

The Greatest Among You

The following article is an excerpt from
“A Study of the Teachings of Jesus Christ”

Written by Joseph F. Harwood

Copyright 2021

<https://www.abookofbiblestudy.net/>

[Scripture quotations taken from the NASB](#)

Beginning in Mark 10:35, Jesus taught His disciples about those who would be great in the kingdom of God and what would be required of them. He continued His teaching in Mark 10:42-45, where we read:

Calling them to Himself, Jesus said to them, “You know that those who are recognized as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them; and their great men exercise authority over them. But it is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant; and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.” (Mark 10:42-45)

Greatness in the kingdom of God will be evaluated in a completely different way than greatness in the world. By the world’s standards, servants are numbered among the least, because they must take orders from those who have authority over them. However, from Jesus’ teaching in this passage we learn that in the kingdom of God, those who serve will be numbered among the greatest.

Paul taught in Philippians 2 that our attitude should be the same as Jesus had during His life on earth. He took the very nature of a servant, being obedient to God to the point of death, even the humiliating death of crucifixion where He was stripped, beaten, and nailed to a cross all according to the will of God, in order to accomplish for His people what they could not accomplish for themselves: the forgiveness of their sins and salvation (Matthew 1:21).

Just as Jesus did not come to be served, but to serve others and “to give His life as a ransom for many”, and just as He took the form of a servant, humbling Himself by being obedient to the point of death, so we also, as His followers, are called upon to humble ourselves in submission and obedience to the word of God, and some of us will be called upon to do so even to the point of physical death. We will all experience reflections of the sufferings of Christ in our own lives, in some measure, according to God’s plan and purpose for each of our lives individually.

When we strive to obey God regardless of what it may cost us, and regardless of what we may have to give up in temporal gratification in order to be obedient, then we also have humbled ourselves by being obedient to God’s word, as we deny ourselves or “die to” (Luke 9:23) anything we may desire that would involve sin. Whatever hardship God allows to touch our lives, and whatever temptation to violate the principles in His word we may experience, when we determine to obey Him as we have received instruction through His word, then we also have taken the very nature of a servant, putting His will above our own.

Just as Jesus came to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many, so we also, even if in some very small measure, will be called upon to give our lives as a “ransom”, so to speak, for others. For example, we may give up some of the financial resources that God has given to us so that someone else may benefit from our sacrifice. We may also be called upon to give up some of our time in an endeavor that benefits others, when we could have spent that time doing something to benefit ourselves.

Giving of ourselves to serve others, even in some very small measure when compared to Jesus’ sacrifice at Calvary, is for us a share in His sufferings and sacrifice, in that we too have given something of ourselves as a “ransom” for someone else so that they may benefit from our sacrifice. Such sacrifices are a manifestation of the love and mercy that will always accompany a genuine faith in Christ.

