

What does it mean to be a great disciple of Jesus? What does it mean to be considered one of the greatest? Does it mean that you need to be a Christian? Who has changed the world? Is it someone who has lead revivals or crate social change like John Wesley? Someone like an evangelist who is lead tens of thousands to Christ and preach the gospel to millions like Billy Graham? is it someone who's a great theologian and who taught and wrote and who helped all of us figure out things about the Bible? Like John Calvin or Augustine. Someone who preached Incredibles sermons like Charles Spurgeon the prince of preachers? Or maybe it is those who sin the least. Those who are like the desert fathers and mothers, who sold everything that they had, and went and lived in monasteries in the desert, spending their whole life doing nothing but praying.

The problem is that as Christian's we tend to still think this way. When we think of greatness, we think of it in terms of what the world values. We think of it in terms of numbers and success. But in the kingdom of God greatness is to find differently. In the kingdom of God, the greatest are probably not even on the world's radar.

Turn with me in your Bible to Luke 22:21-38. Here we are going to find Jesus teaching His disciples how they can be great.

I. Christlike greatness comes through service (v. 21-27).

Before we dig into our points about greatness, we need to see the setting. Remember, this is taking place during communion.

Jesus has just been explaining all that communion means.

Jesus is reinterpreting Passover.

While they are still partaking a few Jesus warns them.

Verse 21, **"But behold, the hand of him who betrays me is with me on the table. 22 For the Son of Man goes as it has been determined, but woe to that man by whom he is betrayed!"**

Someone is going to betray Jesus.

Jesus already knows about Judas' deal.

And Jesus is warning Judas of the consequences.

Verse 23, **"And they began to question one another, which of them it could be who was going to do this."**

They start to argue with one another.

They started accusing one another of who the traitor could be.

And so as they are wondering about who the worst among them is.

As they accuse each other the debate changes.

Verse 24, **"A dispute also arose among them, as to which of them was to be regarded as the greatest."**

They're no longer arguing about who the worst of them is.

Now they're arguing about who the best is.

And it's almost laughable that this is happening.

Someone points at Peter and says he will betray Jesus.

And Peter says no I'm not the worst. I'm actually the best!

I'm better than all of you.

Don't you guys remember when I walked on water?

Levi points out how many demons he has cast out.

John pipes up and says well yeah well I'm Jesus's favorite.

It turns into debate television like a sports show.

Jesus interrupts them,

because He wants them to understand where greatness comes from.

If you want to be great in the eyes of Jesus,

it's not through arguing with everyone else about how great you are.

The kingdom of God does not look at all like the kingdoms of this world.

Jesus is not using the same measurements.

Jesus talks about how the world shows its greatness.

In verse 25, **"And he said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those in authority over them are called benefactors."**

The gentiles exercise lordship.

It's really the idea that they are domineering of them.

They are really bossy.
They love to flex their power and their authority.
They love to command, and to tell others what they have to do.
They love to throw their weight around.
That is how they treat others.
And while they do this, they call themselves benefactors.
There's a kind of irony in that.
As they dominate harass and make everyone blow them's life worse,
they say that they really doing it for their good.
That someone has to,
And that their strong leadership is gonna make it all great.

But Jesus says that's not how it's supposed to be in his kingdom.
Verse 26, **"But not so with you. Rather, let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as one who serves."**

The kingdom of God is the upside down kingdom.
The values in Christ kingdom are the opposite of the values of the world.
Christian should not measure greatness the way that the world does.
Christians should not strive for greatness in the way that the world does.
Christian should not use their power the way that the world does.
Christ greatness is a different kind of greatness.
Instead, greatness comes from serving others.
Those who are great in the kingdom of God are not those who demand
other people serve them but who cannot wait to serve other people.

He says, **"become as the youngest."**

He's not talking about pretending that you're younger than you are.
Because in their culture leadership and greatness was determined by age.
They took respecting your elder seriously.
The more seniority you had the more right you have to be in charge.

And says Jesus says to act like you were the youngest.
Jesus says, even if you're the one who has the most seniority.

Even if you were the one who has all of the power and you have the say so you should act like the youngest.

You shouldn't dominate the meeting.

You shouldn't boss everybody around.

You should be serving others instead.

I'm reminded of how Homer often treated me whenever elder meetings.

I was intimidated when I first became the pastor here, especially about elder meetings.

And if I'm honest, I'm still a little intimidated sometimes in days.

Partly because of bad experiences, elder meetings, partly because of my age.

I'm a little younger than our elders.

One thing I meant a lot to me, especially in those first several meetings was the way that Homer would act towards me.

Even though he has been an elder longer than I've been alive, as we are talking and discussing what we should do often he would turn and look at me and say, "David what do you think we should do?"

And he genuinely wanted to listen.

He was willing to listen to the youngest.

Verse 27 Jesus asks the question, **"For who is the greater, one who reclines at table or one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at table? But I am among you as the one who serves."**

Normally, how do you find out who's the most important person in the room?

It's the person at the head of the table.

It's the person that everyone is rushing to get their plate for them.

It's the person who everyone is filling up their drink for them.

The greatest definitely isn't the person bringing the food out of the kitchen.

I spent a year on staff at a mega church.

A well-known pastor who has written books and is on TV.

And one church dinner I got the very important job of polishing his silverware.

And I was told it had better be done right because he would notice.
That is how the world decides who is great.

But at the end of verse 27 Jesus points to himself.

Jesus says that He is the one who serves.

Jesus does not demand people polish his silverware.

Jesus washes their feet.

Jesus serves the meal Himself.

Jesus entire ministry has shown himself to be someone who serves.

He did not come down to earth to demand worship, He served.

He did not set up and build a big house in an important place,

He willingly walk everywhere to visit and served the least.

Jesus went after those who were sick and who needed healing.

And he serves them.

Jesus ministered to the poor, the prostitute, and the refugee.

Even though Jesus had all the authority in the world.

Even though Jesus could work, any kind of miracle and sign and wonder that he wanted it.

Even though Jesus could snap his fingers at all 10,000 angels around him, which serve his every lead and desire.

He does not do any of that.

Everything that Jesus does he does to us.

Everything about Jesus was an act of service and great to us.

So if we want to be like Jesus, we need to act like Jesus.

You cannot be considered great in the kingdom of God, if you are unwilling to do what Jesus did.

You cannot call yourself a great Christian leader, if you are unable, and unwilling to serve like Jesus did.

Because greatness comes through service.

II. Christlike greatness comes through enduring trials (v. 28-34).

Greatness in the kingdom of God doesn't come through success,
but it comes through hardship,
and it comes through suffering.
It doesn't always come through having an easy road,
or having being liked.
It mostly comes through trials.

Being human means, you will have to suffer.
That's part of life, it's part of the brokenness and the sin in our world.
There is sickness and death, sin, and suffering all around us.

Jesus does not say that he will save us from all suffering.
He doesn't promise that we will never have to taste it.
But he does say he will give us the strength to endure it.
We can be bruised, but not crushed.
Broke down, but not abandoned.

Verse 28, **"You are those who have stayed with me in my trials,"**

Jesus looks around the table with the last supper.
He says that everyone here has endured in my trials.
Following Jesus has been incredible, but it has not always been easy.
It has been filled with hardship and was trials.

Remember, they all left everything to follow Jesus.
They walked away from their families.
They walked away from their friends.
They walked away from their community, and where they live.
They walked away from their careers and their livelihoods.
They gave up everything to follow Jesus.

Jesus had many disciples even massive crowds.
But not everyone in those crowds have been able to endure.
There are many who have fallen away.

There are those who follow Jesus for a time because they liked it and things got hard and they left and went back.

But the apostles have endured the trials.

They have survived them.

They haven't passed all of them, but they haven't quit.

And there is a reward for those who endure trials

Verse 29 and 30, **"and I assign to you, as my Father assigned to me, a kingdom, 30 that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel."**

Those who endures suffering or award with the kingdom.

Those who endure the trials of Jesus, get to rule with Jesus in his kingdom.

The kingdom that is to come.

Jesus says if you continue to endure, you will get to eat at the next supper.

We get to share the table with Jesus in the fullness of his kingdom.

And then they will no longer sit in the room of some guy that they met in the city, who is carrying water and hiding.

Then they will sit in thrones,

And they will rule over the judge all of the 12 tribes of Israel.

That's the highest honor of those disciples could ask for.

One of they can have.

But they will not gain it through their accomplishments.

They will not gain it through their merits.

They won't gain it through their talent.

They can gain it by enduring trials.

So this part should be an encouragement for us.

There is a reward on the other side.

Life is not just suffering, and then you die.

The Christian life is often suffering, and then we get to be resurrected with Jesus to eternal reward.

If we endure.

And Jesus explains what he means when he turns to Peter.

He begins to particularly address Peter's future trials

First 31, **“Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you,[d] that he might sift you like wheat,”**

This is a heavy verse.

Satan has entered back into the story.

Satan will make Peter suffer.

This tells us that there's a difference in trials.

Some trials are uncomfortable.

Some are small.

Some trials go on too long.

There are some trials that are excruciatingly difficult.

Many of the trials and hardships that we enter in this life are just a result of living in a fallen world.

Some because we have to live with other sinners like ourselves.

Some trails are from our own choices.

Some trials are really so bad that they come from Satan himself.

Peter is going to face one of those trials.

Jesus tries to warn Peter.

Because Jesus is trying to prepare the disciples.

They wanna argue about greatness, and who wants to be the greatest.

And Jesus says OK if you wanna be the greatest here's what you've got to be able to endure.

Peter, you wanna be the greatest,

because you know that Peter had to be one of the loudest people arguing.

If you want to be the greatest, you're gonna have to endure the most suffering.

You're gonna be able to able to endure some of the hardest trials.

In verse 33 Peter has lots of bravado. **“Peter said to him, Lord, I am ready to go with you both to prison and to death.”**

Peter says he's willing to go all the way with Jesus.

Peter is ready to win the argument.

Peter says he's willing not just to go to prison with Jesus but he's willing to die for him.

He will die, if need be.

And it's not just that he's willing to die for Jesus.

Peter is saying he is so sure that he would never betray Jesus.

Peter is so sure that he would never fail in a trial.

Peter is so because he is so great he would die before he betrayed Christ.

First, 34, **"Jesus said, I tell you, Peter, the rooster will not crow this day, until you deny three times that you know me."**

It's so interesting what Jesus is doing here.

Because Jesus is not telling Peter that he is the worst

Jesus is not telling Peter that he is the one who's going to betray him.

But Jesus is telling him OK you think you're so great and you're so much better.

You were going to fail three times before tomorrow morning.

Not only are you not actually going to die for me,
three times are you gonna tell somebody that you don't know me.

What does this have to do with greatness?

Jesus already tells us,

And we know the story Jesus words will come true.

Peter is going to fail these trials.

There is a reason to Jesus says what he does.

There's a reason that Jesus has greatness comes from enduring trials

Jesus does not say the greatness comes from succeeding in trials

Jesus does not say the greatness comes from conquering trials.

Jesus does not say that greatness comes from always behaving in a Christlike, godly fashion in every trial.

Jesus says greatness comes from enduring the trials

Yes, it's not about winning and being successful.

It's not about having a faith that is so strong that you come on the other side, unfazed and unbroken.

It's that you come through it still holding on
Enduring a trial means holding onto Jesus

This is what Jesus means, and when he says in verse 32, **"but I've prayed for you that your faith may not fail."**

Listen, sin is wrong but not a fatal failure

Behaving wrongly in a trial does not mean that you have blown it .

Jesus says Peter I know that you were going to fail this trial but I'm praying that your faith won't.

Jesus is already giving us a hint, and showing us enduring a trial may mean that we deny Jesus three times in the midst of it.

But your faith can come out the other side .

It means that our faith doesn't fail even if our heart, and even our strength and our mind do fail.

Look at what Jesus says, in the rest of 32, **"I've prayed for you that your heart may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers"**

Jesus is telling Peter he's going to fail.

He says this trial is going to come it's going to be too much for you.

You are not ready you will not succeed.

But Jesus is also saying it does not have to be the end of your story.

Peter will not succeeded but he can endure .

How can we endure?

We endure through repentance.

Proverbs 24:16 is on my favorites. It says, **"a righteous man fall seven times, but rises again. But the wicked stumble in times of calamity."**

The righteous and the wicked both are going to fall.

The righteous and the wicked will both fail in trials and in hardship. The righteous and the wicked are both going to sin, especially when it gets tough.

But the righteous get back up

The righteous repent
The righteous turn into Jesus for salvation.
The righteous turn into Jesus for grace.
The righteous fail, but they endure.
This is what Jesus tells Peter.
I know you're going to fail, but when you fail, come back.
Endurance comes through repentance.

Even when the trial totally destroys you and you feel like you've lost.
It's not the end if you turn from your sins.
God does not throw us away when we fail.
God does not cast us out.
As long as we repent, we still have a chance to turn back .

And we don't have to do this on our own
Things that Jesus tells Peter that he is praying that his faith may not fail.
We endure trials through not just through repentance and our own strength, but through the prayers of Jesus.

This is not the Jesus prays for Peter but you're on your own.
Scripture tell us, this is what Jesus does for us now that he stands before the throne of God interceding on our behalf.
You can be sure in this life that you will end under trials.
You can also be sure that Jesus is praying for you.
He prays that your faith will endure your trials.
Your name is on his lips.
Your name is in his heart.
And your name is in his prayers.

Would I want to see here that Christlike greatness comes through failure.
But if you have failed.
If you feel like you've ruined it and you've gotten it all wrong.
And maybe you have.
You need to know that it does not have to be the end of your story.

Endurance means getting back up.
You don't need to feel condemnation for your failure.
Seek forgiveness from Jesus.
Turn back to him and keep on following.
Endure.

III. Christlike greatness comes through God's provision (v. 25-38).

The last point in our last idea is that Christlike greatness ultimately comes from God.

It is not something that we can bring about ourselves.
It is not something that we earned from our own talent.
It is something that can only come as God provides it for us.
And Jesus shows us that He gives us all we need to be great.

Verse 35, **"and he said to them when I sent you out with no money, bag, or NASA, or sandals, did you lack anything? They said, nothing."**

The last time that Jesus sent them out on their own.
When he commissioned the disciples, he gave him the authority to cast out demons and miracles.
He told him not to take anything with them.
They were basically to go like those who are homeless, and have nothing.
And they were to do so, because God said he would provide for them.
And he asked him, and he asked them to recall it into it.
When Jesus sent them with nothing, They were provided for.

None of them starve to death.
None of them died.
God took care of their every need.
Jesus is reminding them of God provided in those moments.
He's also reminding them of what those days were like.
Because of those days they were very well received.

That was near the height of Jesus popularity.

Every village that they went into, they were almost always accepted.

All of the sick were healed.

Everyone was coming in the crowds were forming because they wanted to see Jesus and his disciples for themselves .

So they didn't have to take anything with them not just because God was providing for them but because everywhere they went, the people were helping them have what they need.

Verse 36, **"he said to them, but now let the one who has a money bag, take it, and likewise a knapsack. And let the one who has no sword, sell his cloak and buy one. I tell you that this scripture must be fulfilled in me: "and he was numbered with the transgressions. For what is written about me has its fulfillment."**

Jesus is not taking them a trip on memory lane.

Jesus is trying to tell them that things are not the same anymore.

Now, why would Jesus tell them that now they need to get a money bag and a knapsack?

It's not because God has run out of provisions.

It's not that God no longer has the ability to provide for them.

But it does mean things are going to be different now.

God is not going to provide in the same way they did before

The times have changed.

Jesus is no longer going to be celebrated by the crowd.

Now he is going to be called a heretic, sinner, revolutionary, dangerous criminal, and be executed.

And his disciples will not be popular anymore.

Now they two are going to be opposed.

So Jesus is trying to set them up to understand that God will still provide for them.

God is still going to meet their needs.
But it is not gonna be as comfortable as it was before.
They're gonna have to bring some of their own money with them.
And Jesus wants to remind them of how he provided before.
God provided then in the past.
God will provide in the future.
But they need to get the things are going to change.

Something we have to remember too.
We are often tempted to doubt that God will provide for us.
Because we see how he provides when things are easy and then, when things are hard, we start to think that maybe he is providing anymore.
He is providing.
He's providing what we need.
But His provision does not always look the same.

Verse 38 the disciples respond **"and they said look Lord here are two swords. And he said to them it is enough."**

Everything Jesus is trying to say, just goes woosh over the disciples heads
They don't get it at all.
They take it way too literally.
They think Jesus is trying to tell them that ministry is going to get really difficult, and they gotta be ready to fight.

They start counting their swords.
Figure out they have two.
And they tell Jesus well we got two swords.
Jesus I think we can take the Romans.

It's so Jesus response is not him telling them that is enough swords .
It is Jesus putting his head in his hands, and just saying enough.
Saying I'm done talking
It's saying, never mind just be quiet.

They don't grasp all what Jesus is trying to say.
And there's been times that I've seen people try to take this,
As if Jesus is trying to teach us something about whether Christians can or
cannot carry guns on them.
That's what the disciples thought Jesus was talking about,
but that's not what he was talking about.
He has been spending this entire time trying to turn their conversation
from how great they are somewhere else.
Jesus has been trying to get them to understand where true greatness is
found.

They cannot find it in themselves.
They will not find it on their own strength or in their own ideas.
Greatness comes through God and that's it.

Instead of sitting there, arguing with one another about how great they
were.
They should've been on their knees, praying and asking that Jesus would
make them great.

Because he can
Because he wants to.
Because he will.

God's provision does not just mean God provides for our material needs.
It also means God is giving you everything that you need to be great.
He may have not given you a charisma to fill stadiums.
He may not have given you incredible writing ability.
He may not have given you a great outpouring of talent in any area.
Maybe you feel talentless and ordinary.
But Jesus has given you everything that you need to be great.
Everything you need to be great in the kingdom of God.
Because in the kingdom of God, those who serve, those who endure, and
those who trust with God is given are the greatest.

In the new world, the greatest disciples are not people whose names we know, but they will be a bunch of ordinary, often overlooked people like you and me if we follow Jesus.

Ultimately, we need to be reminded of the gospel.
See greatness in the kingdom of God does not come from ourselves.
It comes from God.
He gives it to us.
And he doesn't just give it to the people who have it all together.
He doesn't just give it to the people who seen the most awesome.
Jesus gives his grace to the people who deserve the very least.

The gospel frees from our need, and our desire to be great.
Frees from our desire to be somebody incredible.
Because we don't need Time Magazine or the world to think you are great.
We just need Jesus to think that we are.
To Jesus, the widow who keeps her joy is great.
To Jesus, the parent who endures even though the kids are awake in the middle of the night again is great.
To Jesus, the single woman who follows Christ faithfully even though she wanted a family is great.
Greatness does not come from accomplishments.
Greatness comes from faithfully following Christ in our ordinary lives.

What does it mean to be a great disciple?
It means you serve.
It means you endure trials.
It means you trust in God's provision.

I used to think like the disciples.
I thought greatness was found in accomplishments.
I wanted to plant a church in New York City and lead a revival that touched millions.

Because I thought that was greatness.

I thought that is what I should strive for.

Here I find myself having been a pastor at TBF for four years today.

And I have learned to stop thinking of greatness in terms of success and accomplishments.

Greatness is for those who are faithful.

Let us continue be a great church.

Not because the world knows what we do or even who we are.

But because Jesus does.