

What Is True Greatness

by Leonard Martin

Leonard Martin's sermon explores the true nature of greatness in God's kingdom, contrasting it with worldly standards and emphasizing humility and service.

Duration: 1:03:53

Scripture: John 6:53

Topics: "Greatness"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker begins by addressing the concern of retaining and remembering the messages heard during the week. He shares a story about a letter published in a British weekly paper, where the writer expressed their inability to remember any of the 3,000 sermons they had heard in 30 years of attending church. The speaker then suggests that ministers may need to consider if their time could be better spent on something else. The sermon also references a parable in Matthew 20 about a landowner hiring workers for his vineyard.

Transcript

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A special thank you to all who support this ministry. In light of the message and in light of that testimony, I along with the Apostle Paul beseech you, I beseech you, therefore, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable, which is just our reasonable service. It's our reasonable service.

We are His. We're bought with a price. Let's give our bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to Him.

I greet you in the precious name of Jesus. I'm very glad to see you all. And once again, a special blessing and special greetings to you as Bible School students.

You've heard a lot of messages this week, haven't you? I wonder how many of them you were able to retain and to remember. How many of the messages were you able to retain and to remember? Sometimes we get a little discouraged after hearing numerous messages, and we look back and wonder a little bit how many we actually are able to remember and retain. Before I get into my message, I would just like to give you a little bit of an encouragement in case you are wondering or maybe feeling a little bit bad about the fact that you can retain only a small percentage of all the messages and everything that was said this week.

The little story goes like this. There was once a provocative letter published in the British weekly paper. And I don't know how long ago this was, but it was a provocative letter that was put in the British weekly paper.

And it went like this. It addressed it like this. Dear sir, it seems ministers feel their sermons are very important, and they spend a great deal of time preparing them.

It goes on to say I've been attending church quite regular for 30 years, and I have probably heard about 3,000 sermons. To my consternation, he said, I discovered that I cannot remember a single sermon. I wonder, he said, I wonder if ministers' time might be more profitable spent on something else.

Well, it goes on to say that for weeks there was a storm of editorial responses ensued, which finally ended with this letter. This letter went this way. Dear sir, I have been married for 30 years.

During that time, I have eaten approximately 32,850 meals, and they were mostly my wife's cooking. I cannot remember the menu of a single meal. And yet, I have the distinct impression that without them, I would have starved a long time ago.

So it's okay just to sit under the spout and be washed with the sermons, and you might not remember a lot, but that's okay. It is infiltrating into your life, and it's being a part of your life. And I tell you, without the spiritual food, you would have died a long time ago.

Just a little bit of encouragement to you. Don't get despondent or discouraged about the fact that you can remember so little. Just continue to sit under the preaching of his word, and let it wash over your souls, that you may continue to grow in the likeness of Jesus Christ.

While Jesus was on the earth, he at times said some things that were very hard to understand. And actually, sometimes they were very offensive. They were very hard to understand, and sometimes very offensive.

I'm going to give you two of them. In John 6, verse 53, it says, Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth of my flesh and drinketh of my blood hath eternal life, and I will raise him up the last day.

For my flesh is meat indeed, my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood dwelleth in me, and I in him. And a lot of the disciples, they took that from a literal perspective.

They were not able to spiritualize that, and they were greatly offended that their leader, the Lord Jesus Christ, would say that you're going to eat my blood and drink my blood and eat of my flesh. That was very difficult. In John 6, verse 66, it says, From that time, many of his disciples went back and walked no more with him.

Jesus said some hard things and hard to understand things at times. Also, another one, another hard to or gives the idea of hard to understand. This is not something that Jesus said, but in 2 Peter 3, 15, Peter writing here, talking about the second coming of Christ.

He's talking about there are some difficult things to understand. He said in account that the long suffering of our Lord is salvation, even as our beloved brother Paul. Also, according to the wisdom given unto him, as written unto you, as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things in which are some things hard to be understood.

There are some things that are hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable. They rest or they twist them because they don't understand them as they do. Also, the other scriptures unto their own destruction.

Unto their own destruction. There are things in the Bible that are very hard to understand. I want to give you two other things.

This is what Jesus said. Two other things. The one beginning with a parable in Matthew 20.

You don't have to turn there, but in Matthew 20 gives that parable of a householder. And this householder or this landowner had a vineyard and he needed somebody to work in his vineyard. It says he went out early in the morning and he found some and he hired them and made an agreement.

I'll pay you a penny for the day's wages, a penny for the day. I'll give you a penny. It goes on to say that he went out at the third hour and he found some standing in the marketplace and they were idle.

And he said, come and work in my vineyard and I will pay you a penny for your day's work. He went out at the sixth hour again, hired some more and agreed with them that one penny will be their wage for that day for the work that they do for the rest of that day. The ninth hour, he went out again and every time he hired them, he agreed with the employee that he's going to give them a penny for their wage at the end of the day.

And at the end of that parable, at the end of the parable that Jesus gave there, he said that there will be those that are last, that will be first. And there will be those that are first, that will be last. Now, when I look at a parable like that and I see somebody who worked from the start in the morning, the whole way through the heat of the day, and he got a penny, just like the person who came in about nine hours later or whatever it was, and he worked a very short time.

Actually, I think there was someone hired the eleventh hour. He only worked a very short time. The pay was the same.

And as I look at that, I say something doesn't seem quite fair about that. Something don't seem quite fair about that. The first shall be last.

The last shall be first. Matthew 11, 11. It says, Verily, I say unto you, among them that are born of women, there has not risen a greater than John the Baptist.

He's the greatest of a man who's been born from a woman. He was a forerunner of Jesus Christ. What a position.

What an opportunity. He was the greatest. The Bible says he was the greatest born among women, none greater.

Notwithstanding, it says he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. I don't understand that. I'm not sure if I really understand that.

But one of the things I want to say to you this morning is that some things are hard to understand. But we're not the kind of people who are going to rest them to our own destruction. We're not going to twist them and make them say something that makes it feel good to us.

We're going to just accept the fact that there's some things in the Bible we don't understand. And it is not going to have anything against the character of God. God is still fair.

He's right. He's just. And he's holy.

It doesn't matter. There are some things we don't understand. But as we look at this, the first shall be last.

The last shall be first. And he that is least shall be the greatest. I would like to this morning try to unlock the mystery of what Jesus was actually saying.

And I'm not going to give you a whole lot of points at the end of what this actually means. I'm going to give you one simple answer of what Jesus was saying when he said the first shall be last and the last shall be first. And that he that is least shall be the greatest.

I'm going to give you one simple answer, but I'll warn you ahead. It's not as much as it is a simple answer. It's not a simple answer.

We will pursue today to see if we can understand what Jesus is saying. It may be just one small piece of the puzzle that is missing, that in finding it, it will help us to understand what Jesus meant. Those that are first shall be last.

They that are last shall be first. They that are greatest shall be the least. He that is least shall be the greatest.

It doesn't always make sense, but I think there is a key that we need to understand to be able to rightly interpret what Jesus is saying. To be able to look for that key, turn with me now to Matthew 20. Matthew chapter 20.

In Matthew chapter 20, here we have that parable given of the workers in the vineyard. But after that, in verse 20, we have the mother of Zebedee. That would have been James and John's mother coming and worshipping him.

It says in verse 20, she had come and she was worshipping him and desiring a certain thing of him. And he that is Jesus said unto her, what wilt thou? She saith unto him, grant that these my two sons may sit

the one on the right hand, the other on the left in thy kingdom. She asked a tremendous request for her sons.

And if we went into some of the other gospels, we have it given there that Peter and John James and John themselves asked for that position. They asked for that position. But I find it interesting.

We look at that and we say, what was wrong with them? Why were they asking for that spot? Didn't it seem a bit prideful, maybe a bit arrogant to ask that they could have that place at the right hand and the left hand of Jesus and his kingdom. I would like to back up now to the prior chapter in verse 19 and verse 28. Here, Peter had just got done saying that we have left all and followed him, followed Jesus Christ.

And in verse 28, Jesus says, said unto them, Verily, I say unto you that you which have followed me in the regeneration, that means you that have followed me while I was in the world, walking in this world in the body of flesh, you that have followed me in the regeneration, the ushering into the kingdom of God, when the Son of man shall sit on the throne of his glory, he says, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And as I saw that, all of a sudden I said, maybe it's no real great surprise that these two or their mother came and asked for that prominent position at the right hand and the left hand of Jesus Christ. Maybe it wasn't so surprising.

The disciples, especially James and John, they had reasons to feel that the way they did. They felt that means they were handpicked by the Lord. Jesus Christ had the privilege to follow him and serve him for the three years as he served in in this world that he would.

They would then be given the privilege to be serving right at his right hand and his left hand in his kingdom. He said, you will sit on twelve thrones and you will be judging. I think that's all the more that they heard.

I think they heard that they will be reigning with Christ. And I'm sure that their considerations of reigning with Christ was probably of real earthly perspective, that Christ Jesus is going to set up a throne on the earth and reign there at this point. I think that's all the further they saw.

That's all they understood. Even though this was a great opportunity given, it is so much like the flesh. We still, down in the inner part of our being, there's something in every one of us that wants to be the greatest.

We want to be in the forefront. We want to be seen by people. There's something breathing and working in the veins of humanity of wanting to be the greatest.

And so, as we look at James and John here, it's no real question of why they wanted that position. We know how we're made up. We look at positions.

And when we look at positions, all of a sudden, we automatically equate greatness with the position. The way they thought and the way we think today has not changed. We think that position and abilities create or equal greatness.

Position and abilities equal greatness. Let's look at Matthew, verse 20, chapter 20, verses 25 and 26, or the first half of 26, after they asked for that position of greatness. They were looking at position as greatness.

Jesus called them unto him in verse 25 and said, You 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. Jesus is saying, man looks at it this way. Man looks at position and abilities.

Looks at that prominent position and equates greatness with it. Looks how fast or how strong that person is and equates greatness with it. But Jesus is saying, that's not the way my kingdom works.

My kingdom does not work that way. My kingdom does not equate greatness with position and abilities. Just because you might have a position of leadership in the church, does not necessarily mean you are great.

Just because you could be an evangelist and you could preach a fiery sermon and many people come up to the altar and kneel at the altar and souls get saved, does not mean necessarily that you are a great person. There are men that we greatly revere, and rightly so. Men like, you've heard the names, D.L. Moody.

Men like Hudson Taylor. Men like John Wesley. Tremendous men.

We envy them, we look up to them, and rightly so, but that does not necessarily mean by God's standards they are great. We're going to try to find out, what is God's standard of greatness? We think of position. We think of abilities.

And we think they equal greatness. But God says, no, that's not the way my kingdom works. That's not the yardstick I use to measure greatness.

Some of us remember not too long ago of the pilot who, having flown into that flock of geese, ended up taking his jet and landing on the Hudson. And then you had all the people being able to get out there safely, being rescued. I just heard that, I think he's from one of the western states, maybe California, that he is going to probably get the recognition of the year in California for what he did out there on the Hudson, in landing that jet safely on the waters.

And we look at that, and I'm sure many of us did, as we heard about that story, and we thought of this pilot, and how he so beautifully landed that plane on the water, and then everybody got saved. And there's something within us that looks at the prominence, the heroism of something like that, and there's something beating within every one of us that says, oh, for that position. But I'd like to tell you, just because he was such a hero does not necessarily mean that he's great by God's standards.

I mean, it's commendable that he was the last one out of the plane, making sure everybody was out of there. But I tell you, position and abilities do not equate greatness. There is something in many of us that craves for position of honor, and we need to ask the question, is that what God calls great? We're all caught up in this greatness according to man's standard.

There's something within us that wants to climb the ladder of success. We might just be a worker, and we're begging and wishing for the place of being a foreman on the job. And once we're a foreman, we like to be a manager.

And once we're a manager, we like to be a vice president. And once we're a vice president, we like to be a president of the company. There's something within us that naturally pursues greatness in position.

But God says, that's not the way my kingdom works. We look at the person who can run the fastest, sing the best, drive the biggest and nicest vehicles, have the nicest house, have the biggest farm, and you name it, and we look at that, and we see the prominence that it brings into the person's life. And there's something beating within our blood, in the veins of our fleshy desires, that would like that position to be seen of man.

But God says, greatness in the kingdom of God is not determined by position and abilities. You know how it is, young men? Strong, to seek. That's pretty important to us.

But I tell you, by God's kingdom and by God's standards, it doesn't mean greatness. There's something else. We need to use a different measuring stick.

We find ourselves reading books of heroes. Heroes that did astounding feats. And then we daydream in a fantasy world.

And the only thing that's different from the book is that I am the one who is the hero. And everything is turned my way. We've spent many hours daydreaming of that, being that hero.

If I was the one who was the hero. If I was the one who was sitting in that seat. If I was the one who did that heroic deed.

We dream of the prominence and the honor and all the things that go with that. But Jesus said, positions and abilities, they may bring greatness to us by man's standard. But that is not the yardstick that God uses for measuring greatness.

From this passage here in Matthew 20, we see that there are two kinds of greatnesses given here. There is a greatness given that God says you're not supposed to pursue after as a child of God. There's a kind of greatness that does not go with this kingdom.

And we're supposed to deny that greatness. But he also gives another greatness here that we are to pursue after. There is a greatness in the kingdom of God that we are supposed to pursue after with everything we have.

Even to a point, we have no time for the greatness that is considered great in this world. I like the way W Tozer put it. He said, there's nothing wrong with the desire to be great.

Provided there is nothing wrong with the desire to be great, provided for things we seek the right kind of greatness. Number one, we seek the right kind of greatness. Young men, there's nothing wrong with seeking after greatness, but it needs to be the right kind of greatness.

Number two, that we allow God to decide what is great, that we allow God to decide what is great. Number three, there's nothing wrong with the desire to be great, provided that we are willing to pay the full price of that greatness. We are willing to pay the full price of that greatness or that greatness demands.

And number four, there is nothing wrong with the desire to be great, provided that we are content to wait for the judgment of God to settle the whole matter as to who is really great. Those four things can be a part of our life. I tell you, there is the greatness that you need to seek after with all of your heart.

And I tell you today, it's not by position and it's not by abilities. It's not how smart you are. It's not how many letters you have in front of your name because of your profession.

That is not the yardstick that God chooses. There is another thing. There is a greatness.

And if you're willing to pursue that greatness, there is nothing wrong with pursuing it as long as you pursue it. According to God's standard. Now, if you're like me, I would really like to know what that greatness is.

I want to pursue that greatness and let's find out what that true greatness is. I think we all agree here that it is not by position. And even though I'm an elder and even though I serve in a church, it doesn't mean that means nothing when it comes to measuring how great I am.

Nothing to do with it. I can be an elder. I can be in the church.

And by God's standard, I may not be great at all, but we're going to find out this greatness. Let's go back to Matthew 19 again in verses 28 to 30. There we read verse 28.

It said to the disciples that were following Jesus that they're going to sit on the twelve twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And that's where they stopped. They didn't hear anything after that, I suppose, because in verse twenty nine, Jesus said, and everyone, everyone, not just the disciples, not just the disciples, because they got a prominent position in walking with Jesus for three years.

No, it's for everyone that has forsaken houses or brethren or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or land. For my name's sake, they shall receive a hundred fold and shall inherit everlasting life. And then he says, but many that are first shall be last and the last shall be first.

I think we get our first clue here. What true greatness is. We get our first clue here.

What true greatness is. It seems like when Jesus told the disciples that you're going to get to sit on twelve thrones, judging Israel, that he made some qualifications here. It isn't just some specific, special people who follow Jesus for three years, but it's for anyone and everyone who is willing to sell out to Jesus Christ and to serve him with all of his heart.

It's those that will reign with Christ Jesus. And the reason I think he says, but many that are first shall be last, the last shall be first is because the way we think, we think of position. We look at the disciples and we see they follow Jesus for three years.

They had a special position. And so that automatically equates that they're going to get to rule and reign with Jesus Christ. But Jesus Christ makes some qualifications here.

It's everyone who is willing to leave everything to follow Jesus Christ. Let's go on here and let's look a little further. Matthew 20, verses 20 to 28.

We have here going to read verses 20 to 28 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 will thou? What do you want? She says unto him, Grant that these my two sons may sit the one on the right hand, the other on the left in my kingdom.

But Jesus answered and said, You don't know what you ask. Are you able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? Are you willing to walk the same way

I walked? He's given some qualifications here of greatness. If you're willing to walk the same way I walked, that equates greatness.

And of course, they said unto him, We're able. And he, Jesus, said unto them, You shall drink indeed. You shall drink indeed of my cup and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with.

OK, I know you men are going to walk with me. Your hearts are going to be sold out. He looked ahead of the time and he looked at that time when the people around them would say that these men have been with Jesus.

They knew the greatness. He he knew the greatness that they would have. I think Jesus looked ahead of the time when they would say these men that turned the world upside down have come hither.

And so Jesus says, Yes, you are going to drink of my cup and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with. Maybe referring to their martyrdom in the end of their life. But he said to sit on my right hand and on my left.

That is not mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared to my father. Again, we see some qualifications here. If you're willing to walk with Jesus Christ and to live the same way he did and suffer the same things he did, you then definitely can be considered great.

Verse 24. And when the ten heard it, they were moved with indignation against the two brethren. But Jesus called them unto him and said, You know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them.

That's talking about position. And they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you.

But whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister. Whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant. We see the same language here.

Those that are least shall be greatest. Those that are greatest shall be least. We see here that the the greatest shall be a servant.

The chief should be the greatest should be a minister. The chief should be a servant. Verse 28 qualifications, qualifications of greatness.

Even as even as what? Even as the son of man, he came not to be ministered unto, but to minister and to give his life a ransom. I would like to give you that one ingredient that will equate greatness in your life. It's just one word and it is this Christ Christ likeness.

We see in here that if you're willing to follow Jesus Christ, if you're willing to suffer as he has suffered, if you're willing to walk as he has walked, if you're willing to serve the same way he served Christ likeness, that's greatness. And I want to tell you, this is a greatness that cannot does not have any competition. Have you ever heard someone say to someone else? I'm greater than you are because I'm more Christ like we don't hear that.

Do we? I'm greater than you because I'm more Christ like no. But when you talk about arm wrestling, young men, I'm greater than you because I can put your arm down. I don't think there's much competition when it comes to this greatness.

You know what else I think? I think it's only God that can really decide whether you're great or not. I talked about some of those men that we revere like a DL Moody and Hudson Taylor and John Wesley. But you know what? We don't know their private life.

God is the only one that knows what the thoughts are behind the scenes when the doors are closed, when no one else is there. Are you like Jesus then? Or are you not? So it's God that has to decide who is really great. I don't think there's any competition in this one.

I think we can all run for the mark with all that we got. But the problem is running within our fleshly blood in our veins is that desire for position and abilities, position and abilities. And until we repent of that, until we repent of that, I don't think we can get the greatness that Jesus Christ is offering to us.

Now, let us see if we can unlock some of these scriptures. Let's look at that scripture we talked about earlier. It said, Verily, I say unto you, among them that are born of women, there has not risen a greater than John the Baptist, notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

I think we need to understand that John the Baptist was the last prophet of the Old Testament. It was before the Holy Spirit has come. Today, you're bought with a price.

You're the temple of God, and God dwells in your temple. So I think what he's saying here, yes, John the Baptist had a very prominent position, very prominent position. But if you're willing to allow Jesus Christ to sit on the throne of your heart, if you're willing to be Christlike, if you're willing to forsake all to follow Jesus Christ, then even if you're the least of the least, because you're Christlike, the Bible says that'll be great.

We have the parable of the householder who made an agreement, no matter how long they worked, that they would get paid a penny a day just to seem so unfair that that would happen. But I want to tell you today, you could have been one of the prophets, like the prophet Isaiah or the prophet Jeremiah, and stood and prophesied to the people of God for many, many years, or the prophet Ezekiel. You could have been John the Baptist, who was a forerunner of Jesus Christ.

You could have been one of the disciples or the apostles. You could have had a part to do in putting down the pages of this scripture. But it doesn't matter if you're living in 2009, if you will be willing to give your life to Jesus Christ.

If you're willing to live for Jesus Christ, you can get that paid that penny at the end of the day. You don't have to wish you had that prominent position back there that the disciples had or that the others had. Matthew 5 19 says, whosoever therefore shall break one of the least these least commandments and shall teach men.

So he should be called the least in the kingdom of heaven. And I'll tell you right now, that's one I don't understand. But that's what the Bible says.

I don't see how you can break a commandment and teach men so and still be called at least the least in the kingdom of God. But I'm sure you're with me. I don't want to be called least in the kingdom of God.

I want to run the race with patience so that I can have a crown at the end. It goes on to say, but whosoever shall do and teach, do and teach, then the same should be called great in the kingdom of heaven. Do you remember another verse somewhere that refers to Jesus Christ in a similar matter? It says in Acts chapter one, the former treatise, have I made O Theophilus of all that Jesus began to both do and teach.

And so if you're willing to follow the Lord Jesus Christ and you're willing to do those things that he asked of you and to teach men. So he says, even though you're the least, you will be the greatest. You know how it was with the Pharisees.

Jesus warned his disciples. You hear what they say. You see their actions.

You may do as they say, but don't do as they do. And so it could be me in the pulpit. I could preach a tremendous sermon to you.

But if I'm not willing to walk in the ways of Jesus Christ and walk out those things, there is no greatness. But it's to those who do and teach. Matthew 18 one.

At the same time came the disciples under Jesus saying, who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? And Jesus called a little child onto him and set him in the midst. Jesus called a little child, set him in the midst of them and said, Verily, I say unto you, except you be converted and become as little children, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever, therefore, shall humble himself as this little child.

The same is what greatest. The same is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Now, if you're a Bible school student, you were sitting here one day and one of your teachers said to you, why? Why do.

Why does Jesus in humility refer to a little child? And we often hear, oh, it's because of their sweet spirits, forgiving spirit. And they're just so innocent. And he said to you, I don't really consider that to be the most important ingredient.

But he said, because there are followers, their followers. And so in light of that, then we could say whosoever therefore shall humble himself as a little child and be a follower of Jesus Christ. The same is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

Robert, Robert Murray, McCain said, it's not great talent to God blesses as much as likeness to Jesus. It's not great talent from. It's not great talent whom God blesses so much as likeness to Jesus Christ.

I want to present to you today that being Christlike is the standard that God holds, that Jesus Christ holds, whether you're great or whether you're small, whether you're the least or whether you're the greatest, whether you will be last of all, because you're first in this world or whether you'll be first because you're last in this world. The true, true test of greatness, the true test of greatness comes by how much am I like Jesus Christ? Others may have their positions. Others may have their abilities.

These are counted so small in light of the greatness that we can have by being like Jesus Christ. And the question comes, how much am I really like? We're going to hold up a measuring stick. We're going to hold up a measuring stick.

How much are you really like Christ? And then you can decide between you and the Holy Spirit, between you and God. You can decide whether you fit in the category of those that are first in this world and last when it comes to the kingdom of God or whether you're last in this world and first. Because of Christ likeness, 1 John 4, 17 says herein is our love made perfect that we may have boldness in the day of judgment, because as he is, as he is in the world, so are we.

Really, is that true? We can have boldness on the day of judgment. And I stand before God, the creator of the whole world, stand at the end of my life and give account of my life. There is one thing that is going to

keep you and that is going to be boldness in your heart to stand and not fear to stand before him.

It's not how many people you necessarily witness to. It's not how many people came to Christ. It's not how many tremendous sermons you have preached.

The yardstick that God is going to use, the yardstick that is going to bring boldness in your heart to be able to stand before the creator of the whole universe is the yardstick. That the way he lived in the world is the way I this kind of greatness. Christ likeness will give us a tremendous amount of boldness in the day of judgment, because as Christ is, so are we.

Second Corinthians 3:18, but we all with open face beholding as in a glass, the glory of the Lord are changed into the same image from glory to glory that is by the spirit of the Lord. There's some qualifications given here that the spirit of the Lord has to be working in our lives to changes from glory to glory. I would like to say if you're seeking after greatness, you need to be born again.

You need to be saved. If you're going to follow after Christ likeness, you need to have your sins forgiven. You need to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you need to make him the captain of your salvation.

Have to be. There is no other way. But we all with open face.

This is talking about from the Old Testament. There was a veil and the veil separated between the holy and the holiest of holies. But that was rent.

It was torn open. We can now gaze right into the face of the Lord Jesus Christ through the word of God. And as we gaze into the word of God, we are changed from glory to glory into his wonderful image.

There was in an Italian city, a statue, a statue stands in an Italian city of a Grecian maiden with a beautiful face, a graceful figure and a noble expression. One day there was a poor little peasant girl came face to face with this beautiful statue. She stood and she stared and then went home to wash her face and to comb her hair.

The next day she came again to stand before the statue and then to return home once more. This time she mended her clothes and day by day she changed. Her form grew more graceful.

Her face more refined until she greatly reflected the famous statue. She was transformed in appearance, in appearance. And just so the spiritual man must each day seek to conform to the perfect image of our Lord and savior, Jesus Christ.

First, John three verses two and three says, Beloved, now are we the sons of God? It does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him for we shall see him as he is. Do you believe that someday we're going to appear before Jesus Christ? We are going to see him as he is. The Bible goes on to say every man has this hope of seeing the Lord Jesus Christ.

Every man to have this hope in him, he purifies himself, even as the Lord Jesus Christ is pure. The yardstick today for greatness is Christ likeness. Let me ask you a question.

This whole thought of being Christlike and standing before the mirror of the word of God and gazing upon the pages of this Bible, gazing upon the Lord Jesus Christ until you are made into his very image. How many I wonder in here this morning would say that their devotional time is dry? There's no life there. How many of us in here can hardly get up in the morning to read our Bible because it's just simply a religious

duty? I would like to give you something today that should inspire you to climb out of bed the first time the alarm rings because I want to get before Jesus Christ.

I want to look into the words of the pages of this book until I'm conformed into his image. That's a whole lot better than just going through my religious duty of reading my Bible. Brothers and sisters, you get to be Christlike.

The yardstick is to be like Christ and so it should motivate us to get out of bed in the morning because I want to gaze upon the Lord Jesus Christ and to be made into his image. I think one of the curses in the alarm clock is that of the snoozer. I wonder how many in here push the snoozer one time, two times, three times.

How many of us set the clock way ahead so that it rings way ahead so I do have time to push the snoozer how many times and still get up on time? I was there myself. I was there myself. I think it's a curse.

But I think if we get this desire to be like Jesus Christ running in our veins, why, when it comes morning time, we're ready to get up because we want to get into the book and we want to look at Jesus Christ until we're transformed into his very image. And I know there are times, especially I always think of you mothers who didn't get any sleep at night because of a fussy baby. It's no condemnation.

God understands those things. I'm talking about those who had time. They have the ability to get to bed on time.

They have the ability to get up when the alarm clock rings and to get alone with God and look in the pages of his book so that we are transformed into his image. There is nothing to compare with this greatness of being like Christ. I asked you the question, what would people say about you? What would people's estimation be about you? I know it isn't very fair because I can look so godly in the public and then in my private life and the things I listen to and the things I read could be so ungodly and give a false impression.

But I want to ask you, people will know you. It will come out. What would they say about you? There was a minister.

He was filling in for a young boy's class. And he asked this question. What do you think Jesus was like? What do you think Jesus was like? Doubtless, he, the pastor, expected an answer like, well, he was a good man or he was a poet or he was a carpenter or he was like God.

But no, that wasn't the answer. One little fellow raised his hand and replied. I think Jesus was like my Sunday school teacher.

I think Jesus was like my Sunday school teacher. Has anyone compared your demeanor and your deeds to those of Jesus Christ? Romans 8, 29 says, For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his son. Those that he did foreknow, he also did predestinate.

Those that get born again, he planned that you will be made into the likeness and image of his son, that he, Jesus, might be the first born among many brethren. I like another translation. It says, For God knew his people in advance.

God knew his people in advance and he chose them to become like his son so that his son would be the first born with many brothers and sisters. Many brothers and sisters. There was a lady by the name of

Miss Catherine Dick.

She was in charge of a youth camp near Abadan, Nigeria. She was so well appreciated, so well appreciated. She is a citizen of Nigeria.

It was a man that put on the trunk of his car. If you want to know God, see Miss Dick. If you want to know God, see Miss Dick.

I want to ask you the question. Where do you come when it comes to the yardstick that God uses for greatness? Second, Peter one forces whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises that by these you might be partakers of the divine nature. God has given us so many beautiful promises, so many beautiful, great and precious promises in the word of God.

And the reason he has given them is so that we will become like him. We will be conformed into the divine nature of Jesus Christ, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. Are we Christlike? It's the question we need to ask ourselves.

Are we Christlike? Are we Christlike? There's a story of a young man. He says it had been a trying week at our love and action office. He worked at a would have been a where they helped out souls that were in the pits of sin.

Love and action office at five o'clock on Friday. He said, I was looking forward to having a quiet dinner with friends. The work is over.

I'm going home. I get to go out with my friends and have a good evening. And then he says, the phone rang, Jeff, it's Jimmy.

I heard a quivering voice say, Jimmy, who suffered from several AIDS related illnesses, illnesses was one of our regular clients. Jeff, I'm really sick. I've got a fever.

Please help. Jeff's testimony was I was angry. I was angry after a 60 hour work week.

I didn't want to hear from Jimmy. But I promised to be right over. But still, during the drive over, I complained to God about the inconvenience.

The moment I walked in the door, he said I could smell the vomit. Jimmy was on the sofa, shivering and in distress. I wiped his forehead.

They got a bucket of soapy water to clean up the mess. I managed to maintain a facade of concern, even though he said I was raging inside. Jimmy's friend, Russ, who also had AIDS, came downstairs and the odor made Russ sick, too.

And as I cleaned, Jeff said, as I cleaned the carpet also around Russ's chair, I was ready to explode inside. Then Russ startled me. He said, I understand.

I understand. Jimmy, what Russ said, Jimmy, the two sick fellows were talking together. I understand.

I understand. Watch Ross. Jimmy asked weekly.

I understand who Jesus is. Russ said through tears. He's like Jeff.

He's like Jeff weeping. Just as weeping. I hugged Russ and prayed with him.

And that night, Russ trusted in Jesus Christ as his personal savior. A God who had used me to show his love in spite of myself. My brothers and sisters.

Holding God's measuring stick up to your life. I want to ask you the question. Do you have greatness in this life position and abilities that you're seeking after? Or are you seeking after the greatness of the kingdom of God? And that's being Christlike.

There was the young son of a noble consecrated pastor who became very ill after the boy had undergone an exhaustive series of tests. The father was told the shocking news that his son had terminal illness. The youngster had accepted Christ as his savior.

So the minister knew that death would usher him into glory. But he wondered how to inform him that he soon would die. After earnestly seeking the direction of the Holy Spirit.

The father went with a heavy heart through the hospital ward to the boy's bedside. It says first he read a passage of scripture and had a time of prayer with his dear son. Then he gently told him that the doctors could promise him only a few more days to live.

And the father asked the son. Are you afraid to die, my son? Are you afraid to die? Says blinking away a few tears. The little fella said bravely.

No, not if Jesus is like you, dad. Not if Jesus Christ is like you, dad. What would others say about your life? Let me ask you the question.

True greatness comes being like Jesus Christ, Christ likeness. Are you willing to forfeit that for some position or some ability? That gets a few honors in this world. You might have a whole shelf full of souvenirs because of some of the things you've done.

But I tell you, that is not compared to the greatness that we can get through being like Jesus Christ and spending eternity with him in heaven. We need to repent of the pride that we have when we consider our positions or our abilities. How much do they mean to us? The question is asked.

If we hurt when others win or others get a position we wanted, then we know that it means too much to us. Then we know that it means too much to us. I think it is very important.

I think it is very important to be academically fit. But if we are academically fit at the expense of being Christlike, then we will be deeply disappointed one day. While a few philosophers and religionists of pre-Christian times have seen the fallacy in man's idea of greatness and exposed it, it was Christ Jesus who located, who located true greatness and showed how it could be attained.

He said, whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister, and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant. It is that simple and that easy, but yet that difficult. It is that simple and that easy, but yet that difficult.

The ease and simplicity are there for anyone to see. We have to but follow Christ in service to human race, a selfless life that asks only to serve, and greatness will be ours. That is all, but it is too much, for it runs counter to all that is Adam in us.

Adam still feels the instinct for dominion. He hears deep within him the command, replenish the earth and subdue it, and he does not take kindly to the command to serve. And there lies the confusion.

There lies the contradiction that sin has brought, for sin is the trouble after all, and sin must go. Sin must go. Sin must go, and Adam must give way to Jesus Christ, so says our Lord in effect.

By sin, men have lost dominion, even the very right to it, until they win it back by humble service in being Christlike. Joshua served Moses for many years, and thus his character was so molded and shaped through servanthood, that God could then use that godly character to catch the attention of all the people in Israel. We know how Joshua, it's said that in Joshua chapter 1, that God started lifting up Joshua in the eyes of all the people, and giving him prominence, but I believe that Joshua learned to serve Moses for many, many years prior to that, and it wasn't because Joshua was just a leader now, but it was because Joshua learned to be a servant, not because of his prominent position.

So you and I, though our flesh recoils at the thought of serving, this is where true greatness is fitted. This kind of greatness runs counter to all humanistic thinking, and it is only the ones that get close enough to hear that still small voice that so sweetly dispels in the ear the words. True greatness is only found in being like Christ, that we will ever lay all else aside to find this gem.

To the believer who has heard that note that is close to the heart of our Savior, he it is that will not be dominated by the urge to find greatness in a position, or in the strength of his arms, or the wonderful, winsome abilities that he has, but will lay all of those aside to reach for, yes, to contend for that prize of greatness, and that to be made in the likeness of Jesus Christ. What price are you willing to give for the greatness that is a part of the kingdom of God? Are you willing to be Christ-like? You need to ask yourself the question, what do people see in my life? What is my life really like when I'm all by myself in the quietness of my closet or behind the closed door? Am I really Christ-like? God is measuring you today. I'm not measuring you.

God is measuring you, whether you're great, whether you're first, or whether you're last, whether you're the least, or whether you're greatness by your life. Are you really following Jesus Christ, and is your life Christ-like? I wonder how many in here are willing to repent. Repent of thinking and living in a way that we think that position and abilities are what brings greatness.

We're seeking after them. I wonder how many are willing to repent of that, and are willing to seek after the greatness that is found through being like Jesus Christ. There is only a few.

Jesus Christ said, many, many say, there are many that say, Lord, Lord. Many. Many that say that, but there are only a few.

There's only a few. Straight is the gate, narrow is the way. Few there be that find it.

I wonder how many people are willing to seek after the greatness that comes through being Christ-like. Broad is the gate, wide is the road that leads to destruction, and many there be that go in thereat. I wonder how many are willing to lay down the earthly pursuit of greatness, and to be able to give their lives, and to be Christ-like.

And so as with that pastor's son, as the son looked into the face of the father, said, I am not afraid of meeting Jesus, if he's like you. If he's like you. Let's pray together.

Heavenly Father, we want to thank you for your word, and again for showing us in your word what is true greatness. Sometimes we are perplexed about the whole idea of greatness. That the least will be the greatest.

He that is first will be last. He that is last will be first. Sometimes it's so hard to understand.

But we see in your word today that being Christ-like is the yardstick that you're using, Father. And we acknowledge there is no competition in this, because you're the one who's going to decide whether we are really great or whether we are not. I pray for each one that is under the sound of our voice.

That deep within our hearts we would be ready and willing to lay down the earthly, carnal, fleshly way of thinking. That position and abilities are the way to greatness. And be willing to make Jesus Christ Lord and Savior in control of our lives.

And to sit and stand before you, before the pages of your word, in our time of prayer and fellowship with you. And gaze upon the Lord Jesus Christ until those around us would say, in him or in her I see Jesus Christ. Oh God, help us and deliver us.

We are such needy creatures. We have so many needs. We are so prone to giving way to the flesh.

So prone to giving in to the desires and pursuits of our fleshly desires. But give us the grace, Father, to pursue with all of our heart, all of our mind, all of our soul, all of our strength. To pursue first the kingdom of God and his righteousness.

Bless each one that's here. May your grace flow into our hearts and our lives by your spirit, for we pray it in Jesus' name. And for your glory with thanksgiving.

Amen. God bless you and thank you.

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