

5.6.C(35).Kingdom Service: Great to Last. Mark 9:30-37.

Read Mark 9:30-37.

³⁴ But they kept silent, for on the way they had argued with one another about who was **the greatest**. ³⁵ And he sat down and called the twelve. And he said to them, “If anyone would be **first**, he **must be last** of all and **servant** of **all**.”

³⁶ And he **took a child** and put him in the midst of them, and taking him in his arms, he said to them, ³⁷ “Whoever receives one such **child in my name receives me**, and whoever receives me, receives not me but him who sent me.”

Mark 9:34-37

Background:

As a disciple, you are an Heir of the Kingdom of God. The entirety, the rule, and the wealth of the Kingdom is to be yours when Mashiach possesses it all on his day. So, if the Kingdom and its fullness is yours, then you must take hold of the Kingdom even now, though it is still hidden.

So, as you reach maturity as a disciple, you are also called to live fully and responsibly in the kingdom. But, here is the complication. The Kingdom of God, established by the radiating *glorious life* of its Lord and King, Jesus Mashiach, runs counter to the fleshly kingdoms of earth. For, each earthly kingdom derives power through the flesh, and it maintains its power by fleshly domination.

In contrast, the Kingdom is first the House of the King, a household of reborn children of God,

who live with one another in the Spirit of unity and love. As members of one family, the family of God, these Heir-disciples embody and relate to one another by the shared and glorious life of the King, who is the source of a sanctifying righteousness which runs counter to the *flesh*. If the flesh is driven by Self-interest, the Spirit moves the family, and especially its mature and *great ones*, in sacrificial service.

So, let's consider how the *natural judgments* and assumptions of the flesh run counter to the Spirit's Kingdom dynamics.

Human Distinctions:

Status: True Greatness= Extensive Service.

Because the *flesh* is idolatrous, it usurps God's place of *Headship* and exalts itself as Self-important and Self-honoring in this life. So, this *fleshly ambition* and *self-interest* conceives of status as being "greater" than others. Greatness is

to acquire wealth and power at the expense of others, for the purpose of Self-honor and self-indulgence.

However, mature disciples distinguish themselves as having more authority by having more responsibility to serve. Greatness in the Kingdom means *greater responsibility and authority to serve*.

So, the distinction of being “first” or prominent in the kingdom is not for one’s own self-gratification, but rather, the complete opposite. To be first means to be the first in responsibility to serve, to sacrifice, and to help the others.

Case Study: Israel’s burden of being Firstborn.

There is a misconception that Israel has been withheld from its Mashiach due to its own failings, transgressions, or hardness. The idea of Israel’s unworthiness has been virulently propagated during the Church-age by misguided but ignorant sophists.

It is true that Israel bears responsibility for its choice to reject Jesus as its Mashiach. But, this rejection, in God's plan, is not due to a failure but for courageous sacrifice. For, as the Lord's Firstborn family of all the families of the earth (Exodus 4:22), Israel has the burden, the right, and the responsibility to bring *redemption* to all the other families of the earth *first* before Israel itself is redeemed.

That is the greater Kingdom purpose of Israel's wandering apart from Mashiach these two long days (two thousand years) after Mashiach was cut off on the cross (33 CE). As Paul predicts, once the "fullness" of the Gentiles comes in, then "All Israel will be saved" (Romans 11:25-26).

In this way, Jesus, the Heir and Firstborn of Humanity as "the Son of Man" and of the heavenly family as "the Son of God" has the sole right and responsibility to *redeem* his family from Satan's dark enslavement. So, in the

Kingdom, the foremost of Us bears the burden of suffering, sacrificing, and foregoing redemption until all the family is redeemed first. That is what Mashiach bears, and that is the burden Israel bears as the people of Abraham and David.

Consider how the Kingdom re-defines the ways that we must relate to one another in this *common life of Mashiach*, as Jesus teaches in the book of Matthew:

⁶ and they love the place of **honor** at feasts and the best seats in the synagogues ⁷ and greetings in the marketplaces and being called rabbi^[b] by others. ⁸ But you are not to be called rabbi, for you have **one teacher**, and you are all **brothers**.^[c] ⁹ And call no man your

father on earth, for you have one **Father**, who is in heaven. ¹⁰ Neither be called **instructors**, for you have one **instructor**, the Christ. ¹¹ The greatest among you shall be your **servant**. ¹² Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted. Matthew 23:6-11.

Role: Attributing Teaching- Self-ambition or Selfless Sharing.

In the world, there are certain “roles” that are more honorable and noteworthy than others. Because “standing” in the world depends on one’s accumulated accolades, recognition, and support, teachers distinguish themselves with their *proprietary teachings*—each teacher claims for the honor and sway of his “name.” So, in rabbinic

Judaism, there are teachers, but recognized teachers are called “rabbis”—great ones. And, the greatest of these have their names memorialized because their teachings are embraced as doctrines by their traditions.

But, Jesus warns that such distinctions within the Kingdom are unacceptable. In a worldly system like Judaism, each teacher stakes out a self-proclaimed authority of expertise, with different *spheres* of authority carving up the community into separate factions, like the *leaven* creating pockets of emptiness within the loaf.

Instead, Jesus instructs that there is only *one* who has the authority to be the source of all the teachings of the Kingdom, and that instructor is the Mashiach himself. All other teachers depend on, enforce, and clarify his authority through their teachings. Their teachings are always *dependent*, explanatory rather than inventive, *and faithful* rather than independent. Thus, only the

Mashiach's authority is recognized and all other teachers share this authority as *brothers* sharing the common bread given to them by the Mashiach.

Position: Proximity to Power: great or little?

In any social structures, it is inevitable that *power aggregates* and organizes. In worldly settings, the powerful who have dominated and extracted resources from others by their Self-promotion work together to maintain their control and their dominance.

But, who is truly powerful in the Kingdom of God, where there is only one seat of power, the throne of Jesus Mashiach and His Father. Who is positioned in places of *power and distinction* in the Kingdom?

We have already seen that “greatness” in the Kingdom means a greater responsibility to serve, to care for, and even to suffer and sacrifice. So, the *greatest* in the Kingdom suffers the most, for

he sacrifices for All in the Kingdom. Similarly, his supremacy and authoritative Word requires that his people share it equally, for the common good. So, selfish and *independent* teaching contrary to the Lord's purposes are not acceptable in the Kingdom, for that would create pockets of rebellion and division within the coherent family unity of the House.

But, how are the sons of the Kingdom **positioned**, relative to one another? Because there is only one source of power, the King of the Kingdom, who does the King choose to position?

In the world, the "Great Ones" come together because they have earned and accumulated "power" by their own hands. So, they come together, each in his own "right."

But, remember that the Kingdom has one source of power and glory. Not wealth, military might, or political influence. In the Kingdom, the King is its sole source of glorious life. So, the

distinguishing quality for those most highly valued, the ones distinguished among the brothers, are actually the ones most like “children” (9:36).

In the Kingdom’s unexpected thinking, the child who is most dependent, most needy, and the simplest in their devotion to the King, is the best *one to represent* the King in all his glory.

If the King gathered to himself a collection of Self-Rulers, accustomed to commanding and acting in their own authority, these would always resist and resent any intrusive power that would curb their own will.

But, a **child** simply follows his Lord to do his will. Scorned in the world by his simplicity, his impudent need for the King and his lack of Tradition-appealing thought, such a simpleton would be worthy of derision. But, in the King’s eyes, such a child is highly valued and of great use to the Kingdom. For, in the Kingdom, knowing the King in his glory is the highest position, for he says:

“my grace is sufficient for you. For, my power is made perfect in weakness.” (2 Corinthians 12:9).

In the Kingdom, children who are weak, who are helpless in themselves, but who draw near to the Lord unashamedly and know that they are dearly loved, such children perfectly reflect the Lord’s Kingdom glory!

And, in the spiritual realm, our inherent weakness and powerlessness is the actual reality. So, living with Jesus with the simple faith of a child positions you *closest* to Jesus and in a place of *Kingdom usefulness*!



However, remember this. Those close and highly useful in the Kingdom are overlooked on earth, for their value, though seen by the King, is hidden

from those who assume great places of significance on earth. Kingdom usefulness and position appear on earth to be inconsequential and foolish, having no impressive weight in the affairs of man.

As a *sacrificial shepherd*, be sure that your value and position in the simplicity of your childlike devotion and availability to the Lord is fed only by the *heavenly approval* of your Lord and God! For, even though you are overlooked on earth, your impact for the Kingdom will be one day recognized!

Case Study: Unknown in the Church.

One night, I was sitting before the Lord in my room in Hawaii, with the breeze reminding me of the Spirit's touch. As was my habit, I waited on the Lord and asked him what was on his mind and heart.

He let me know that there was a burden on his heart. There was a blockage keeping his Jewish people from coming to him. He wanted me to do something about it.

So, unrecognized by the church, I left to do field work for a graduate degree among the Jews of Chicago: reform, conservative, modern orthodox, ultra-orthodox. After around a decade in the field, a Jewish friend asked me: "Who are the parents of Jesus?" "Mary and the Holy Spirit." "We will give you that he may be the Son of God. But he can never be the Son of David." "Is inheritance by Mary? No, not through maternal line. Through Joseph? No, not through adoption." After years, I responded: "When God promises to "raise up seed" for David, he acts according to duty (yibbum) and redemptive right (geullah). Similar to the actions of Judah and Boaz, the Seed raised up is the son of two fathers: God and David."

The findings that both Jewish traditional interpretations and modern Jewish readings naturally lead Jewish readers down this trail of *toledot-zera* to 2 Samuel 7:12's promise was published in a journal, circulated, and published on this website. But, not only was this ignored by the Church, but even the Messianic Jewish community, which takes its theology from the church rather from a Torah-derived pathway.

Through this long process, I never expected any type of worldly recognition. But, the Lord has assured me that when Israel finally turns to Mashiach, they will know that He is the Seed raised up for David!

Focus:

1. Kingdom Service: Greatest suffers Most—future justice of resurrection) 8:30-31

2. Kingdom Greatness: Last and servant of all.

8:32-35

3. Kingdom Representative: Humble Child reveals Glorious Lord). 8:36-37

Consider:

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Question:

Further Discovery: