



Matthew 20:17-34

# THE HUNGER FOR GREATNESS

*While Jesus was seeking to get the disciples to understand that He must go to Jerusalem to die, their minds are filled with the question, "Who is to have the highest place in the Kingdom?" With all that Christ had said and done, they were still obsessed with the desire for rank and precedence in the realm of Messiah's reign. It was in keeping with this human desire for advancement and preferment that the mother of James and John came to the Lord to ask for her two boys the two highest positions of honor. ...The fact that the other disciples were angered at James and John shows that they were in heart and in spirit no better than the two brothers. Their minds were filled with the same thing. They all had wanted the first place.*

—W. A. Criswell (1909-2002)

In Matthew 19, Jesus begins His journey to Jerusalem where He will be arrested, rejected, and crucified. Along the way, He instructs His disciples, preparing them for ministry in the coming church age.

## THE MISSION OF THE MESSIAH (20:17-19)

This is Jesus' third prediction of His suffering, death, and resurrection (16:21, 17:22-23; cf. Mark 10:32-34; Luke 18:31-34). In this prediction Jesus is even more clear on what will happen to Him in Jerusalem.

- His death and resurrection were \_\_\_\_\_.
- His death and resurrection were \_\_\_\_\_.
- His death and resurrection were \_\_\_\_\_.

*The disciples did not understand any of this. Its meaning was hidden from them, and they did not know what he was talking about.*

—Luke 18:34 (NIV)

## THE MINDSET OF THE WORLD (20:20-24)

Right after predicting His suffering and death, Jesus is approached by the mother of James and John with a request.

*Command that in Your kingdom these two sons of mine may sit one on Your right and one on Your left. (20:21; cf. 19:28).*

James and John, the sons of thunder (Mk. 3:17), were eager for places of honor in the Messiah's kingdom. Their faith in the Messiah was coupled with prideful ambition. They were thinking like the world.

*Every person needs to feel significant. We want our lives to count. We yearn to believe that in some way we are important and that hunger for significance is a drive as intense as our need for oxygen.*

—R. C. Sproul

*More than anything else we are creatures of desire.* —P. Gwan Pak

*Whatever wins our affections will control our lives.* —Ed Welch

*The disciples had indeed left everything to follow Jesus. They had genuinely confessed Him as their Lord and Savior. But, like many Christians in every age since that time, they often focused on what they could gain, revealing that they had not completely let go of pride, selfishness, and worldly standards. No doubt the greatest hindrance to their accepting the idea of a suffering dying Messiah was that they did not want to believe in such a Messiah.*

—John MacArthur, Jr.

The mother of James and John appears to be Salome, the sister of Jesus' mother, Mary (cf. Matt. 27:56; Mark 15:40; John 19:25).

## A Worldly Way of Thinking:

D\_\_\_\_\_ to be first and not last.

U\_\_\_\_\_ whatever means are necessary.

S\_\_\_\_\_ in my own strength.

T\_\_\_\_\_ disregard for others.

## THE MINISTRY OF THE DISCIPLES (20:25-28)

Jesus called His disciples to a totally different way of thinking.

- True greatness is found in \_\_\_\_\_ God.
- True greatness is found in \_\_\_\_\_ others.
- True greatness is found in \_\_\_\_\_ Jesus.

*The Son of Man did not come to be served  
but to serve  
and to give His life a ransom for many.*

## THE MIRACLE OF THE KING (20:29-34)

Leaving the old city of Jericho, with large crowds following Him and the disciples still trying to figure out His mission and message, Jesus heals two blind men sitting by the road (cf. Mark 10:46-52; Luke 18:35-43).

- The blind men \_\_\_\_\_ their need.
- The blind men \_\_\_\_\_ about Jesus.
- The blind men \_\_\_\_\_ to Jesus.
- The blind men \_\_\_\_\_ sight and salvation from Jesus.

*The world may assess a man's greatness by the number of people whom he controls and who are at his beck and call; or by his intellectual standing and his academic eminence; or by the number of committees of which he is a member; or by the size of his bank balance and the material possessions which he has amassed; but in the assessment of Jesus Christ these things are all irrelevant.*

—William Barclay

*When a man thinks he is better than others will he not put himself before others? He must have the first place in gatherings, be the first to speak in council. He comes without being called. He interferes without being asked... He does not so much want to be better as to be seen to be better. He is not so much concerned about leading a better life as appearing to others to do so.*

—Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153)

*There must be the inward worship if there is to be outward service.*

—Alexander MacLaren

*A lion in God's cause must be a lamb in his own.*

—Matthew Henry (1662-1714)

*You first have to see your unimportance before you can see your importance and significance to the world.*

—Charlie Haden

**Servant.** Grk, *diakonos*, "one who runs errands, a waiter of tables."

**Ransom.** Greek, *lutron*, "the purchase price for freeing slaves."

*The two blind men represent James and John, the "two blind apostles."*

—M. D. Goulder