

Sunday Message
6/6/04
Calvary Chapel Mission Viejo

“Becoming the Youngest”
Luke 22:24-27

And there arose also a dispute among them as to which one of them was regarded to be greatest. ²⁵ And He said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who have authority over them are called 'Benefactors.' ²⁶ "But not so with you, but let him who is the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as the servant. ²⁷ "For who is greater, the one who reclines at the table, or the one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at the table? But I am among you as the one who serves.

Introduction

One of the greatest struggles in our lives is the pursuit of significance in our own minds through our actions, speech, achievements, etc., by which we think others are impressed with us, and, therefore, we view ourselves as being praised and honored by others in our own mind. That is the essence of what this passage is presenting; i.e., the false pursuit of significance by means of elevating ourselves in our own minds over others for the sake of our corrupted and deceived egos. However, Jesus presents the means of finding God's true significance, which can only be found in Him, and which He has provided for us before the foundation of the world.

- I. The Word “Dispute”
 - A. The word “dispute” in the Greek is φιλονεικία (*philoneikia*).
 - 1. It comes from two words, the first being φιλο (*philo*), which means “to love, or have affection for someone, or something.”
 - 2. The second word is νεικία (*neikia*), which means “victory.”
 - a. The actual Greek word is νίκη (*nikē*), which comes from the Greek verb, νικάω (*nikaō*).
 - b. *Nikaō* means “to conquer or overcome; to carry off the victory and come off victorious; to win the case and maintain one's cause.
 - B. The application of the “love of victory” in this instance is for the exaltation of oneself over another for ego's sake.
 - 1. For the disciples, their pursuit of “victory” in this particular context had nothing to do with the “victory” one pursues in an athletic contest, nor of winning a military victory.
 - 2. In the context of what this passage is presenting, their pursuit of “victory” had solely to do with their “ego,” wherein they were

wanting, in their own minds, to view themselves as being the best and superior to their fellow disciples.

3. Without any qualification, this is the basest example of our pursuit of significance and its deceptive, misleading and destructive “addiction.”

II. Our Natural Pursuit of Significance

A. Jesus presents the truth of our pursuit of “dominion over others” for ego’s sake as being a cornerstone principle of our self-identity and self-worth.

1. “The kings of the Gentiles” is referring to worldly leaders, either in the political arena, the business arena, the military arena, or even in the religious arena.
 - a. There is, without question the absolute necessity for there to be leaders in all of the above areas, and those leaders must demand obedience and compliance with their directions, visions and goals.
 - b. However, on the other hand, that which Jesus is bringing into question is not the need for leadership and order in society, but rather the attitude with which one leads and rules.
2. The phrase, “lord it over them” is referring to how they lead.
 - a. This verb “lord” is used in a negative manner in this instance.
 - b. It is describing the attitude with which one has in exercising his or her leadership over others.

B. The idea of being a “Benefactor” can be a central goal in a person’s life.

1. The word “Benefactor” was used as a means of recognition and as a title for princes and other honored persons.
2. Interestingly, the word “called” means they are continually being called “Benefactors,” which in turn helps to inflate their egos and give them an ongoing false sense of identity and security.
3. The truth of the matter, however, is that their identity and security is very tenuous and is stable only so long as the truth of who they really are doesn’t surface.
4. If the reality of who they really are surfaces, then their bubble of false identity and security will burst, and they will be scrambling fearfully and anxiously for something, or anything that will give them some emotional solace and inflate their ego even if it is only momentarily.

III. Jesus’ Description of the Source of True Significance

A. Jesus says that the world’s source of significance is the absolute opposite from where true significance is found.

1. Jesus gives the source of our significance as that which is totally antithetical to the world’s means of finding significance.

2. If you were to go to a sales meeting of salesmen from the Western United States and a president of your meeting was to be selected from among those assembled, the person chosen would be a salesman who had had many years of experience in his field and understood all aspects of the product, regions, problems and competition.
 3. Thus, if a younger salesman came in with only a couple of years of experience, his significance to the company would be overshadowed by that of the more experienced man, who in turn would be the “significant” one in the group.
 4. The younger man would be respected, but he would not be the “significant” salesman in the group, whereas the more experienced and successful salesman would be the “significant” salesman.
- B. Our true significance, therefore, is found in seeking to be insignificant in our own minds in the minds and thoughts of others.
1. The enslavement of our thinking through Satan’s lie is that in order to be considered worth something and have an existence that matters, we must, in our own minds see ourselves as superior to others, as well as believe that others also see us as being superior to them and others.
 2. This in turn becomes an emotional addiction, and no matter the amount or magnitude of recognition we receive, it is never enough to satisfy the insatiable craving for “significance” through being superior to others in our own thinking, as well as how we think others see us as being superior.
 3. This addiction is particularly obvious when we are confronted with someone who is a peer and is succeeding and advancing beyond us in our field.
 - a. In Philippians 2:1-8, we read the following:

If therefore there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion,² make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose.³ Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself;⁴ do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.⁵ Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus,⁶ who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped,⁷ but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men.⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

- b. Verse three in the above passage is a serious indictment against us because of the fact that so much of what we do is based primarily on “selfish and empty conceit,” regarding ourselves as “more important than” anyone else, and we are solely looking out for the “interests” of ourselves.
- c. In addition, as verse seven states that Jesus “made Himself of no reputation,” for us, our whole life has been about doing just the opposite; i.e., making a reputation for ourselves in our own mind in the eyes of others.
- d. The consequence of such a pursuit is a constant state of frustration, anxiety, jealousy, resentment, insecurity and compromise in order to acquire the reputation we think will make us “significant” in the minds of others.

IV. The Example of Jesus

A. Who is the greatest in the eyes of men?

1. Jesus gives an incredible example that the disciples can immediately relate to.
 - a. At a banquet, that individual who has the greatest significance in the eyes of men would be the one at the head table being served.
 - b. And for the moment, he is significant in his own eyes, as well as in the eyes of others.
 - c. However, such significance can change dramatically as a result of circumstances, and thus, one’s sense of identity and worth would also change as he might lose, in his own mind, his sense of “significance” in the minds others.
 - d. That is, the beneficial circumstances and the praise of men would be the basis of this person’s “significance” in his own eyes, and this in turn would be his criteria of how he thinks others will look at him and measure his worth.
2. The idea of “being served,” versus “serving” as the measure of one’s worth, value and importance is part of our depraved and corrupted natures.
 - a. It goes to the core of our very being and is the source of great spiritual and emotional sickness, misdirection and psychological disorder.
 - b. Interestingly, the true source of life, in every way, is found in the life of Jesus, but it is the absolute antithesis of what the world tells is our source, and it is the antithesis of what our carnal minds lean toward.
 - (1) Satan exploits this area of great weakness and vulnerability in our lives through his lies by telling us, “You can’t really believe that trusting God and obeying Him in faith will bring fulfillment in your life, can you?”

- (2) According to Satan, nobody will know who we are, and our work and effort will go unnoticed by men, and thus, we will not be honored or recognized before men for our achievements.
- (3) Consequently, if we are not recognized and honored by men, we are in turn meaningless and worthless.

B. Jesus defines the true meaning of greatness.

- 1. Jesus says He is the one who is doing the serving at the banquet.
 - a. Jesus is the Creator of the universe, and yet He gives us an example of where our true identity is found.
 - b. In Matthew 6:1-4, Jesus once again tells us where true blessing comes from and how we receive it:

Beware of practicing your righteousness before men to be noticed by them; otherwise you have no reward with your Father who is in heaven. ² "When therefore you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be honored by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. ³ "But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing ⁴ that your alms may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will repay you.

- (1) The phrase “in secret” is ἐν τῷ κρυπτῷ (*en tō kruptō*).
- (2) From *kruptō* is derived the English word “crypt,” which is our word for tomb.
- (3) Thus, in the above passage, Jesus is saying that if we want to be blessed by the Lord with true blessing, then we need to do what we do as though we were in a tomb, completely hidden from the sight and recognition of men.
- c. In Colossians 3:23-24, Paul also enunciates the same truth:

Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men; ²⁴ knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve.

- (1) The word “heartily” is the Greek word ψυχῆς (*psuchēs*), and it means “inner life, one's inmost being.”
- (2) Thus, out of our “inmost being” we are to do our work “as for the Lord, rather than for men.”
- (3) The reason for doing it unto the Lord is “knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance.”

- (a) The word for “knowing” implies a completed act of coming to know something in the past, and an ongoing result and effect of that knowledge up to and through the present time.
 - (b) Thus, this “knowing” is based on seeing God’s faithfulness in His Word, as well as seeing it in our own lives.
 - (c) Psalm 37:3 states it quite succinctly: “Trust in the LORD, and do good; dwell in the land and cultivate faithfulness.”
 - [1] The word “cultivate” means “to graze on.”
 - [2] Thus, as cows “graze” all day long on the grass in the field in order to be fed and survive, so too must we graze on God’s faithfulness all day long in order to survive and overcome the attacks of the devil.
2. Thus, Jesus is saying that He is “as the one who serves,” and our true identity and “significance” will only be found as we too become a servant and serve as Jesus served.

Conclusion

Our means for finding true significance, therefore, is to seek to become insignificant in our mind in the minds of others, versus seeking to be significant in their minds. A good test for our motives is to ask ourselves, “Is what I am wanting to do or say about me, or is it about Jesus?” This has been a tremendous “filter” for me, and when I ask the question, if the answer comes back, “It is about me,” then I drop it and do the very opposite of what my carnal motivation is wanting me to do.

May the Lord take this truth and apply it in your lives in a powerful way so that you might find true freedom in Christ through your “significance” being in Him, versus in yourself before men. God bless you.