

Humble Pie (Luke 9:46-50; 18:9-14)

I. Introduction

A. *This Week in Clear Living*

1. Humility begins with the right attitude toward God.
2. Do not seek status. Let status seek you.
3. Being great means being least in attitude.
4. The kingdom of God is larger than me and mine.
5. Humility is the only attitude that will enable one to connect with God.

Question: Many people are very competitive and want to be the greatest. What did Jesus tell His disciples about trying to be great? In your opinion, what determines greatness?

B. What determines individual greatness?

1. What determines a great athlete?
2. What determines a great leader?
3. What determines a great employee or employer?
4. What determines a great parent?
5. What determines a great Christian?

C. The disciples often showed their human side by trying to decide which of them would be greatest.

1. This was not the first time that the disciples had shown concern about which would be greatest, and Jesus gave them a similar answer on that occasion, too.
 - a. Matthew 20:26-28 says, "But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many."
 - b. Luke 22:24-27 says, "And there was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest. And he said unto them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. But ye shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve. For whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? is not he that sitteth at meat? but I am among you as he that serveth."
2. In verse 46, they were debating that very issue.
 - a. Arose (*eiserchomai*) - to arise, come into existence, begin to be, of thoughts that come into the mind.
 - b. Reasoning (*dialogismos*) - the thinking of a man deliberating with himself or inward reasoning.
 - c. Are Luke 9:46-48, Matthew 18:1-4, and Mark 9:33-35 talking about the same event?

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- 1) Each passage is similar but also different.
 - a) Matthew 18:1 says the disciples came to Jesus to ask a question.
 - b) Mark 9:33 says that Jesus asked them about their dispute.
 - c) Luke 9:46-47 talks about a reasoning among them and how that Jesus had perceived their thoughts.
- 2) However, the three passages probably refer to the same conversation because the Transfiguration was recorded by each author just before they reported the dispute (Matthew 17:2, Mark 9:2, and Luke 9:33).
- d. Matthew 18:1-4 told this story a little differently, but both passages are probably sharing the same conversation. Also, Mark 9:33-35 is included because he wrote the conclusion of their conversation.
 - 1) Luke wrote that the disciples were debating which of them would be greatest. Matthew wrote that the disciples were wondering who would be greatest in heaven.
 - 2) Luke wrote that Jesus perceived their thoughts, while Matthew wrote that the disciples asked Him the question.
 - 3) So what really happened?
 - a) I believe that Mark 9:33 happened first.
 - 1)) Jesus asked what His disciples had been discussing.
 - 2)) He already knew, but He wanted to teach them an important spiritual truth (Luke 9:47).
 - b) Then, the disciples (responded to Jesus) asked who would be greatest in the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 18:1).
 - c) Jesus knew that what they really wanted to know was which of them would be the greatest (Luke 9:47).
 - d) They had probably already assumed that they would be greater than everyone else in heaven.
 - 4) Mark 9:35 summed up His message. Mark 9:35 says, "And he sat down, and called the twelve, and saith unto them, If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all."
 - 5) As usual, Jesus had a surprising response to those that were trying to pin Him down to the answer that they wanted to hear.
 - a) He had often angered the Pharisees by His sharp, critical remarks to them.
 - b) On this occasion, He probably surprised His disciples about how one achieves greatness in God's eyes.
3. Was the disciples' concern important? No.
 - a. When we think as they were thinking, are our concerns and competitive desires very important? No
 - b. Such concerns can cause us to miss what the Holy Spirit wants us to do in our walk with the Lord.

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- c. They can also de-legitimatize our work for the Lord by causing us to have the wrong motives.

Question: What, if anything, is keeping you from achieving greatness in the Lord's eyes?

- II. What did Jesus tell them about how to be great in the kingdom of heaven?
 - A. He used a little child to illustrate His answer. Notice the variation of answers among the three passages. **The first step is to receive Jesus as Savior.**
 1. Matthew wrote that a person had to be converted and become as a little child to enter into the kingdom of heaven.
 - a. Converted (**strephe**) - to turn one's self from one's course of conduct, to change one's mind. He is talking about the repentance that leads to salvation.
 - b. Child (**paidion**) - infants, probably a reference to our being spiritual babes when we are converted.
 2. Mark wrote that Jesus took the child in His arms and said that receiving the child in Jesus' name was the same as receiving Jesus, which was the same as receiving God.
 - a. Receive (**dechomai**) - to receive favourably, give ear to, embrace, make one's own, approve, not to reject.
 - b. John 3:16 - believeth in Him (**eis**) - to receive, to enter into a relationship.
 3. Luke wrote the same as Mark and added that the least among the disciples would be great.
 - B. What are some traits that newborn Christians share with newborn babies?
 1. They need milk/nourishment (I Corinthians 3:2).
 2. They need discipline (Hebrews 12:6-8).
 3. They need love (John 15:12).
 4. They need to be taught what is expected of them (John 14:26).
 5. Most children are naturally humble, and when really young, they will listen. They were concerned about being great, but Jesus was teaching His disciples to be humble (Luke 9:48).

Question: Matthew 18:3 says, "And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." Do you have to become like a little child to be saved?

- C. Luke 9:48b says, "...for he that is least among you all, the same shall be great."
 1. Least (**mikros**) - small, little, of rank or influence
 2. Great (**meegas**) - of God's preeminent blessings
 3. What is God's preeminent blessing?

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- a. It is having a saving relationship with Him and enjoying the eternal peace and joy that comes from having that relationship.
 - b. Most people will never be President or a CEO, but everyone can have a relationship with Jesus.
 - c. The best that one can have also happens to be available to everyone that will have it.
 - d. Luke 10:19-20 says, "Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you. Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven."
- D. The first of the Beattitudes conveys the same message of humility that Jesus was sharing with His disciples.
1. Matthew 5:3 says, "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."
 2. Poor in spirit (*ptochos*) - destitute of wealth, influence, position, honor, the type of person that will humbly call upon the Lord.
 3. Matthew 11:5 says, "The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them."

Question: What was the real issue with the disciples about greatness? Does Matthew 12:30 contradict Luke 9:50?

III. A Concern for the Greatness of Outsiders

- A. The disciples had probably already assumed that they would be greater than everyone else in heaven.
- B. In verses 49-50, they were concerned about the status of those outside their group that were doing great works for the Lord.
 1. According to the Quarterly, the person that cast out devils in Jesus' name was doing legitimate work for the Lord, but he was not one of the twelve disciples.
 2. The disciples were probably somewhat jealous of what they perceived as competition.
 3. Jesus told them to view such individuals as co-workers, not as competitors.
 - a. Serving the Lord is an individual decision.
 - b. But it is not an individual effort.
 - c. We work together using our spiritual gifts as the Holy Spirit would lead so that many might be saved.
- C. Does Matthew 12:30 contradict Luke 9:50?
 1. Matthew 12:30 says, "He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad."

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2. Luke 9:50 says, "And Jesus said unto him, Forbid him not: for he that is not against us is for us."
3. These verses are not saying the same thing, but they do not contradict each other.
 - a. Matthew 12:30 addresses the level of commitment for each individual Christian.
 - b. Luke 9:50 tells individual Christians that they are not in a contest with other Christians. We all work together.

Question: How does Luke 18:9-14 reinforce what Jesus taught His disciples about being humble?

IV. The Religious Man and the Sinner

- A. The analogy is easily understood.
 1. The religious man was trying to work his way to heaven (favor with God) by good works.
 2. The sinner knew that he could not please the Lord by His works, so he was forced to strike his chest and ask for mercy.
- B. All of the cults focus on good works.
 1. Only Christianity boasts a risen Savior.
 2. Only Christianity teaches that a person cannot earn his or her way to heaven.
- C. The Bible is clear.
 1. Ephesians 2:8-9 says, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast."
 2. John 3:16 says, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (*eis*)
 3. Acts 16:31 says, "And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." (*epi*)
- D. Getting saved is the result of humbling oneself before the Lord and asking for forgiveness. **This goes against all of man's teachings.**
- E. Living for the Lord is an act of humility as the individual lets the Holy Spirit conform him or her to the image of Christ (Romans 8:29) and lets the Holy Spirit show him or her how to use their spiritual gifts for the Lord's glory (I Corinthians 12:7-11).

V. Next week's lesson: Knocking on Heaven's Door (Luke 11:5-13).