

Greatness in the Lord's Kingdom  
(Matthew 20:20-28)

Introduction:

1. This morning we showed from the Scriptures that God's kingdom was established in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost that followed the Lord's death, burial, and resurrection.
2. On the occasion that we read about in Matthew 20:20-28, the apostles showed that they had some mistaken ideas about how to be great in God's kingdom.
3. This was not the first or the last time that they demonstrated this problem.
  - a. They demonstrated it earlier in Matthew 18:1-4.
  - b. They demonstrated it again in Luke 22:24.
4. Although the apostles were mistaken, Jesus made it clear that the way to be great in His kingdom is through serving others.

Discussion:

- I. (vs.20-21) JAMES AND JOHN MADE A REQUEST OF JESUS
  - A. Their request was that they be given what they considered the 2 most prominent positions in the Lord's kingdom.
  - B. From Matthew's account it seems that this request came from their mother.
    1. However, in His response Jesus spoke to James and John -- not to their mother.
    2. (Mark 10:35) This request actually came from James and John.
    3. Perhaps James and John thought that Jesus would more likely grant their request if it appeared that their mother was making it.
- II. (vs.22-23) JESUS RESPONDED TO THEIR REQUEST
  - A. (vs.22) Jesus first asked them if they were able to suffer as He was about to suffer, and they said they were able.
  - B. (vs.23) Jesus let them know that they would suffer, but He also let them know that these 2 prominent positions were not His to give.
- III. (vs.24) THE OTHER APOSTLES BECAME INDIGNANT TOWARD JAMES AND JOHN
  - A. (Mark 10:41) They "*became much displeased with James and John.*"
  - B. The situation:
    1. Two apostles wanted what they thought were the greatest positions in the Lord's kingdom.
    2. The other apostles became angry with James and John.
    3. Jesus used this situation as an opportunity to teach all the apostles how to be great in His kingdom.
- IV. (vs.25-28) THE LORD'S RESPONSE TO THE SITUATION THAT HAD DEVELOPED
  - A. (vs.25) Jesus referred to the Gentile [Roman] government with its different levels of authority.
  - B. (vs.26a) Jesus said that His followers are not to act like the rulers of the Gentiles.
    1. The desire for preeminence is strongly condemned in the Bible (3 John 9-10).
    2. (1 Peter 5:3) Even the men appointed to be overseers are forbidden to be "*lords*" over the church.
  - C. (vs.26b-27) The way to become great in the Lord's kingdom is by being a minister and a servant (see Matthew 23:11-12).
  - D. In other words, we are to be like Christ (vs.28).

Conclusion:

1. The way to enter the Lord's kingdom is by being born again (John 3:3, 5).
2. After entering the Lord's kingdom, the way to become great is through serving others.
3. Service to others will be important at the judgment (Matthew 25:40, 45).