that you don't even notice or think about. If you break them or set them aside deliberately and shall teach men so to do, you know what Jesus said, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven. You don't want to be this sort of least in the kingdom of heaven, I want to assure you.

He's talking about those in the kingdom of God who take commandments and they say, that doesn't matter. We can afford to ignore them or they teach others around them and say, oh, that's not for you, don't worry about that scripture, don't worry about that teaching, you'll be fine. You know what Jesus says,

you are the least of all in the kingdom of God if you dare do that, but whosoever shall do them the least commandments and teach them the least commandments, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

So notice in this first point what Jesus does in trying to explain to you about being the least in the kingdom of heaven. He said, concerning the very least insignificant command, maybe you think it doesn't matter, Jesus didn't say that. Maybe you think certain things in the Bible that Jesus taught, they don't matter, they're not important, those are side issues.

I want to tell you, he's concentrating here on the least command and he's saying, if you dare teach others that that doesn't matter, forget about it or creating an interpretation to set it all aside, it's a very dangerous thing. At best, you are the very least within the kingdom of God and in other words, in size, you are the very least, you are the last, you are unnoticed. If you treat God's word like that, he will treat you like that, I promise you and how you treat the word of God is how God treats you.

Can I ask you how you treat the word of God? If you want to get an idea of how God is going to relate to you, just take a minute here to think about how you treat the word of God because your attitude of the word of God is your attitude towards God himself. Now what least commandments is he talking about? There's three realms of the commandments of God in the Bible and as we look at the Old Testament, what he was teaching here in Matthew chapter 5, there's three areas of law. There's the moral law that stretches back to Eden, there's the ceremonial law or the Levitical law that was given to Israel for the priesthood, the commandments about their garments and their worship in the temple and everything else.

There's also national law that was specifically for Israel. Remember the command that says on top of your house, if you have a house and you've got a roof on that house, remember in Israel it was a flat roof, that's what it was like and there's a commandment in this Bible that says you've actually got to have a fence in around your roof in case anyone falls off. That's not Levitical law and that's not moral law, that's national law and I haven't heard many preachers preaching that you've got to make sure that your roof's pennant but it is wisdom, it is practical wisdom and so we see that it is the moral law in Matthew 5, Jesus is dealing with the moral law, Matthew 5 all the way through and he goes through dealing with the law of God.

He deals with issues like murder, he deals with issues like adultery, he deals with issues like an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, he begins to deal with these things but listen, he says, they of old in the Old Testament, the prophets of God, they said this but I say this. Have you noticed that? So in other words in verse 28, whenever he is saying they said you're not to commit adultery, he says but I say unto you, you're not to look at a woman with lust in your heart and all the way through the sermon on the mount, he is laying out what the law said and then he is actually saying I say unto you, this is my teaching. So in verse 22, he talks about murder, he said in the law it says you're not to murder, I say unto you, you're not to get angry with your brother.

In verse 39, he talks about those that would take vengeance, in the law it said tooth for a tooth, in the law according to the law, I can take vengeance. That isn't the teaching of Jesus. The law taught clearly, you ought to, they punch you, you can punch them back.

There is a retribution there and yet Jesus says in verse 39, but I say unto you, turn the other cheek. That's not law. I'm going to tell you that is the teaching of Christ and so he says if you try to diminish this teaching on lust and anger and turning the other cheek, if you say these are insignificant things and there's men in the church who'll take lust and say it's of no consequence.

Oh yes, adultery is sin. I've seen it all through the church. They will get angry over adultery.

They will get angry over divorce. Jesus deals with in Matthew 5 and they say if you're divorced, you're despicable, you're the least in the kingdom of God if you even get in. Oh but Jesus doesn't say that.

He's dealing with lust. Those same people who are radical over the issue of divorce, they are not radical over lust. I wonder where they're living.

Are they living in old testament law? Are they pharisees? Are they living in the new testament where we say lust is the issue? You don't hear them. The men who are very stalwart and strong, I would say actually teaching wrong on divorce. They actually don't even take a strong stand on lust of the eye and so Jesus said but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

Now look at this. He's saying those that teach the little things, the little teachings of Christ and who practice them, they will be seen as great. The little commands, insignificant like we just mentioned and if you teach these, you're great.

If you try to do away with them and say you don't need to worry about them, you are the very least. What an attitude of heart. Then it says further in Luke chapter 1 verse 15 speaking about John the Baptist for he shall be great.

Talk about the child, the baby. He shall be great in the sight of the Lord. As God looks upon him, John in the womb of his mother is actually great.

That's how God looks upon him. God considered John as a babe in the womb to be very great and he shall drink neither wine nor strong drink and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost even from his mother's womb. Then listen to what it says in Matthew 11 verse 11.

Verily I say unto you among them that are born of women there has not risen a greater than John. I'm talking about greatness here, real greatness and so Christ himself says amongst all the men that have ever been born of women, John is the very greatest. There's no greater than him and listen to what he adds.

Notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. He's not saying use the just scrape into the kingdom of God and are barely in there and don't really do much is greater than John the Baptist. He's not saying that.

He's actually now talking about the least in the kingdom of God. If you really understand the true positive meaning of being the least in the kingdom of God that I'm about to share right now. If you understand that you are greater than John the Baptist who was at the end of the old testament dispensation.

You see he was part of that old covenant. He was the last prophet of that old covenant and we see that the kingdom of God that Christ was bringing in through his sacrifice on the cross that the least those who really embody what it means to be the least in the kingdom of God are going to be far greater than John. But I want you to see here for a moment what does it mean in a positive sense to be the least in the kingdom of God.

Jesus says in Matthew chapter 18 and verse 1. At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus saying notice what they say. Who and is the disciples Peter and John and James and the rest? Who is the

greatest in the kingdom of heaven? They want an answer. Who is? In fact they want to know who's the greatest among us in the kingdom of heaven.

They want an answer from Jesus. How's Jesus going to answer that? Is it Peter? Is he the greatest? Or is it John who can keep his mouth shut? I mean who is the greatest? And they're standing there saying tell us master. We want to know who is the greatest in the kingdom of God.

We are your chosen apostles. We are casting out the demons. We are healing the sick.

We are followers of you. Are we the greatest? And Jesus called. How's he going to answer? Jesus called a little child.

Notice the word little. Little child unto him. Come here boy.

And the little child runs to him and set him in the midst of them and said verily, verily I say unto you except ye be converted and become as a little children ye shall not enter the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Three times he has used the word little in reference to the child.

In the following two verses he uses it another two times. Five times he talks about the little child. He has set the child.

You want to know what true greatness is in the kingdom of God? Do you want to know it tonight? What does it mean to be great in the kingdom of God? To have success. To be the embodiment of growing and maturing. Do you know what Christ done? He presented a little child who didn't know his left hand from his right and he said there you have an example.

I'm teaching you about greatness. You want to know who's greatest in the kingdom of God? Look at this little child. Jesus says except you be converted and become as little children.

You know what little children are? They trust. They lean. They rely upon their father and their mother.

They're very simple. They're very innocent. They're very naive.

They are followers. They can't look after themselves. I didn't say childish.

Childish is taught against in the bible. To be childish and stupid and light is actually sinful. You shouldn't be that but he's saying unless you be converted and become as little children you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven.

You want a lesson on greatness? Look at that baby at the back of the room. Look at the baby at the back of the room. That is a testimony.

Jesus used a little child as an example. Then he goes further and whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me. But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck and that he was drowned in the depth of the sea.

Those who endanger the soul of a child in the church is in grave danger of personal damnation. If you want to see something about greatness in the church look at the preacher. Look at the present preacher.

What he thinks of children in relation to people out there who are thought of as great. The little insignificant unnoticed children. What do you think about them? You see these are lessons in greatness but you need to understand who is the least in the kingdom of God.

Jesus is teaching them. Then in Mark chapter 9 verse 33 and he that is Jesus came to Capernaum and being in the house he asked them what was it ye disputed among yourselves by the way? Of course he knew but he's asking them. But they held their peace for by the way they had disputed among themselves who should be the greatest.

What were you talking about? Nothing. Oh never mind. We'd rather not say.

Isn't it interesting the top apostles are discussing something they don't want to even tell Christ what they're discussing. They're saying who is the greatest among us. Do you know what's in your flesh here tonight? Greatness.

A desire for greatness. Well I think more highly of myself than I ought to. That's what the Bible says.

Do you realize your flesh looks down on others and better than them? Do you realize all of you in this room at some point have always looked to find someone to look down to say I'm greater than them. Within human nature in the flesh is a tendency to dispute over who's the greatest. You may never put that on your lips but it may be concerning your Bible knowledge or your prayer or your spirituality or your uncompromising nature or your understanding of some Bible truth and you go surely I'm the greatest in this thing.

Surely I'm better and even if you're not better than someone else in the church you'll always find someone to say I'm excelling in this area above them. And so he asked them what are you saying? He says again and he sat down and he called the twelve and said unto him if any man desired to be first. We're talking about being the least or the greatest.

If any man desired to be first. Can I ask you tonight do you desire to be the first? Because in this scripture it says it's okay to desire to be the first. It's okay to be.

Within your full nature that gets taken and misused. But he sat down with them. They've been disputing who's the greatest and so he says let's have a little talk.

Who here around this table actually desires to be first? And the word desires to choose, determine or to make a decision that I would be first. Do you know what it means to be first? To be the least? To be the greatest? The same shall be. So Jesus has given a definition.

Now we're talking about the kingdom of great. What does it mean to be first in the kingdom of God? So he tells them the same shall be last of all. There's the kingdom of God.

You want to be first. You desire to be first. You want to be first.

Okay I'm telling you what it means in God's kingdom. Your flesh, your mind, your experience might tell you what it means to be first. You may say I'm going to be first.

I'll work up the ladder in the church. I'm going to work through ministry. I'm going to work through things over the years.

Really? Can I tell you how to get there and work up the ladder in the church? Jesus says here you will be last. Welcome to the kingdom of God. This is the first lesson.

First step towards greatness. How do you get towards greatness? You are going to be last. And Jesus adds, and servant of all.

You really want to be first. You desire to be first. Then I'll tell you in the kingdom of God you're going to be last.

Right at the back of the queue. You're going to serve everybody else. That's what you're going to be.

You're going to be a servant. No, no, no, no. You misunderstood me.

I want to be the master, the teacher, the pastor, the preacher. I want to be the mature one. I want to be there sitting with everyone around me and giving out all my wisdom.

Then you'll be the last. You're going to serve everyone. If you don't do that, then you don't understand greatness in the church.

You see, being the last in the kingdom of God is to be first. To be the least in the kingdom of God. The only way to be the greatest in the kingdom of God is to make sure you're the least in the kingdom of God.

You want to be the greatest in this church. Can I tell you how? The first step is to be the least in this church. You say, how do I go about that? Read the words of the Lord Jesus Christ.

They are all very, very clear. And again, we read in these scriptures that he took a child and set him in the midst. And when they had taken him in his arms, he said unto him, whosoever shall receive one of these children in my name, receiveth me.

Whosoever shall receive me, receiveth not me. This is straight after telling them how to be great. Do you realize greatness in the kingdom of God is connected to these children that run around us? Do you know children? I've never treated as children.

I go, that's a fully function. I know as a child, I understood everything going on around me. I understood more at eight years old than some Christians at 40 years old.

I can assure you, I understood an awful lot. Jesus says in Luke chapter nine, and there arose a reasoning among them, which of them should be the greatest. And Jesus, perceiving the thoughts of their heart, took a child and set him by him and said unto him, whosoever shall receive this child in my name, receiveth me.

And whosoever receiveth me, receiveth him that sent me. For he that is least among you, the same shall be great. If you receive a child in the name of a child in Christ, in other words, every child in this church, you're treating them like you would Christ.

That's radical. This is basic Christian teaching. And you know what? It's going to mark you out in this church, whether you're great or whether you're the least.

That's my first point. I've got another four. These are the basic teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Small steps to greatness. What's the first one? To be the least, to be the last, to demonstrate it. Number two, being the last in the kingdom, the least in the kingdom, now the last in the kingdom.

Matthew 19, 27. Then answered Peter and said unto him, behold, we have forsaken all and followed you. And what shall we have there for? And Jesus answered him and said unto him, that ye which have followed me now in the regeneration, when the son of man shall sit on his throne of glory.

The regeneration is the changing of everything. When Jesus comes back again, that's what the regeneration is. Ye also, speaking to the apostles who followed him, who had forsaken all, he says, you apostles, when I appear on my throne, you shall sit on 12 thrones, judging the 12 tribes of Israel.

And everyone that hath forsaken homes, our brethren, our sisters, our father, our mother, our wife, our children, our lambs, for my sakes, shall receive a hundredfold and shall inherit everlasting life. Listen to this last scripture. Look what he's talking about.

But many that are first shall be last, and the last shall be first. So we see the first great lesson is being the least, the most unnoticed, doing the most insignificant things. But here again, we see Christ teaching the apostles that being last in the kingdom, what does it mean to be last? Because you know what he says? People are going to get a big shock when you come into the kingdom of God.

In this world, the first are the first, and the last are the last. But when you come over into the kingdom of God, that which would seem to make you the first, suddenly it gets turned on its head. It's the upside down kingdom.

And suddenly you thinking that you're first in the kingdom of God, according to the teaching of Jesus, you could find yourself last if you're not careful. In your natural mind, you could think, I'm first, I'm fine, I'm okay. But when you test it with Christ teaching, you suddenly find out you're right at the back of an awful long line.

And that's why Jesus says, many that are first shall be last. And those that are last, there's people who seem to be last. But because of the teaching of the kingdom of God, actually how God looks at them, he says, no, they're the first.

You think they're back of the queue, they're right at the front. You think you're at the front of the queue, no, you're right at the back. Now notice the context of this for a minute.

In Matthew 19, 27, it says, then answered Peter. What's the context of this teaching to understand? The first shall be last, and I shall be first. What is he saying here? Well, look at the context.

Then Peter said, what about us? What about us? The word then means, look back to what he just said. What had just been in Matthew 19? It's the incident with the rich young ruler. Remember the rich young ruler who comes says, I keep all the commandments.

Master, what must I do to inherit eternal life? And he was very zealous. He runs to Jesus and Jesus says, keep the commandments. He said, oh, I keep them all.

He says, hmm, good on you. Well done. He says, just one thing, just one thing.

Go sell all that you have, give to the poor, then come follow me. Just that one thing, just one small, tiny thing. And you know what? He turned around and he walked off.

Jesus is saying, you've got to forsake all to follow me. If there's anything in your life that you refuse to forsake, it could damn your soul. It's very dangerous.

You better treat it like fire. It's no problem having things. You know, in the Bible, it's no problem being rich.

It's no problem having a house or a car or a wife, no problem having a good job or having money or having holidays. But you better make sure they don't have you. All of these things.

You see the rich young ruler had just walked off. Peter steps up and then said, what about us? What are we going to get? After all, we've forsaken everything. We have followed you.

We have left everything behind and we're out here preaching the gospel. What about us? What are we going to get? What does Jesus say? If whatever you've forsaken, you're going to get rewarded for. If you've left family, if you've left friends, if you've left homes, if you've forsaken or lost things because of the gospel, you're going to get them back a hundred fold.

It's a remarkable thing. And you are going to get eternal life. What's this got to do with being first and being last? What you're going to see in a minute.

Notice as well in verse 28, he says, ye also, you 12 shall sit upon 12 thrones, judging the 12 tribes of Israel. He's saying, look at Israel right up to this point. They're the ones with power, the 12 sons of Jacob, the 12 tribes of Israel.

But you know what? Everything's getting turned on its head now. You new 12 apostles are going to sit on thrones, judging the entirety of Israel. You see these 12 ignorant fishermen, tax collectors, zealots who have been saved, not trained in the biblical ministry.

You know what? They're going to sit and judge the entire nation of Israel. This in part answers, what does it mean the first are going to be the last and the last are going to be first? This in part answers it. They're going to sit in judgment of the entire nation.

But also look at this. They are awarded for what was lost. They are going to be rewarded in a very, in a very real way.

In chapter 20, verse 16, notice again, he repeats this. So the last should be first and the first should be last. For many be called, but few chosen.

He's just repeating the statement. Do you know what comes in verse 1 to verse 16? A parable. Jesus gives a parable and it comes in between saying this twice about the first should be last and the last should be first.

He gives a parable. The parable is about the laborers in the vineyard. And it says there in that parable, early in the morning, he went out and he hired men to work in the fields.

And that first group of men who came in early in the morning, he guaranteed, he said, I'm going to pay you a penny and I want you to work in the harvest fields. And that was okay. And then three other times during the day, he went out and he hired other men, didn't give them a guaranteed wage.

Then in verse 8 it says, and he called the laborers at the end of the day, and he gave them their hire beginning from the last onto the first. He's talking about the day of rewards at the end of time when Christ comes back and he's going to reward you for labor and in the field. Do you know who he's going to start with? The 21st century Christians.

And he's going to work all his way back to the first century. And you know what it says here? He gave the 21st century Christians one penny and he works all his way back through the 20th century, 19th, 18th, 17th, back to the first century and he gave them one penny. And he gives a warning here.

He's given a real warning. He talks about those that came in in the first hour at the beginning of the day who were laboring at that point of time, who were promised, who worked for a set wage, one penny. And they're saying, hold on, how come all of these others, even those that come in in the 11th hour, how come they get the same as us? And Jesus says, am I not the master? Do I not have a right to do this? You know what he's doing to these 12 apostles, to Peter? He's saying, oh yes, you're going to sit in thrones and judge the entire nation of Israel.

Yes, you'll get rewarded for forsaking everything. But he's given a warning here. He's saying, you are the first.

You're the chief in the labor and you need to be very careful of resentment. What about you that have gone through trials and troubles in this church? All hell came against this church in trying to establish it. It has cost us dearly to have this church here.

It has cost me my very blood to be standing here preaching the night. I assure you, there's a high price being paid. But I assure you, someone who gets saved and comes in this door in the week ahead or in the past week and who joins themselves to this, there is a reward.

I haven't done more. I want to assure you, there is a general reward. You know what he's saying to Peter and the others? You need to be very careful that the first don't become the last and the last don't become the first.

You need to guard your heart against resentment and attitudes. I'm saying, I've labored a lot. I paid a price.

I mean, look at the rich young ruler, but I'm here. I've forsaken all. I served you through these years and you need to be careful to say, others are getting rewarded like me.

Surely I get more for this. I've been more on the road. I've done more.

I've preached more. I've reached more. What he's saying here to the apostles, it's a warning to them.

At payment day, there will be some surprises. The last will be the first. The first will be the last.

When you open up the history books of church history and you read about John Wesley, Candace has said this before to you, that we're going to get shocked at where John Wesley will be in the kingdom of God. All of you are going to be very shocked. I think John Wesley is going to be shocked.

You're going to find that he's not at the front of the queue at all. And as you look at church history, people you have never heard about are going to stand up here. Some of you are going to be standing there and going, who are you? Why are you at the front? Why are Whitfield and Spurgeon and all the rest way back? Who are you little granny? Who are you lady? Who are you sir? I never read your testimony.

I never read about the thousands you led to the Lord. Who are you? I don't even know why I'm here. This angel just guided me, said just stand there in this queue.

Since I'm not making fun here tonight, I'm actually saying we are in for a big surprise. On that day, there's going to be reversals. How we thought the kingdom of God.

Well, that man had a position. That man had a ministry. That man had a lot of people following him.

Surely he's important. Absolutely not. We're talking about the kingdom of God.

And so the first shall be last and the last shall be first. There's going to be an awful lot of shocks. There may be reversals of positions when we get into the kingdom of God.

Both ways, people who seem to be the last are going to get propelled right to the front of rewards. And people who seem to be at the front are going to get thrown right to the back. And yet all of us get a penny for laboring in the harvest fields.

At payment day, there's going to be an awful lot of shocks. In Mark chapter 10, 29, and Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, there is no man that has left house or brethren or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands for my sake and the gospels. But he shall receive a hundredfold now in this time.

Don't misread that. You've forsaken a lot. I'll reward you at this time.

But it's delayed 20 years. I know. He'll come.

Just keep serving me. You've left houses. I'll give you plenty of houses to walk in.

Just keep walking with me. But many that are first shall be last and the last shall be first. Number three, being the lowest in the kingdom, being the least in the kingdom, being the last in the kingdom, being the lowest in the kingdom.

Luke chapter 14, verse 8. When they are bidding of any man to a wedding, sit not down in the highest room, lest the more honorable man than now be bidden of him. And he that bade thee come and say to you, give this man place. And now begin with shame to take the lowest room.

But when thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest room. And when he that bade thee cometh, he may say unto thee, friend, go up higher. Then shalt thou have worship in the presence of them that sit at meet with thee.

Listen to this. For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased. And he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

When Christ quoted this, he's quoting from Proverbs chapter 25, verse 6 to verse 7. He's taken this story from the Old Testament and he's applying it to his kingdom about the highest and the lowest. Do you know what it means to be the lowest in the kingdom of God and the highest? To take the highest position and the lowest position. Please don't get me wrong tonight.

See in this story, don't you go on a whole thing of the next time we gather in some situation and you go and you sit in the back little scullery room in the lowest little tiny seat and say, here am I. I'm just doing what Jesus said. It's not talking about that. If that's what you think this is saying, you have utterly missed it.

Jesus is telling a story and he's applying it to the kingdom of God to something radically different. This is the example. If you stop with this, it's like stopping with a shadow, stopping with a mere example or a parable.

You're there trying to fulfill it. Actually, you're contradicting the story because you know what the issue is? It's about humility of heart. You could actually be sitting in the back little cold lowest room alone away from the fire saying, well, I'm just doing what Jesus said and all the time pride is in the heart.

Do you know I am the greatest here because I'm taking the lowest seat? Jesus would be gone. They're missing it. They don't understand what I'm actually saying here.

Whosoever exalted themselves, do you realize the person taking the high seat is the person who in their heart, they exalt themselves. They actually think more of themselves. Whosoever exalted himself shall be a beast.

God does this. It's talking about pride and humility in the heart. It's not talking about a seat at a feast at someone's house.

It's not talking about that. It's an entire attitude of heart. Those who are proud, God will bring them low.

He will use the things of life to show you something. He that humbleth himself shall be exalted. When you take the lowest position, when you take the lowest seat, when you think less of yourself, this isn't talking about you educating yourself and say, I'll take the lowest seat every time.

Therefore, someone can promote me. Nine times out of 10, you're going to stay sitting in your little cold room down at the furthest end from the fire. Do you hear me? I'm telling you what it says.

You can have a principle to say, I'll always go to the lowest seat, but you've never learned to humble yourself. It says in Matthew 23, verse six. And speaking about a certain type person, they love the uppermost rooms at feasts.

Could you take the low seat, but love the upper room? Love the best seat at a feast. Wish you had it. Waiting for someone to promote you.

Then that isn't humility of heart. And the chief seats in the synagogues, he's dealing with religion. Jesus said, and greetings in the market.

And to be called a man, rabbi, rabbi, but be not called rabbi for one is your master, even Christ. And all of you are brethren. You know what we are? We're all brethren.

I'm a brother like you. I'm part of the brethren. We are one.

I am not greater. I want to tell you that it's not about false humility. It's about a condition of the heart that does not look down on others.

Someone who's consumed with themselves could choose the lowest seat and yet they're consumed with their self. They're aware of their self. They're not taking the lowest seat because they're more conscious of others.

They're taking the lowest seat because they're so aware of themselves saying, I deserve the highest seat. Religion and the church is filled with people, titles, positions, recognition. I'm dealing with the heart here.

What does it mean about being the lowest and the highest in the kingdom of God? It's an attitude of heart. I need recognition. I desire a title.

Positions are important. If you actually think that going higher in the church is about position, recognition, titles, and ministry, you don't understand this. If you really humbled yourself, you'd realize that you could have all that and be proud in heart, arrogant in heart.

When you have within your heart the desire for recognition, the desire to be noted, serving Christ is not what this is about. You want to work yourself up through things in order for recognition. That's a very dangerous thing.

Jesus goes further here in Matthew 23, and call no man father for one is your father which is in heaven. Neither be called masters for one is your master, even Christ, but he that is greatest among you shall be your servant. The least, the last, the lowest.

Christ is teaching this. Do you see how all these things get missed in the church? I'm sick to death of the church of our generation. Ministry, position, title, success, numbers.

It is so destructive things. I believe in the teachings of Christ. I believe we ought to build our life on these very things.

This ought to be fundamental and it's not in this generation. And you know what? We need to embody these things. We need to understand the principle of the kingdom.

It's not working your way up to a successful ministry where you're touching multitudes and your name is known and you're noted by everyone or you have a title or a reputation. If you think that is success, you utterly misunderstand the kingdom of God. That's got nothing to do with success.

I could be a grandmother looking after a brood of kids and I'm the most successful person in this city. I'm in true success in the kingdom of God. If you don't understand how that works out, then you've got to come back to the teaching of Christ.

Point four, being a, what's the next L going to be? The least, the last, the lowest, being a loser in the kingdom of God, being a loser. I want to teach you how to be a loser. You need to know how not to be a loser, but also how to be a loser.

There's one type of losing you do want to have. One type of losing you do not want to have concerning the kingdom of God. Matthew 16, 24, if any man come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow me.

For whosoever will save his life will lose it. That's the first losing. And whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.

So you've got two losings here, two losers, being a loser in the kingdom of God. The first loser tries to save his life. They're saving their life.

They're keeping their life. I can keep everything, but be religious and say I'm a Christian. But do you know what? I keep everything.

The word of God speaks about things in my life, but I'm going to keep it. The Bible talks about denying yourself, but I'm not going to do that. I want to keep my life, my decisions.

I want to order my life. I want to manipulate a ministry. You see, that's called keeping or saving your life, your life.

And you know what? You're a loser eternally in the kingdom of God. If you're trying to save your life, if you're trying to keep your life, if you're trying to preserve your life and walk through as a Christian without allowing the word of God, the cross to penetrate, you're going to die in the kingdom of God. You're going to lose your life.

If you actually don't embrace the cross, which means death to who you are, death to pride, death to arrogance, death to lying, death to stubbornness, death to unforgiveness, I'm not going to forgive them. Then you're saving your life. You're trying to preserve your life.

And you know what you're going to do? You're going to lose yourself. You will be lost if you try to keep it. Whosoever will lose his life for my sake will find it.

You know what losing your life is? Losing his life for Christ's sake shall find it. In Mark 8 it says, shall save it. Or in Luke 17, preserve it.

So if you lose your life because of the cross, if you lose out, if you die, if you lose lots of things, if you lose a job or a home or a prospective partner, if you lose friends, you lose family who turn against you, do you know what? That's called losing it as long as it's for him, as long as it's for his glory, not for yourself. You know what? You're going to save your life. You're going to preserve it.

So someone can be losing their life and they're a winner in God's kingdom. You're a success. Oh, but I lost this.

I've suffered. It's been hard. It's broken my heart.

You don't know what it's cost me. Yes, but that's success. No, but I've lost lots of things.

No, you're a success in the kingdom of God. You could be someone else who's living your Christian life. I've maintained everything.

You're enjoying it. You're whistling Dixie, walking through the tulips, enjoying everything, saying, you know what? I know I'm not as spiritual as ought to be, but I'm fine. I believe in Christ.

What a dangerous place to be gaining the world. What did Judas do? It says here, and Christ says about it, those who lose for what is a man profited for the son of man, when he shall come in his glory with his angels, then shall he reward every man according to his works. If a man loses his own soul, what will it profit him? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? If he shall gain the whole world, what are you going to do with your soul? When Jesus talks about gaining the whole world, how many people in this generation gain the whole world are likely to gain the whole world.

And yet there's a warning for every single person. If you should gain the whole world, you could lose your soul. What does that mean? What did that command mean for Judas? His world that he gained was 30 bits of silver to buy a bit of land to build a retirement home.

He was thinking of retirement. I'd betray Christ to get that 30 bits of silver. I don't really mean it.

I don't want him to die. I just want the money. That actually was the world that Judas gained.

He gained the 30 bits of silver. The land was bought after he committed suicide. What a disaster.

What about Lot's wife? Her world was that house in Sodom and she lost her soul. What about Esau when he was tired and exhausted? I'll give you my inheritance for a bowl of pottage. What about Achan? He sold his soul for a Babylonish garment, some silver and some gold.

Do you know that was their world? You see, you could say, I'm not in danger of gaining the whole world. I'll never do that. I don't want the whole world.

But your world that you would sell Christ for could be very close. It could be a house, a retirement home. It could be a friendship.

It could be a Babylonish garment. It could be a heresy that would destroy your life. Jesus says in Matthew 10, he that loveth father or mother more than me.

Remember elsewhere, he says, if you don't hate them and people say, how can you hate your wife? Some would look for justification. Well, there's the verse. You're not to hate your wife.

What Jesus is saying, if you love them more than me and you love daughter, you're not worthy of me. If you love your daughter more than me, you're not worthy of me. If you love anything, house, money, reputation, ministry in the church, if you love that more than me, you're not worthy of me.

And so it's talking about being a loser in the kingdom of God. There's two ways to be a loser. You can lose your life and you'll gain that spiritually.

God will bless you. Or you can lose it by not following the commands of Christ. He that findeth his life shall lose it.

And he that loses his life shall find it. Let me finish here on this fifth and final point. What's it going to be? The least, the last, the lowest, the loser.

Fifth and finally, being a leader in the kingdom of God. If you come to the teachings of Christ, this is not as the church out there teaches about success and ministry and prosperity, and you go for it. Like the American who once told me, said, do you like this girl in the local church? Do you like her? Do you think she's attractive? Do you think she's nice? Then just claim her.

Just tell God you're going to have her. You know what? That doesn't come out of scripture. A lot of people, you could get badly damaged with that sort of attitude.

And you know what? All through the church are attitudes and teachings about leadership that contradict scripture. What did Jesus teach about being a leader in the kingdom? Luke chapter 22 verse 24. And there was also strife among them.

Which of them should be accounted the greatest? Talking about ministry now. We've already said this, but look at it in connection with ministry. And he said unto them, the kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them.

They thought that greatness in the apostolic band, greatness as an apostle, they thought, Peter thought, the first 12 disciples thought, the true greatness means to exercise lordship over men in the church like they do in that world. You make the decision. You tell them what to do.

You order everything. You've got power. Do you realize with church leadership, that is anathema? That is a total misunderstanding.

And the first apostles misunderstood. If you think greatness in this church is the power to make a decision, the power to tell people to stand in a meeting, if you think that in any way is what this is about, you don't understand true greatness. He goes further and he says they exercise authority upon them that are called benefactors.

You're getting something from me through ministry. Therefore, I have authority over you. If you get blessed by my sermons, I must have authority over you.

That's a wrong conception of ministry. Jesus is teaching them here, but ye shall not be so. That must not be in the house of God.

He that is greatest among you, let him be the younger. Have you ever seen that if you're older, then you treat someone younger. You go, I've got years, I've got maturity.

Jesus says, if you want to be the greatest in leadership in the house of God, and I love this so I can be the youngest here of all of you. I'm definitely claiming this and standing on this more and more. If you want to be the greatest, then be the younger amongst all.

Do you know when you're the youngest, at least it should be, there ought to be respect. There ought to be honor. Do you know I ought to, if I'm to be the greatest or if I'm to embody true biblical leadership, I ought to be treating others with great respect, with great honor, with great protection.

That's what I ought to be acting like. I'm younger than all of you, even to Andy. I ought to be treating Andy with great respect, and I hope I do, and all of the young ones.

He also says, and he that is chief as he that does serve. So true greatness in the church manifests through leadership is that you are like this, you are serving others. Then he says, verse 27, and whosoever is greatest, he that sitteth at meat.

He's asking a question, who is greatest? The person at a mealtime who sits and eats the meal, or the person who's serving it, who's greatest? Of course we all know that, the one sitting, being served. Say to night, you're sitting, being served up a meal. And so Jesus says, who is the greatest? He that sitteth at meat, but I'm among you that serveth.

If you're sitting, eating the word of God, you're being served. You are the greatest. I'm actually, you may never have thought about this.

I am treating you as the greatest here. I'm not sitting down saying, you go and get me a meal. You go and serve me.

I'm here tonight, having labored long today. I would have loved to sleep today, but there's no sleep. You know why? I've got to be here in my place serving you the best meal, serving you the best that I can provide.

I'm actually ministering to you like a servant. Then Jesus said to the apostles, ye that, but I am among you as he that serveth. Christ was there saying, but I'm a servant to you.

I embody leadership. I am the greatest in the kingdom of God, and yet I'm serving you. I'm ministering unto you.

You are they which have continued with me in my temptations, and I appoint you a kingdom, as my father has appointed unto me, that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the 12 tribes of Israel. Let me close with this. If the child was the embodiment of greatest for all believers, when it comes to a message about leadership, if Christ is really going to teach a 12, what does leadership really mean in the church, and what should it mean in this church? If you sitting here was to say, if I'm to be a leader, if I'm to be a ministry, if I'm to serve God, how do I embody that? What does it look like? Is it having authority over everyone? Is it telling others? Is it planning? Is it organizing? Is that leadership? We get the answer in John chapter 13 verse 3. Jesus knowing that the father had given all things into his hands.

Now look at the importance of Christ. All things are given into his hands. Knowing this, that everything was given into his hands, and that he was come from God and went to God.

So look at his position of authority, of power. Remarkable. Everything is given to him.

He rises from supper. Knowing this, he rises up from supper. Verse 4, laid aside his garments.

They've just eaten. He took a towel and he girded himself round about. After that, he poureth the water into a basin.

No sin. Hey, bring me water. Do you know I preach things like this in Africa? Devastated the leaders.

I went through all the qualifications of leadership when I was in Kenya. And you know what? They always, after I preached, they rushed me out to a back room for a cup of tea. Surprise, surprise.

And that's how we'd done the whole conference. After I dealt with all the qualifications with leadership, the entire place broke mature godly leaders. The most godly of leaders who walked with God.

And because they'd ushered me, I didn't have any choice. This is what they'd done and I'm there. And the two leaders who'd come to serve me, they literally fell on their faces weeping.

They couldn't serve tea. And I'm in there waiting for my cup of tea. The entire church is weeping and broken.

And here, the two who'd come to serve, they are not, they're not, they're incapacitated. And they are broken with the word of God. You know why? They had it up the wrong way.

And they actually told me, they said, you have turned everything upside down. You've devastated us. We're in faithful ministry, good people.

And yet it's being turned upside down. You know what Jesus done? He filled the water himself. Poured the water, a basin, and he began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded.

Then we have the little interlude of Peter saying, you're not going to do this. Okay? He says, what I do now, you do not know what I'm doing. But thou shalt know hereafter.

You don't understand what I'm, I'm washing your feet. Peter says, you're not, you're the master. You're the, the apostle of our faith.

You're the embodiment of all ministry. You're the savior, the Messiah, the fulfillment of scripture. And you're washing my feet.

You're not going to wash my feet. If I don't wash your feet, you're lost. If you don't receive this ministry.

Guys, this is the embodiment of our Christianity. We serve a Christ who literally would wash your feet. He's heading for betrayal.

He's going to die and suffer for your sin. And what's he doing? He is washing your feet. Even the feet of Judas.

He washed the feet of Judas. He washed the feet of Peter. So after he had washed their feet and taken his garment and was set down again, he said unto him, no, you know, no, you what I've done unto you, ye call me master and Lord, and ye say, well, for so I am.

If I then your Lord and master have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I've given you an example that you should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, listen this carefully as I close.

The servant is not greater than his Lord. I've done this. Look at Christ as the leader of the apostolic band of the church of Jesus Christ.

Look at the real Christ. Do you think you're greater than him? Do you think you can serve less than him? Neither he that sent is greater than he that sent him. If you know these things, happy are ye if you do them.

He's saying you're not greater than me. And you know what? This is the kingdom of God. I'm washing your feet.

Do you deserve it? Absolutely not. I'm ministering to you. I am serving.

You want to be the greatest? You want to be the first? You want to be the best? You want to work your way up the ladder? Do you realise you're going to serve everyone else? This isn't freemasonry. This isn't the guards working up the rank structure. This isn't the army where you get ranked by ranked by ranked.

He has turned it upside down. And he says the entire principle of the kingdom, if you want to be the greatest, you'll be the least. If you want to be the first, you'll be the last.

If you want to be the authority in the midst, you're going to serve and minister and lay your life down. And saints of God, these are what I call small steps to greatness. These small steps are actually not small

steps.

They're dynamic steps. They seem like they're only a foot ahead of you. And yet they're so radical, they would turn entire churches and denominations upside down if they were actually believed.

And I believe if you believe this, it would radically impact this church. Please stand with me as we close. Father, I thank you for the word of God.

And Lord of God, tonight we thank you for the Christ who drew near. Lord God who set aside his garment, who surrounded himself by that garment, who washed the very feet of the disciples. My God, and you said it's an example how you're to serve others.

You want to be the greatest. You want to be the first. You want to be the best.

You want success and ministry. You want to be a leader of men. Then it's embodied in the example of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Father, I pray in these little things that we're dealing with, that you'd change lives, even that listen online. Lord God, we pray right now as a church for every person that listens these messages in different countries, in different situations. My God, we want a real church.

We want real leadership in the body of Christ again. My God, I pray that you turn your church upside down again. That we observe men and not be served.

Lord God, even like Paul ministering in Thessalonica where he labored with his own hands. He worked to raise money for himself. And then he preached the gospel onto that church.

Lord God, I pray bring forth the principles of the kingdom of God in our midst in the name of Jesus. Hallelujah.

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