

True Greatness  
Luke 22:24-27  
Better Together series

**Introduce series:**

Better together: How the gospel shapes community...

We are asking a simple question.... What happens when a community really understands the gospel? When a community really understands the gospel it prays, gives, serves, fellowships, and evangelizes. This morning we are going to look at serving...

**Prayer for illumination:** please join me in prayer...

**Sermon introduction:**

When Donald Trump ran for president his slogan was, "Let's Make America Great Again." Regardless of how you feel about Donald Trump this was a powerful message. Why? Who doesn't want to be great? We all want to be great, don't we?

Raise your hand if you don't want to be great! We all want to be great at something? Or at least, we want to be thought of as great. We want to be thought of as great parents, business leaders, artists, athletes, musicians, students, and friends.

I mean truly great, not participation trophy great!!!

But, let's be honest, many of us will never be great in the world's eyes. We simply don't have what it takes. Greatness, that is real greatness, is rare. But here is the good news, we can all be great in heaven's eyes.

Jesus tells us how in Luke 22.

In Luke 22 Jesus tells us that **true greatness is service**. To help us understand true greatness we will look at three aspects of true greatness from Luke 22...

Greatness desired  
Greatness defined  
Greatness demonstrated

**First, Greatness desired!**

**Luke 22:24 (ESV) — 24** A dispute also arose among them, as to which of them was to be regarded as the greatest.

The 12 disciples are with Jesus in the upper room. He has just served them bread and wine and washed their feet. Knowing that he is about to be murdered, Jesus explains to the disciples that his death on their behalf is going to bring them all the blessings of the New Covenant. They seem totally unaffected. They still don't get it.

Instead of being amazed by Christ's example of service and humility they are consumed with thoughts of their own greatness. How do we know?

We read that a dispute arose among them, as to which of them was to be regarded as the greatest.

Isn't this all of us? We all want to be thought of as great in the eyes of others?

It is one thing to *think* about being regarded as the greatest, and bad to verbalize one's desire to be the greatest. But it gets worse! They argued over who was the greatest.

This ugly attitude resides in all of us! doesn't it???

### **Illustration-**

Many years ago, I attended the SGM pastor's college in Gaithersburg MD, right after I finished seminary in St. Louis Mo. One day our class of 23 had the opportunity to tour the church office of Covenant Life Church (the flagship church of SGC in Gaithersburg Md. with 4,000 attendees).

At this point CJ Mahney, was the president of SGM, a famous author, and the senior pastor of CLC. He graciously invited all of us into his sprawling office for a tour.

While all the guys were listening to CJ talk about his library, how it was organized, his favorite books... I was standing in the back of the crowd. I looked to my left and noticed a book written by one of my old professors from Covenant seminary. I was a TA for this professor, and I proofread a few chapters of his book. He very graciously thanked me in the forward to his book (this is not a humble brag, seriously I did practically nothing with this book). In fact, a few years later, he asked me if I had read the book.

I pulled one of my friends aside and showed him my name in the forward! That was a huge mistake. My friend spoke up real loud and said in front of the president of SGM and all my classmates, "Ha everyone, Dave has an announcement to make". He wants you all to know that he is a well renowned scholar. He wants you all to know how great he is. He wants you all to know that his name is in the forward of this book."

I wanted to be thought of as great in the eyes of my friend, this really backfired on me.

### **Application-**

Why do we want to be thought of as great? We are all infected with the disease of pride. We want people to worship us. This is sin. This sin must be repented of.

We love the praise that comes from men, but only God is worthy of ultimate praise.

It is not wrong to want to be great, as long as we want to be great to magnify the glory of God.

But this is rarely why we desire greatness. We desire greatness for our glory. But I still have not defined greatness. This brings us to the second point...

*Greatness desired!*

### **Second, Greatness defined!**

How does Jesus define Greatness?

**It has nothing to do with status!**

**Luke 22:25 (ESV) — 25** And he said to them, “The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those in authority over them are called benefactors.

A benefactor (which literally means a well doer) was a title given to wealthy men in this culture. These men were thought of as great because they had wealth, power, and a title.

We fall into the same trap. We place great value on wealth and titles. We think that Doctor, CEO, President, Vice President, Lawyer, governor, professor, judge, and senators are great.

But Greatness according to Jesus has nothing to do with wealth and titles.

*Greatness has nothing to do with status! Than what is it?*

**True greatness is lowly service!**

**Luke 22:26 (ESV) — 26** But not so with you. Rather, let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as one who serves.

Young people had no status in the ANE. All the status belonged to the elderly. Youth were not to speak unless spoken too. Wow... things have changed.

**Luke 22: 27 (ESV) —27** 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.

Everyone in his culture assumed that at meal time the person being served was greater than the servant serving them. But Jesus completely flips this idea on its head. The greater person is the one who serves not the one being served.

Do you want to be great? If the answer is yes, then Jesus tells you to be a lowly servant!

Jesus repeats this message six times in the gospel. Here are a three examples,

**Mat 23:11** “The greatest among you shall be your servant.”

**Luk 9:48** "...For he who is least among you all is the one who is great."

**Mar 10:43-44** “But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, (44) and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all.”

True greatness is lowly service.

**Illustration-** *At the peak of his career Robertson McQuilkin resigned as seminary president to care for his wife full time. She was diagnosed with Alzheimer’s ten years previous. He went from leading board meetings, preaching sermons, overseeing a large budget, and writing books, to vacuuming, cleaning, changing diapers, and cooking for his wife.*

*Three years later his wife no longer recognized him. For the next ten years he cared for her through thick and thin. She died in 2003 at the age of 81.*

*One reporter asked him what a typical day was like and he said, "I would fix breakfast and then go in and turn on the lights, ... and then I would feed her. And then of course, after that I had to change and clean her up... Then lunch. She had to be changed every four hours. In the evening we would have supper, and after supper about 9:00 I'd start working on the bedtime routine."*

*"Once, though, I completely lost it. In the days when Muriel could still stand and walk and we had not resorted to diapers, sometimes there were "accidents." I was on my knees beside her, trying to clean up the mess as she stood, confused, by the toilet. It would have been easier if she weren't so insistent on helping.... I mopped frantically, trying to fend off the interfering hands, and contemplated how best to get a soiled slip over a head that was totally opposed to the idea."*

This is humble lowly service.

This is true greatness!!!

Lowly service is really hard.

What is going to motivate us to do this kind of service? This brings us to the next point!

*Greatness desired  
Greatness described*

### **Third, Greatness demonstrated!**

**Luke 22:27 (ESV) — 27 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.**

Jesus describes and then demonstrates true greatness by serving his disciples food and drink. He assumes the role of a slave.

It is easy to forget who we are talking about. We are talking about Jesus Christ, the maker and sustainer of the universe. He served his disciples. This would be like us serving single celled organisms.

But this is just the beginning of his demonstration of greatness. The next day he would assume the ultimate position of lowly service. He would do the unthinkable, he would suffer and die on a roman cross as a substitute for sinners, sinners like you and me, who don't serve others, so that we could be forgiven for all the times that we crave the worship of others, serve ourselves, and ignore him.

I hope that you and I don't grow familiar with these magnificent truths. We have been forgiven, redeemed, and spared from the flames of eternal hell. We should be the happiest people on the planet.

When Christ offered up his body to be crucified it was the greatest demonstration of greatness the universe will ever see because it was the greatest act of lowly service the universe would ever see.

*We have looked at*

*Greatness desired  
Greatness defined  
Greatness demonstrated*

### **Application-**

When we really understand how much Jesus Christ served us when he died on the cross for our sins it motivates us to serve others. If not, we don't get it!

There are many ways we could apply the truths of this passage. We could talk about lowly service in the home, in marriage, in the family, at work, or in the neighborhood. We should serve in all of these areas.

But I want to talk about serving in the church.

This seems to be the priority in the NT.

**Galatians 6:9–10 (ESV) — 9** And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up. **10** So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.

We are to prioritize serving the saints.

Furthermore, every Christian has been given gifts specifically to serve the saints in the body of Christ.

**1 Peter 4:10 (ESV) — 10** As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace:

**Romans 12:4–7 (ESV) — 4** For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, **5** so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. **6** Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; **7** if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching;

Paul is not saying that some have the gift of prophecy, others teaching, and others have the gift of serving. These are all manifestations of service. We are all called to serve the body of Christ with the unique gift God has given us.

When we serve the saints in the church, we are better together.

Music team- it is better to have 7 people on stage.

Nursery team- it is better to have 5 people serving in the nursery on Sunday.

Nursery team- it is better to have 90 people on the nursery roster so each person serves less.

Meals and moves-

Sound team- it is better to have 10 people on the sound team so that the same person is not serving every week.

The gospel makes this community, the church, better together.

**Ephesians 4:15–16 (ESV) — 15** Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, **16** from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

This church excels in serving! It is hard for me to think of ways that we can improve.

But let me mention some data. I'm going to get very practical.

Recently, our amazing admin staff pulled some data from our ministry scheduling software (MSP).

Here is what they discovered-

### **Whole-Church Numbers**

- During the course of one quarter, there are 806 volunteer slots to fill, not counting the worship team. Last quarter, our staff had 502 blocked out dates to schedule around, *meaning we were short 40 volunteers every week last quarter.*
- Last quarter 37 members blocked off five or more weeks, or more than 1/3 of the quarter.

### **North Campus Numbers**

- Let's look at the nursery as a test case.
- If every one of our 59-nursery volunteers served evenly, each volunteer would serve 1.5 x/quarter, or roughly every 9 weeks.
- If 10 nursery workers block off half the quarter, 6 weeks, everyone else is forced to serve roughly 12% more than they did before!
- What if every member served actively in the nursery? Each member would serve roughly 3x/year.
- Just for kicks, what if every regular attendee, 16 and over, became members and served in the nursery? Each member would serve once every 7 months.
- When you block off multiple Sundays a quarter, multiple ministries are affected. How? When another member replaces you, he or she is often pulled from another ministry. Since many members serve in many ministries this starts a chain reaction that affects many people.
- There are valid reasons to block off Sundays. But when you block off multiple Sundays a quarter three things happen. First, it is an administrative nightmare for our admin staff. Second, other members have to serve more. Third, you miss out on an opportunity to be truly great.

We are so much better together. When everyone serves the church, everyone benefits.

The vast majority of you excel in serving.

Let me give one little example... Jeff Bosma (got out of bed, showed up two weeks ago, by himself and went straight into the nursery to serve the entire service, when church was over he left)

Lowly service is the essence of the Christian life. We follow a crucified Messiah and we need to follow him to our own crosses where we die to self to serve others.

Here is the good news. Jesus not only demonstrates Greatness, He forgives those who are not truly great. he forgives people like you and me for being consumed with self.

### **Conclusion-**

It is easy to stand in awe of world class athletes, world class leaders, billionaires, business owners, renowned doctors, artists and musicians.

These people are great in the world's eyes.

Jesus sees greatness as lowly service.

When we get to heaven, we are going to be surprised by who receives the highest honors. It may not be the Billy Graham's, the Martin Luther's, or the St. Augustine's.

The people who receive the highest honors will probably be people we have never heard of.

It may be the bi-vocational house church leader in China.

It may be the homemaker in Santiago.

It may be a clerk at Wal-Mart.

It may be the Garbage collector from the Spokane Valley.

The greatest in God's kingdom are lowly servants. Let's pray...

Have ministry team leaders join me on the stage so that they can recruit and answer questions!