

Least In The Kingdom - Luke 7:24-28

MAN'S EVALUATION OF GREATNESS: 7:24-25

Matt. 11:7-11 (Same message)

**The young man was excited about preaching his first sermon in his home church. After three years in seminary, he felt adequately prepared, and when he was introduced to the congregation, he walked boldly to the pulpit, his head high, radiating self-confidence.*

But he stumbled reading the Scriptures and then lost his train of thought halfway through the message. He began to panic, so he did the safest thing: He quickly ended the message, prayed, and walked dejectedly from the pulpit, his head down, his self-assurance gone.

Later, one of the godly elders whispered to the embarrassed young man, "If you had gone up to the pulpit the way you came down, you might have come down the way you went up." The elder was right. God still resists the proud but gives grace to the humble.

GOD'S EVALUATION OF PURPOSE: 7:26-27a

Malachi 3:1 Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts.

Luke 1:17 And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.

What made John so great? Why did the people view him as great? How did John see himself? Did he see himself as great?

JESUS' EVALUATION OF GREATNESS: 7:28f

...but he that is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.

**Leonard Bernstein, the late conductor of the New York Philharmonic orchestra, was once asked to name the most difficult instrument to play. Without hesitation, he replied, "The second fiddle. I can get plenty of first violinists, but to find someone who*

can play the second fiddle with enthusiasm - that's a problem. And if we have no second fiddle, we have no harmony."

Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. Matt 11:11

Important questions come to mind when I read this passage:

*What does it mean to be "least in the kingdom of God?"

*What can I do in my life that could be greater than John?

**Henry Augustus Rowland, professor of physics at Johns Hopkins University, was once called as an expert witness at a trial. During cross-examination a lawyer demanded, "What are your qualifications as an expert witness in this case?" The normally modest and retiring professor replied quietly, "I am the greatest living expert on the subject under discussion." Later a friend well acquainted with Rowland's disposition expressed surprise at the professor's uncharacteristic answer. Rowland answered, "Well, what did you expect me to do? I was under oath."*

TO BE GREATER THAN JOHN WE MUST:

*Never See Ourselves as Great, but Servants of a Great God - Cf. Romans 6:17-22
Cf. For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake. for God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us. 2 Cor 4:5-7*

Remember, That Being True Servants of God's Greatness Is More Important in Eternity than Fame and Power- Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men. Eph 6:6-7

**On his way to a reception held in his honor, Ulysses S. Grant got caught in a shower and offered to share his umbrella with a stranger walking in the same direction. The man said he was going to Grant's reception out of curiosity; he had never seen the general. "I have always thought that Grant was a much overrated man," he said. "That's my view also," Grant replied.*

Know Who We Are in Christ and Follow His Example

1 Pet. 2:21 For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps:

Earthly Power and Fame Come Only to a Few in this World, but Greatness in Eternity May Come to All Who Follow Christ ...but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you. Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you. John 15:15-16

**Wakefield tells the story of the famous inventor Samuel Morse who was once asked if he ever encountered situations where he didn't know what to do. Morse responded, "More than once, and whenever I could not see my way clearly, I knelt down and prayed to God for light and understanding." Morse received many honors from his invention of the telegraph but felt undeserving: "I have made a valuable application of electricity not because I was superior to other men but solely because God, who meant it for mankind, must reveal it to someone and He was pleased to reveal it to me."*

Seek Christ above All Things and Keep a Proper Perspective of Our Place in the World - If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. Col. 3:1-2

**Booker T. Washington, the renowned black educator, was an outstanding example of this truth. Shortly after he took over the presidency of Tuskegee Institute in Alabama, he was walking in an exclusive section of town when he was stopped by a wealthy white woman. Not knowing the famous Mr. Washington by sight, she asked if he would like to earn a few dollars by chopping wood for her. Because he had no pressing business at the moment, Professor Washington smiled, rolled up his sleeves, and proceeded to do the humble chore she had requested. When he was finished, he carried the logs into the house and stacked them by the fireplace.*

**A little girl recognized him and later revealed his identity to the lady. The next morning the embarrassed woman went to see Mr. Washington in his office at the Institute and apologized profusely. "It's perfectly all right, Madam," he replied. "Occasionally I enjoy a little manual labor. Besides, it's always a delight to do something for a friend."*

She shook his hand warmly and assured him that his meek and gracious attitude had endeared him and his work to her heart. Not long afterward she showed her admiration by persuading some wealthy acquaintances to join her in donating thousands of dollars to the Tuskegee Institute.

**When my daughter, Danae, was a teenager, she came home one day and said, "Hey, Dad! There's a great new game out. I think you'll like it. It's called Monopoly." I just smiled.*

We gathered the family together and set up the board. It didn't take the kids long to figure out that old Dad had played this game before. I soon owned all the best properties, including Boardwalk and Park Place. I even had Baltic and Mediterranean. My kids were squirming, and I was loving every minute of it.

About midnight I foreclosed on the last property and did a little victory dance. My family wasn't impressed. They went to bed and made me put the game away. As I began putting all of my money back in the box, a very empty feeling came over me. Everything that I had accumulated was gone. The excitement over riches was just an illusion. And then it occurred to me, Hey, this isn't just the game of Monopoly that has caught my attention; this is the game of life. You sweat and strain to get ahead, but then one day, after a little chest pain or a wrong change of lanes on the freeway, the game ends. It all goes back in the box. You leave this world just as naked as the day you came into it.

I once saw a bumper sticker that proclaimed, He who dies with the most toys wins. That's wrong. It should say, He who dies with the most toys dies anyway. - Dr. James Dobson