Sermon notes. Luke 22:24-38 GBC.

March 13th 2022

What kind of greatness do you believe in…and seek?

I know that is a big and broad question… but it’s worth a moment to think about. For many of us… it’s not as clear as we might want to think.

If you’re like me… you might find that your mind can try to respond in two different ways… we try to consider and give the right answer… but if we consider the real answer… it may not be so simple.

I had dreams as a little boy of being a great football player, I would imagine myself kicking that winning goal …or making that spectacular tackle.

I am guessing I am not alone, when we were younger, dreams of being great at something…having some notoriety for something…being the Greatest.. when we think about what greatness is..

If you are like me…there is a response that comes out of my self-centered desire to have power of my own…and another that TRIES to see a greatness that is centered in God.

Gospel of Luke… one of the living testimonies of Christ… we are brought to the issue of our pursuit of power and greatness.

**The disciples argue.**

Really a dispute within the people of God. In jesus inner circle…a dispute…surely not

Interesting the only few times we hear of a dispute among the disciples, its about themselves… who is to be recognised and of importance….

I wonder how many disputes we have in the family of God are actually about us and not things of the kingdom.

You may find this a bit comical. Given what Jesus had just said … how he was going to suffer and die and it may seem hard to imagine how his disciples starting to argue about who should be considered the greatest.

It may have been that when Jesus spoke of one who would betray him… there may have been accusation towards one another…or began to argue for why it couldn’t be them because of how great they were.

Nevertheless, Jesus uses this to bring home the very nature crossroads that we each face. Jesus says that you must make a choice.

Will you accept the world’s method of honouring greatness?

Or will you follow the Lord’s example of being a servant?*"The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who exercise authority over them call themselves Benefactors. 26 But you are not to be like that.*

He is saying the that the common way…the way of the Gentiles in contrast to the way of God’s chosen…is that they Lord power over others. They want to use and control others.

And the “benefactors” refers to those who seemed to give to others but only in a way in which they were then owed and held control over others. In essence…they gave to get.

This… Jesus said…is not the way of God. True power does not give to take.

That is why Jesus spoke so much about money, and anger, Many feel awkward about these parts of life. We feel uneasy.

If we listen to Jesus, we realize that what he really spoke to was greed, selfishness and the desire to destroy others… because they are all related to this deceitful pursuit of the false power that tries to consume from others.

False greatness that means making others less than us.

So this dispute and Jesus response was in many ways about who they were, who they were going to be, in the Kingdom after Jesus, the head of their movement, died.

They still didn’t really get that he was going to rise again…

It was about their identity… their kingdom identity.

**What is your Kingdom identity.**

I have a friend, he has dual citizenship, British and Australian. Travels a lot for work….depending on where he is travelling he can use the passport that will make his journey the easiest and most efficient.

We live in a world that can be confusing and amazing all at the same time. As much as we have technology and advances that we have now.

The need for us to feel important, to feel valued, to feel like we have a place in this world, that gives us a sense of worth…is strong

Right through human history, there have been those who have had power, money, authority who have used those things for both good and evil.

There are subtle narratives that tug at us that determine how we live and the decisions we make..

We have even taken some of these narratives and baptised them and claimed them as Christian….Like the protestant work ethic…not in the bible…in fact there’s a story about the K of G where the man working 3 hours got paid the same as the man working 8 hrs..

So when we accept Christ as our lord and saviour, we become citizens of a new kingdom, with new narratives, new rules, new criteria for greatness…all this whilst having to live in the world.

This is what is happening in this story is that Jesus has just announced to him his death and that his kingdom will continue after this.

A new world, a new way of living, but still located in the roman empire in the middle east. Disciples’ response to this, argue based on non-kingdom framework…

Jesus challenges their framework … who are great, those serving the food, or the guests at the table.

Servants are the Greatest in Gods Kingdom.

Mum wasn’t a very good cook, she is no longer alive, but would admit this herself, she tried… why…because her mother was not very good. Because at 19 years of age, my grandmother boarded a ship and travelled with her wedding dress and wedding cake to india to marry my grandfather who was a missionary there…. what does this have to do with anything…

Just because they were British…western. The automatic arrangement was for them to have servants, people to cook, clean and garden for them… I know they both struggled with this and I know stories of the relationship with these servants was godly…The point is, someone had decided, merely because of their education, wealth and skin colour that they should be masters and someone else should be servants…

The reverse in the Kingdom of God…

In the kingdom of God. It is that servant, the one who serves others who is considered the greatest…

How does this sit with us … this idea that the world we live in has one set of criteria, a way of determining importance, influence and power, but as residents of the Kingdom of God, these things are seen in the opposite way…. Sit with the weight of this for a moment.

Why did Jesus want the disciples to get this right, to know how to work out the greatest in the Kingdom of God

Because he was about to pass on the baton, Jesus was the human embodiment of God, He was the King of the Jews, Gods Kingdom broke into the world with his birth but He assures them it will carry on after his death… but he wants to know those carrying the Kingdom forward did so in a way reflective of the Kingdom.

We have been tasked with the same by Him, carry my kingdom forward.

**What does this look like, carrying the Kingdom of God forward in our lives?**

As usual, Jesus does not let his disciples, or us hanging. He tells us and shows us what this means. What this looks like

Jesus letting them know that things are going to change, while I was with you ….no swords, provided for you. Protected you…physically..

No I am going you may need to do some of these things yourself…or he set the example…times are going to get tough and I am not going to be here to bail you out, no physically…so you will need to be prepared.

I am conferring you a kingdom…. You will be my kingdom people; you will carry this kingdom forward…

I have set the example…that the world you live in, and the kingdom of God are opposites….

How then do we live as dual citizens…where do we get our value, what things do we use in our hearts and minds to determine what it greatness.

We all want to be appreciated, noticed, acknowledged…. but what are the frameworks we are using to determine our worth…our value, our path for our lives.

There are competing narratives that are constantly tugging at us, Jesus knew this was the case for the disciples and he knows this is the case for us.

This is the dichotomy, this is the ongoing challenge, how to live as people of Gods Kingdom, with all the pressures attitudes and narratives of the world nagging and gnawing at us.

Jesus shows his disciples, reminds them of this…I looked after you, you didn’t need a sword, it was a dangerous place, the roman empire of this time…particularly for followers of “the way”…

Christ has set the example for them and for us, as he himself displayed when he washed the disciples’ feet.

Jesus said: “For the Son of man also came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45).

And in becoming God’s servants…we receive God power. And it is His power and His grace and His Spirit that enable us to navigate and live in this space of having been conferred on us the Kingdom of God, but living daily in a place with values and measurements opposite to His kingdom.

As we approach easter, we approach the ultimate example of Jesus serving, giving his life for this world, the greatest gift, from the greatest giver.

Living in the kingdom of God, whilst living in a world that doesn’t follow Him, our personal journey and seeking meaning, identity and greatness in that journey..

Only found in one person, in one place in one way. In Jesus, in His Kingdom, by being servants to others.

Greatness lies not in the power of claiming our greatness…but in serving God’s greatness. Greatness is not in serving ourselves…but in serving what is greater than ourselves.

Encourage you all this week, be in His Kingdom, be great, be a servant.