



## “We’re #1”

### Luke 9:46-56

Jan. 8, 2023

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“What do you think of the candidates?” That’s what a reporter for a news magazine asked a young woman at Dartmouth University after a debate among presidential hopefuls. She didn’t say a word about their positions on the issues or their skill at debate. She simply remarked, “None of them seems to have any humility.”

#### 46 An argument started among them as to which of them might be the greatest.

- It is in the cracks and crevices in the Word, that we get some great truths to apply to our lives.
- Luke is going to give us 3 examples of straightforward teaching regarding, pride, arrogance, and authority.

#### EXAMPLE #1 OF PRIDE: “I am the greatest”

- So here we have an argument among the disciples over who is the greatest. “an argument” – διαλογίζομαι - think out carefully, reason thoroughly, consider carefully, weighing something in the mind.

- “I saw the transfiguration”
- “I healed 3 people yesterday”
- “I cast out a demon today”
- “I am the closest to Jesus”
- “I am Jesus’ favorite”

- Why are they jockeying for position? Because they think Jesus is about to set up His Kingdom. They want a high position. Pride, Arrogance.
- They want to create a ranking of who is the greatest. Who is #1?
- That’s the thinking of the world. The world is concerned about social status, who’s #1, who is in a place of authority.

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#### **47 But Jesus, knowing what they were thinking in their heart, took a child and stood him by His side,**

- Jesus knew exactly what was in their heart. Notice “heart” is singular. The problem of pride is common to all men.
- When pride is involved, look at a child.
- Jesus’ pulls a child to His side – a place of prominence.
- A child was the lowest ranking person in that society. Rabbi’s said if under 12, don’t waste your time on them.
- Children –
  - Haven’t accomplished anything.
  - Haven’t contributed anything to society.
  - Are weak.
  - Insignificant.
  - Have no status.
  - Couldn’t care less about the status of adults in the room.
  - All are on a level playing field.
- Jesus takes the most insignificant person in society and puts him in a place of prominence.

“Now, a child has no influence at all. A child cannot advance a man’s career, nor enhance a man’s prestige. A child cannot give us things; it’s the other way around. A child needs things. A child must have things done for him. And so Jesus is saying, “If a man welcomes the poor, ordinary people, the people who have no influence, and no wealth, and no power, the people who need things done for them, then he’s welcoming me. And more than that, he’s welcoming God.”

- William Barclay

#### **Matt 18:1-6**

- 1 At that time the disciples came to Jesus and said, "Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?"
- 2 And He called a child to Himself and set him before them,
- 3 and said, "Truly I say to you, unless you are converted and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.
- 4 "Whoever then humbles himself as this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.
- 5 "And whoever receives one such child in My name receives Me;
- 6 but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him to have a heavy millstone hung around his neck, and to be drowned in the depth of the sea.

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#### **48 and said to them, "Whoever receives this child in My name receives Me, and whoever receives Me receives Him who sent Me; for the one who is least among all of you, this is the one who is great."**

- In God’s kingdom, it is the least that are great. In God’s kingdom everyone is a child. Everyone is on the same level. Everyone is the least and the greatest.
- Beware of titles and robes. False religion is full of them.
- Biblical Christianity is not a scramble to reach the top, but a scramble to reach the bottom.
- Jesus is saying to the disciples and to us, “I don’t care who you are, what you have done. I don’t care about your healings, the number of demons you have cast out, the miracles you have performed, or if you were on the mountain. What matters is, “Are you humble? Is your life characterized by humility?”
- So you count the insignificant, the needy, the helpless, the weak, those with no status as important as anyone else.
- if you do, you walk in humility.
- Jesus is teaching 2 things:
  1. We are all little children. We are the least. No one is greater than another. All are to walk in humility.
  2. Therefore, if we walk in humility we will receive and serve others who are the least among us.

#### **Phil 2:3-8**

- 3 Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with **humility** of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves;
- 4 do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.
- 5 Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus,
- 6 who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped,
- 7 but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men.
- 8 Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

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## Phil 1:15-18

- 15 Some, to be sure, are preaching Christ even from envy and strife, but some also from good will;  
16 the latter do it out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel;  
17 the former proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition rather than from pure motives, thinking to cause me distress in my imprisonment.  
18 What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed; and in this I rejoice.

## 49 John answered and said, "Master, we saw someone casting out demons in Your name; and we tried to prevent him because he does not follow along with us."

### EXAMPLE #2 OF PRIDE: "Us four and no more."

- This is the problem of exclusivity.
- John is saying, "If you are not a part of our party, our tribe, then your ministry should be shut down."
- The problem was not that this person was doing something theologically or doctrinally wrong. The problem, to John, was that this person was doing it outside the confines of John's group of disciples.
- John wanted to have exclusive rights to what he was doing. Pride. Arrogance.
- It is also jealousy. The 9 disciples couldn't cast out a demon but this person could, so let's shut him down. Their pride had been hurt.
- The business world is filled with this attitude. Competition, pride, arrogance.
- The Church has this as well. Competition among churches, pastors, evangelists, seminaries, Bible schools, Christian organizations. Who has the biggest building, the greatest ministry, the most programs, the best worship and music, the most converts, can raise the most money, the largest congregation?
- People like to play "spiritual king of the mountain." Knock everyone off.

## 50 But Jesus said to him, "Do not hinder him; for he who is not against you is for you."

- Jesus says, "Just because the person is not a part of "Us four and no more", doesn't mean he doesn't have a right to have a ministry.
- If you love Christ, if you love the truth, if you love His Word, then you have a right as much as anybody to have a ministry.
- The line is very clear: Someone is either fighting against you and the cause of Christ or they are fighting for you and the cause of Christ. No gray area.
- This does not in any way stop us from helping people or churches that are in doctrinal error. (Corinthians, Galatians, Thessalonians, Colossians, Hebrews, Jude) But Paul never shut these churches down.

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**EXAMPLE #3 OF PRIDE:** *"We can destroy them."*

- Interesting that it says "His ascension". Not His death, burial or resurrection but His ascension. We already are seeing victory beyond the cross. No grave will hold Him.
- This looks beyond the injustice of His trial. This looks beyond a cowardly judge. This looks beyond an angry crowd. This looks beyond the pain and the suffering.

**Heb 12:2**

2 fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the **joy set before Him** endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

"determined" – set His face. Firm resolve. Unshakable.

**Gen 31:21**

21 So he fled with all that he had; and he arose and crossed the Euphrates River, and **set his face** toward the hill country of Gilead.

**Isa 50:7**

For the Lord God helps Me,

Therefore, I am not disgraced;

\*Flint is a hard stone. Figure of speech for hardness, toughness, resolve.

- So Jesus pivots here. Points south.

**52 and He sent messengers on ahead of Him, and they went and entered a village of the Samaritans to make arrangements for Him.**

- As was their method, messengers were sent ahead to find a place to stay and where to eat.
- So they are planning to go through Samaria.

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**53 But they did not receive Him, because He was traveling toward Jerusalem.**

- The Samaritans hated the Jews and vice versa.
- The Samaritan race came about when the Assyrians caused foreigners to intermarry with the few remaining Israelites after the fall of the northern kingdom in 722 BC. The Samaritans rewrote some of the Mosaic Law and changed the names and places so that Abraham offered Isaac on Mount Gerazim instead of Moriah, and the feasts were all celebrated in Shechem instead of Jerusalem.
- The feud with the Jews was so bitter that they would not help anyone travel to Jerusalem, though apparently they did not mind receiving Galileans as such. Josephus tells us that Samaritans were not averse to ill-treating pilgrims going up to Jerusalem, even to the extent of murdering them on occasion.
- Furthermore the Samaritans had lost their temple in 128 BC and were jealous of the Jew who worshipped at the magnificent Herodian temple.
- So there would be no aid, no help, no hospitality.

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## Today we have the same problem as James and John –

1. **Social justice.** We get so angry with those caught up in the movement, with being woke, with intersectionality, with white privilege, with BLM, etc. that we forget these are the people we are trying to reach with the gospel. It is dividing the Church.
2. **Politics.** This is a huge problem.
  - We know both sides of the aisle have anger and hatred for one another, like Jews and Samaritans. It is tearing our country apart. Many Christians find themselves aligned with a political party and join into that hatred. They would frankly, never find themselves sharing the gospel with the other side. They would rather "call down fire" and wipe them out. Then they could achieve their objectives for our country.
  - But Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world." (Jn. 18:36) Believers live in a different kingdom. Their kingdom is not for political power. Its not to gain authority and prestige which will lead to pride. Their goal is not to proclaim that we are the greatest. We are on a different mission. We are not exclusive. We are inclusive. All Republicans and all Democrats and all independents can come in humility to the foot of the cross for salvation. Do we vote? Absolutely! But to get caught up in the fray and emotion of politics is not biblical.
  - That should be the goal for all believers – to share the gospel with everyone, with all who are in political parties, those in the White House, in the Congress, in the Supreme Court, in state and local governments, down to the local school board.
  - The Bible is clear: You are either in the kingdom of darkness or the kingdom of light, regardless of your political affiliation. There is no gray area. We want to reach those in the darkness.
  - Politics has divided the Church, caused pastors to resign, and sent many a young person straight out the doors of the Church because of the hypocrisy (anger, hatred, disdain) that they see in those within the Church. Jesus would say to us,  
"You do not know what kind of spirit you are of;"

## 54 When His disciples James and John saw this, they said, "Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?"

- Where did they ever get this idea to call down fire from heaven?

## 2 Kings 1:9-10

- 9 Then the king sent to him a captain of fifty with his fifty. And he went up to him, and behold, he was sitting on the top of the hill. And he said to him, "O man of God, the king says, 'Come down.'"
- 10 Elijah replied to the captain of fifty, "If I am a man of God, let fire come down from heaven and consume you and your fifty." Then fire came down from heaven and consumed him and his fifty.
- This passage tells a time for judgment for rejecting the true God. This is not the situation here with the Samaritans.
  - James and John were known as "sons of thunder" (Mark 3:17) and now maybe "sons of lightning."
  - James and John in their hatred and arrogance wanted to "fry" the Samaritans. They might have also been thinking about Sodom and Gomorrah.
  - "We are on our way to Jerusalem to set up the kingdom. Don't hinder us."
  - Jesus, back in Luke 9:5 told them what to do if people reject them –
- Luke 9:4-5**
- 4 "Whatever house you enter, stay there until you leave that city.
- 5 "And as for those who do not receive you, as you go out from that city, shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them."

## 55 But He turned and rebuked them, [and said, "You do not know what kind of spirit you are of;

- This reaction really angered Jesus.
  - They didn't realize the source of their reaction. It was not the Holy Spirit but the spirit of this world.
  - Consider:
    1. These are the people they are supposed to reach with the gospel. Somehow that mission had gotten lost.
    2. Look at the examples in Scripture of Samaritans –
      - Good Samaritan. (Luke 10)
      - The Samaritan woman at the well. (John 4)
      - When the first wave of persecution hit the early church, Philip headed to Samaria to preach (Acts 8).
      - Acts 1:8 includes Samaria –
- 8 but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and **Samaria**, and even to the remotest part of the earth."

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This is why Christ came –

**John 3:16-17**

16 "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.

17 "For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him.

**John 10:10**

10 "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.

**Luke 19:10**

10 "For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost."

- So they went to another village.

**Application**

1. The Church is not a business where people are seeking promotion to be the one on top.
2. All believers are on equal ground. In God's eyes we all are the least and we all are the greatest. No titles, no rank, no authority. Therefore no pride.
3. We must be careful not to get pulled into the wretched, evil hatred and anger of this world which only serves the flesh and quenches the Spirit.
4. You are never more Christ-like than when you are serving others in humility.
5. Pattern your life after Jesus Christ who walked His entire life in humility and after death was exalted on high. No one has ever gone lower and no one has ever gone higher.