

Redeeming Greatness

Welcome

Movie Night 6pm this Saturday, John and Elaine 50th anniversary potluck, Business Meeting May 16th

Introduction

If you have your Bible... What, in your own life, are you pursuing greatness in? Who are you trying to become? What are you trying to do? What are you working on right now? What kind of conversations are you having with your friends about what you aspire to do, who you aspire to be? **What is the greatness that you long for?**

And what are we to make of greatness, what are we to do with greatness? Is greatness a good thing, is it a bad thing, is it something we should even aspire to? Is it something we should avoid? What do we do with this human longing for greatness? All of that leads us to our text today in Luke where Jesus' disciples are having a conversation about greatness. And they're asking the question, **"Well, what is greatness, who is great, how can we become great, and which one of us will be the greatest of all?"**

Luke 9:46-50

An argument arose among them as to which of them was the greatest. 47 But Jesus, knowing the reasoning of their hearts, took a child and put him by his side 48 and said to them, "Whoever receives this child in my name receives me, and whoever receives me receives him who sent me. For he who is least among you all is the one who is great."

49 John answered, "Master, we saw someone casting out demons in your name, and we tried to stop him, because he does not follow with us." 50 But Jesus said to him, "Do not stop him, for the one who is not against you is for you."

Context/Story

- Jesus is famous - Possibly the most famous person in Israel at this point. He is giving Caesar a run for his money.
- Disciples begin a debate about who would be the next greatest.
 - Jesus is great, and he is revealed in greatness, and being aware and present to the greatness of Jesus inspires, in the disciples, a longing for greatness. Is that not true?
 - How many of you, you see greatness and you respond to it?
 - Musician - Goes to a concert
 - Athlete - See something on tv
 - Food Network - Sends us to the kitchen
- Jesus doesn't rebuke them, and he rebukes them a lot, He rebuked them last week (vs 41). He will rebuke them next week too (vs55). But here he doesn't rebuke them. He doesn't come and say, "What a dumb idea that you want to be great." Instead he comes and says, "Let me tell you how to do that." He doesn't rebuke them, he instructs them
- Transition: This morning we have 2 problems and 1 solution, "The Problem with Greatness, The Problem with Rejecting Greatness" "Be Great for God"

The Problem with Greatness

1. Explain

- a. The story of Narcissus... Greek myth, and it told a story of a young man who was walking along, and he saw his face reflected in water. And he couldn't believe how **magnificent, and beautiful, and glorious, and intriguing, and fascinating** this person was, and he became so addicted to, and enamored with himself that he just gazed upon himself continually until he died.
 - i. It is from this greek myth that we get the word *Narcissism* from
 - ii. The most important person is me. I'm the center of my universe. I'm addicted to, enamored with myself. And we have a whole culture that promotes self-love, self-esteem, self-help, self-actualization so that I can get all I can get, be all I can be, do all I can do, feel all I can feel, have all I can have. It's all about me.
 1. Commercials/Ads (indulge in this chocolate, own this truck, Buy this beer. And you will be great. Because its really all about you.
- b. But the Bible says something different
- c. The Imago Dei - The Image of God. **The Bible says we are to be imaging God. That means we are to mirror, we're to reflect God.** The God who made us is loving, and gracious, and kind, and good, and just, and truthful, and we are to image, to mirror, to reflect God, to show something of the character and nature of the invisible God to the visible world.
- d. What happens in narcissism is that we **remain worshipers, but we worship ourselves**. We're absolutely consumed with ourselves to the degree that we don't really have much regard for God or other people, unless we feel they can benefit us. So if God will bless me, and people will serve me, then I will pay attention to them, but I'm really not loving them, I'm just using them. And so we were made to be mirrors for God, but we end up being addicted to mirrors, and gazing upon ourselves.
- e. **In our day, to be great, and to pursue greatness means becoming famous.** It means becoming the person everyone sees, looks to, follows, aspires to be.
 - i. 51% of 18- to 25-year-olds said that becoming famous was their generation's most important, or second most important, life goal.
 - ii. 75% of kids between the ages of 6 and 17 want to be a youtube star.
 1. Because everyone wants to be great. Everyone has a desire to be famous.
 - iii. What about you Brandon, you are up on a stage, everyone is looking at you, seems pretty narcissistic...
 1. Yep, Guilty - certainly in the past i have struggled with this sin.
 2. What I learned in seminary.
 3. Martyn Lloyd-Jones "We preach not to fill our churches, but to save sinners from hell."
- f. We cannot pray for God to receive all the glory, and then turn around and accept it for ourselves!

2. Prove

- a. Psalm 115:1 - Not to us, O LORD, not to us, but to your name give glory, for the sake of your steadfast love and your faithfulness!
 - i. Imagine if that was our prayer over everything we post online?
- 3. Apply
 - a. Social Media Impact
 - i. Selfie sticks
 - ii. Likes
 - 1. Measures success on images
 - a. **It is an act of worship is it not?**
 - 2. Increasingly damaging, dangerous, and self destructive behaviour
 - a. **Eating disorders, extreme surgeries, hypersexuality, addictions, Cutting, etc.**
 - b. Evidenced by reality television.
 - iii. Friends
 - 1. Least relational generation in history.
 - 2. Wanna know something that both the famous people and the aspiring famous people have in common? Depression.
 - iv. Depression
 - 1. Celebrities are not healthy people. They're not. Famous people are not doing well.
 - 2. **If you listen to Eminem's latest album, he basically says, "I ruined my whole life, but I'm trying to fix it. I want to do better, and be a good dad. I have no idea what I'm doing. I have no idea what I'm doing, so let's do it together, follow me." Really? Maybe you should follow somebody else. I know this guy who rose from death, maybe that guy.**
 - b. Worldly greatness is something that the christian must reject outright. It is extremely unhealthy and damaging to the christian life.
 - i. Even for pastors. How often do we see or read about the fall of a pastor into sin? It feels like a weekly ordeal. Mankind was never intended to be the center of attention. That right belongs to God and God alone.

The Problem with Rejecting Greatness

- 1. Explain
 - a. But there could be an overreaction where you not only reject worldly greatness, but greatness altogether, **and it happens in the false name of humility.** "I don't want to pursue greatness, I just want to be humble." it is a spiritual solution for the lazy, and the unmotivated to appear holy while being unholy. "
 - i. "I don't want to make much money. I don't want to get good grades. I don't want to push myself academically. I don't want to aspire to do big things because I just want to be humble."
 - b. This too is narcissism.
 - i. **There is the category of narcissists** who want everybody to pay attention to them all the time, addicted to the applause.

- ii. **And there is the category of narcissists** that does the same thing by trying to show themselves to be righteous. “I want to be humble. I want to be simple. I want to be minimal because I care about what people think about me.” They still suffer from the same dilemma, it is seeking the approval of someone other than God, and living for the praise of people other than the maker,
 - iii. as a general rule, both of these ways are sinful. “I have rims.” “I don’t have rims.” “I have a big house.” “I live in a tent.” “I drive an S.U.V.” “I ride a bike to work.” Both are just saying, “Look at me, look at me, I am doing everything I need to do so well! Be like me. I’m good, holy, righteous, pious, esteem me, praise me, love me, give me glory.” They’re both narcissists, one’s just got more junk than the other one.
2. Prove
- a. Proverbs 6:10-11 A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest, and poverty will come upon you like a robber, and want like an armed man.
 - b. Parable of the Talents (Matthew 25)
 - i. Are you the person who will multiply the talents? Or are you the person who will bury the gifts God has given you in the dirt and waste your life?
3. Apply
- a. Do something with your life! Live with purpose for the Lord! Don't let your life go by and when Jesus returns, have to tell Him, I spent the time you gave me on things that did not matter.
 - i. Potential for greatness
 - 1. I’m a football fan. I’m tired of drafting guys with potential. You know what I like? Results. Broncos quarterbacks all seem to have great potential. But unless that potential is disciplined, cultivated, trained. It doesn't amount to anything.
 - b. Live on mission
 - i. Adrenaline Junkies
 - c. Serve the Lord, Build His kingdom, Commit to work diligently, even when it is difficult. **Some of you may need to start a business, some of you may need to start taking seminary classes, some of you may need to pack up and move to Indonesia, some of you may need to change a career, some of you may need to Get a career. some may need to throw out their television or video games. What is keeping you from faithfully aspiring to Greatness for the glory of God?**

Be Great for God

- 1. Explain
 - a. (Point 1) If you pursue greatness as defined by the world, you will not be a faithful Christian.
 - b. (Point 2) If you reject all forms of greatness, you will live a wasted life, failing to steward the gift of life God has given you.

- c. **But there is a third way.** The disciples come to Jesus asking who of them will be the greatest. Jesus doesn't say, "be great like the world", he doesn't say, "don't aspire to greatness, that's dangerous", He says, "here is how to be great", and he grabs a little child.
 - d. One rabbi in the Talmud says, "Morning sleep, midday wine, and chattering with children, and tarrying in places where men of the common people assembled destroy a man."
 - i. **in their day, like ours, if you want to be a winner, run with the winners. You want to ruin your life and be a loser, hang out with losers, spend time with children.**
 - ii. You can't climb the cultural, economic, political, or social ladder if all you ever do is hang out with simpletons, poor people, and children.
 - iii. **Having a child is considered by many to be the worst thing ever because it disrupts our ability to pursue our greatness. They take time, money, and attention. What about me?**
 - e. Jesus is saying, Until you humble yourself, and you're willing to have a child-like faith you won't truly be great.
2. Prove
- a. Paul Tripp - "Jesus demands everything. Not just so we would submit to His control, but to free us from the control of things that were never designed to control us."
3. Apply (so what are we to do?) **How are we to be great? 5 things I want us to consider. If you are taking notes, write these down.**
- a. Live for the Glory of God alone.
 - i. 1st Corinthians 10:31 - So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.
 - ii. It's not about what other people think of you. It's not about being loved by men. Not about the likes, or the followers, or the status.
 - iii. **When People are big, God is small. But when God is big, People are small.**
 - b. Reject unhealthy comparisons to others
 - i. Unhealthy comparison of yourself to other people leads to one of two things, **pride or despair**. Pride: "I'm cuter than they are, smarter than they are, funnier than they are, more successful than they are, wiser than they are, I'm just better than they are." This sense of smug superiority. Or despair: "I'm not as cute as they are. I'm not as smart as they are. I'm not as rich as they are. I'm not as funny as they are. I just kind of feel like the loser."
 - c. Enjoy humbly serving the outcasts
 - i. If you are thinking about yourself, you are not thinking about somebody in need. You are overlooking people. You should be serving them. Get your eyes off yourself, Navel gazing, love others.
 - 1. This happens in churches also!

- ii. **In our day, rarely do you see strong, competent, young men investing in children. And all the while 40% of kids tonight go to bed without a father.**
- d. Accept your life, and do your best
 - i. Look, **here is the reality. We are not writing the story of our lives. We do not hold the pen. As much as we may want to, God doesn't exist to read the lines that you and I write for our life. God, in his sovereignty, has good works for us to walk in, Ephesians says, and you have got to accept your life**
 1. Maybe you wanted to be married, but your single...
 2. Maybe you wanted to be single, but your married...
 3. Maybe you wanted to have kids, but you are infertile
 4. Maybe you wanted to be healthy but your sick
 5. Maybe you wanted to be rich, but your poor.
 - ii. Greatness is not defined by you or your circumstances, but by God. And he says that we must have faith like a child, be humble, serve God and serve others. And **we will live a great life.**
- e. Rejoice in the greatness of others
 - i. Vs 49-50 - John answered, "Master, we saw someone casting out demons in your name, and we tried to stop him, because he does not follow with us." 50 But Jesus said to him, "Do not stop him, for the one who is not against you is for you."
 - ii. They come and say, "Jesus, this other guy's doing great things. He's got a great ministry. He's casting demons out of people. We told him to stop, he won't." Jesus is like, "Well, does he love me? Is he a good guy? Is he doing a good job?" "Yeah, he's casting demons out of people." THEN PRAISE GOD! We should be excited about God moving in churches that are not ours, rejoicing when God is moving in others! We can learn from it, and celebrate it! It is okay!

Jesus is How We Receive Greatness (conclusion)

- 2nd Corinthians 5:21 - God made him who knew no sin to become sin so that in him, we might become the righteousness of God
 - Luther calls this "The Great Exchange" - All of our sin, idolatry, narcissism, pride, jealousy, envy, all of it, goes to Jesus, and he dies paying the penalty for our sin. And he gives us, imputes to us his righteousness
 - This means that you and I now possess, through faith if we are the children of God, the righteousness of Jesus Christ. There is nothing greater in all the world. You want to have a great life? It is available to you in Christ Jesus.

Pray

New Members Presentation



LUKE 8:16-21 Light Vs Darkness

INTRODUCTION: An argument arises among the disciples revealing sin in their hearts. Jesus takes the opportunity to teach his disciples some valuable lessons about what it means to truly be great.

DISCUSSION

- What does it mean to be the greatest?

EXPLANATION

- What does the argument reveal about the hearts of the disciples?
- What point is Jesus making when he pulls aside a child?
- Why does Jesus make a point to tell His disciples to be “the least”
- Why did the person who was casting out demons trouble the disciples?

APPLICATION

- Where in your life are you concerned about the approval of others?
- What does it mean for you to be the least
- How can we redeem greatness in this way?
- What ways might we as a group be able to serve our community?

THE 5 W's (broken up into gendered groups)

- Word (How have you gotten into the word this week?)
- Wife/Husband/Family (How are you doing with your spouse/family?)
- Wellness (What are you doing to take care of yourself?)
- Work (How are you handling the work God has given you?)
- Witness (Who have you witnessed to, or prayed for this week?)