

November 27, 2016

I Want to Know Jesus

"I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead."
Philippians 3:10-11

"An argument started among the disciples as to which of them would be the greatest... 'For he who is least among you all—he is the greatest.'... 'No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God.'... 'What must I do to inherit eternal life?'... 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind' and 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'... 'Who is my neighbor?'"
Luke 9:28-10:37

After Peter's confession that Jesus is the *"Christ of God"* our Lord *"...resolutely set out for Jerusalem..."* because his time on earth was nearly complete. In preparation for the end of his ministry he took the three Apostles who were his inner circle, Peter, James and John, to the top of a mountain to pray. While they were in prayer Jesus was transfigured so that he appeared to them as he does in heaven.

Following this amazing display the three Apostles who witnessed it *"...kept this to themselves..."*, but their experience obviously effected them and they began to talk about who was the greatest among the twelve. Jesus, knowing that they were getting it all wrong, begins to teach them about greatness as it is measured in his kingdom. He tells them, *"...he who is least among you all—he is the greatest."* Over the next two chapters Jesus will continue to teach them one of the most basic requirements of our walk as his disciples.

In the world's terms greatness is measured in prestige which is usually directly related to how much money and power someone has. Thus, from the world's point of view, those who have money and power are more important, more 'special' than those who don't. For those who have chosen to follow Jesus this measure does not, in fact cannot, hold true.

In the world of the believer greatness is measured, not in wealth or power, but in humble service to others. Later in this same gospel Jesus will say, *"...you are not like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves."* (Luke 22:24-26) For those who followed Jesus in the first century and for those of us who would follow him today this is a tough concept to grasp and to practice. Measuring greatness in humble service is way outside of our basic understanding, but in the kingdom of God greatness is measured in service.



In giving us the parable of the 'Good Samaritan', Jesus further strengthens this point. In a confrontation with a teacher of the Law, Jesus reminds all of those who would follow him that the most important pillars of our faith are our complete love for God demonstrated in our love for our neighbor. How, after all, can we demonstrate that we love God with all our hearts, with all our souls, with all our strength, or with all our minds? I am convinced that demonstrating our love for God, even if it is so all-encompassing, cannot be done outside of our service to others. It is in humbly serving those around us that we most clearly demonstrate our overwhelming love for our Father.

In his description of judgment our Lord says, *"Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come you blessed by my Father; take as your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.'...I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me."* (Matthew 25:34-40)

At the conclusion of his parable Jesus asks the teacher, *"Which of these three do you think was neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?"* His answer: *"The one who had mercy..."*

You and I are called to follow Jesus, to deny ourselves, to take up our crosses and to put self to death. We are called, having surrendered our lives completely to the Father, to become those who humbly serve and in our service we demonstrate before an unbelieving world that we are, in fact, his children.