

Mission 2021 – Striving for Greatness in the Kingdom

Matthew 18:1-35

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I. Refugees (2 Chr 11:13-17)

II. The Greatest in the Kingdom

A. Question #1 – Who is greatest in the kingdom of heaven? (1-20)

Our text begins with the disciples' question, "*Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?*" "*Kingdom of heaven*" means the same thing as "*kingdom of _____*." Pursuing greatness in God's kingdom is not the problem! (cf. 1 Cor 9:24) Defining greatness according to the world's standard is (cf. Rom 12:2). The world defines greatness by placing _____ or some other idol at the center; Jesus puts _____ at the center.

1. Answer – The one who humbles himself (2-4)

Jesus summarizes this God-centered focus with the word _____.

The humility of the child refers to the child's *identity*, *dependence*, and *calling*.

- First, *identity*. Only those who know God as their Father enter the kingdom. The most important thing about you is not _____ *you do* but _____ *you are*.
- Second, *dependence*. He who is *greatest in the kingdom* is he who recognizes his complete dependence upon his Father. "*What do you have, that you have not received? And if you have received it, why do you boast?*" (1 Cor 4:7 cf. Pr 17:6)
- Finally, *calling*. He who is *greatest in the kingdom* is the one who obeys his Heavenly Father, who places the Father's will above his own.

2. Warning A – Beware stumbling your brethren (5-9 cf. Mt 7:1-5)

The first warning (5-9) focuses upon how we should think about *our own sin* and the second (10-20) focuses upon our *brother's sin*. The order is incredibly important. Remember Jesus' exhortation (Mt 7:1-5):

And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me remove the speck from your eye'; and look, a plank is in your own eye? Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.

Jesus' first warning is to beware *stumbling* your brethren *through your own sin*. The great man cares for his brethren by governing himself. We must take extreme measures to deal with our own sin. Deal with it _____.

3. Warning B – Beware despising your brethren (10-20)

In the second warning, Jesus urges us, negatively, not to *despise* our brethren, and, positively, to *rebuke or correct* our brethren. We are to deal with our brother's sin _____ because God loves him; he too is God's child.

a. Don't despise your brethren (10-14 cf. Lev 19:16-18)

Leviticus helps us understand what it is to despise our brethren:

¹⁶You shall not go about as a talebearer among your people; nor shall you take a stand against the life of your neighbor: I am the LORD. ¹⁷You shall not hate your brother in your heart. You shall surely rebuke your neighbor, and not bear sin because of him. ¹⁸You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD. (Lev 19:16-18)

b. Do rebuke your brethren (15-20 cf. Pr 27:5-6)

"Open rebuke is better Than love carefully concealed. Faithful are the wounds of a friend, But the kisses of an enemy are deceitful" (Pr 27:5-6).

B. Question #2 – How often shall I forgive my brother? (21)

Peter chose *seven times* to emphasize a *generous* but *measured* response to a brother's sin.

1. Answer (22-34)

Jesus tells the story of the *unforgiving servant* to dispose of the *measured* element. The servant was forgiven an *immeasurable* sum and then refused to forgive a *healthy* sum. Jesus' point is that no matter how grievously you have been injured or wronged by your brother, your injury is negligible *in comparison to* what you have been forgiven by God. Jesus wants us to reckon how much greater is our sin against God than our brother's sin against us. If we are really dealing with our own sin _____ and our brother's sin _____, then we will realize that we need to forgive our brother *seventy times seven*.

2. Warning (35)

He who will not forgive his brother will not be _____. God will cast the *unforgiving* man or woman into hell. If we refuse to forgive our brother, then God will not forgive us.

III. The Pathway to Greatness

Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven? Jesus informs us that *the greatest in the kingdom of heaven is the child of God who deals with his own sin relentlessly while dealing with his brother's sin compassionately*.

IV. Conclusion