

The Great Servant
Mark 9:30-37

Well, how does our society that we live in depict greatness? That concept of true greatness, what does that look like and how does our society talk about, discuss, and decide greatness? Right away, you can think about sports, all the athletic contests that we have (more than enough to fill our time when watching TV and endless games and endless analyzing of games), of how they can go forth - seeing what teams have the most trophies, which players have the most rings, who's won the most MVP's, who has scored the most points - and the statistics that follow to decide who is really great in the sports realm. Even in artistic genres, you can think about songs and how they can do top-charting songs and which songs have charted in the top 10 or at the number one spot for the longest period of time and decide that that is true greatness, or winning awards and having award ceremonies and Grammys and things like that. Or, even movies - movies that are truly great are the ones that bring in the most money their opening weekend and following. Movies also win awards and things of that nature. This is often the depiction of greatness that we see, the typical things - who is the best, who has won the most things, the most stuff, the most awards, the most money and it goes and follows.

What about churches? How do you measure what a truly great church looks like? Well, what is a great church? Is it a church that has the most people in its building or on its membership list? Is it a church that brings in the most money from its members that are giving? Is it a church that has the most amount of ministries when you look at their ministry lists on their website or in their bulletin? What is a truly great church? Clearly, I think we can see there's a distinction there. There's a difference that starts to form in our mind between how the world determines and dictates what is great versus how God starts to decide and determine what is great, especially when we start to think about the church and our own lives. It's exactly what we're going to see this morning from our own Savior as He talks about this topic of greatness and what is true greatness. And it has nothing to do with how the world has defined it and has everything to do with one word, service. True greatness, simple in God's eyes. He's laid it out. It's not money. It's not the fame. It's not the popularity. It's service. That's it. It's simple. It's

clear, and it is absolutely against and opposed to everything we've been told and taught in our upbringing into this society.

That's what we're going to see this morning here in Mark 9. So, if you're not already there please join me in Mark 9:30, and we'll read all the way through verse 37 for our text this morning; "They went on from there and passed through Galilee. And he did not want anyone to know, for he was teaching his disciples, saying to them, 'The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill him. And when he is killed, after three days he will rise.' But they did not understand the saying, and were afraid to ask him. And they came to Capernaum. And when he was in the house he asked them, 'What were you discussing on the way?' But they kept silent, for on the way they had argued with one another about who was the greatest. And he sat down and called the twelve. And he said to them, 'If anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all.' And he took a child and put him in the midst of them, and taking him in his arms, he said to them, 'Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me, and whoever receives me, receives not me but him who sent me.' " This is our text this morning.

As we've really been coming off some pretty stunning passages in Mark's gospel - we reached the climax of the gospel when we saw the identity of Jesus put forward in clear terms from even Peter identifying Jesus as the Messiah, the Christ. No more guesswork, no more wondering. We saw in Mark 8 that Jesus is the Messiah, and we also saw not just who Jesus is but what He came to do, and that's where He went on to talk about His coming and inevitable suffering, death, and resurrection, to the point that Peter actually tried to rebuke Jesus, and Jesus had to respond in rebuking Peter. And then, with this teaching of discipleship, what it really means to follow Christ - an offering up of your own life, denying self, taking up your cross, losing your life for the sake of saving it. In the end, all these things being taught by Jesus and being finally revealed to not just the disciples but to us the reader as we go through Mark's gospel. And so, what we find is we're on the journey here to the back end of the gospel, and we see more and more of a highlight of Christ's work, what He's now going to do, and we see that highlighted even again in our passage this morning.

That's how we really begin our passage in verses 30-32, the prediction of service -the prediction of service. Looking at these verses again; "They went

on from there and passed through Galilee. And he did not want anyone to know, for he was teaching his disciples, saying to them, 'The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill him. And when he is killed, after three days he will rise.' But they did not understand the saying, and were afraid to ask him." Hopefully, upon reading those verses, you're thinking in your mind, that's familiar. We've seen this before somewhere. And that's true, we just jump back to Mark 8:31. That's where we saw, "And he began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed, and after three days rise again." This is not the first time that Jesus has actually spoken these words. This is now the second here as He is predicting yet again what will take place, and that is ultimately His act of service in giving His life.

But before we get more into that (what He specifically says), we see a change of scene here, and this is the return from where they were. And you ask yourself, well, what do you mean the return? Where were they? Well, they weren't really in the normal location for most of Jesus' ministry. They were actually further north as we were reminded, and if you were to look on a map, you are reminded about Caesarea Philippi, that city that was basically located at the northernmost point of Israel, and the land that they had at the time. So, going all the way up to Caesarea Philippi, he was spending time with the disciples, trying to interact with them, engage them, and this is where the teaching came out of who He is as the Messiah, and what He must do in His suffering. This is where they've been. They've retreated. They've gone away. They've withdrawn from the typical ministry location of Galilee and all around the Sea of Galilee in those different towns and cities there. So, now we see that after some time up there in Caesarea Philippi, after that glorious moment when He took Peter, James and John on the mountain (probably Mt. Hermann up there) for the transfiguration, showing them that He really is the glorious Messiah and King. Now, we head back down (right?), head back down from Caesarea Philippi, back into Galilee which is not just the Sea but the location around the Sea and all the towns surrounding it.

So, we're returning. Jesus and the disciples are returning as He is journeying back from Caesarea Philippi, and we see also in his verse here that, "And he did not want anyone to know..." There's a big change here. When Jesus had done so much of what we read in Mark 1-8, all in Galilee, so much

interaction, so much ministry, so much teaching, healing, miracles; all this taking place in the region of Galilee. Now, He withdraws, and He comes back to Galilee. Not for more public ministry though this time. This time He's changed His approach as it says, "And he did not want anyone to know..." There's a desire to try and keep this theme of withdrawing and being under the radar, flying under the radar, not being noticed. He wants to keep that as a priority as He spends time with His disciples and teaches them. This is the goal. I mean, in fact, if you were to think about it, all the ministry, all the public display of Christ and His teaching and what He's done, it came to a head when we had (in Mark 8:11) the Pharisees come up yet again and say this. They're "...seeking from him a sign from heaven..." And in verse Mark 8:12, "And he sighed deeply in his spirit and said, 'Why does this generation seek a sign? Truly, I say to you, no sign will be given to this generation.' And he left them, got into the boat again, and went to the other side." Kind of the end point of Jesus' public ministry in Galilee, the point of which He said I'm done; I'm done doing this. I'm done doing more displays of miracles for you people. You've seen plenty. You've been inundated with truth. You've been exposed to the power of God, the Holy Spirit working through His Messiah. You don't need any more. You don't need another sign from heaven. This has been plenty for you, and that's why He says I'm not going to give you a sign, and He retreats. He withdraws. And that begins where we really saw this series of passages that was happening at the end of Mark 8 where He was spending more time with His disciples, and He will continue to do that as we really see the book move toward its conclusion of Him going to the cross. It's a big shift taking place.

We see He wants to stay under the radar; "...for he was teaching his disciples..." Spending time with His disciples was the goal as verse 31 notes for us, and it's in this teaching that we're exposed to this reminder. We've already seen it once, and it comes up again, and it will actually come up another time in Mark's gospel. This is a frequent reminder because it's important, important for Jesus to tell His disciples, important for Mark to write it down, and for us to read; "...for he was teaching his disciples, saying to them, 'The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill him. And when he is killed, after three days he will rise.'" So, along the way, as they're traveling from Caesarea Philippi back down through Galilee, Jesus is using this time with His disciples to again reiterate, to speak once again about His mission, what He must do now. He must suffer. Notice that He describes Himself as the Son of Man, again, and

that is not just a random term. It's a term He likes to use, a title He likes to use for Himself, and it's not just to connect Him to Adam the first man, or anything like that, it's actually, more specifically, from Daniel 7 (a passage in Daniel if you were to look at it) that shows the title for the Messiah. Another title that exists is the Son of Man. The Son of Man is the One who comes and approaches God and receives the kingdom, all dominion, all power, all authority over all people. So, this title here that Jesus gives to Himself, the Son of Man, is another way of Him saying the Messiah, the Appointed One, the Anointed One, the Christ and is going to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill Him.

He spoke of His work in three stages (alright?), going to being delivered into the hands of men, being killed after being arrested and suffering, and then rising again; never forgetting this part, that there is hope, there is resurrection on the other side of this suffering, but notice how it's communicated here. In the way that He says it, there's something interesting. He says, "The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men...", and then He goes on after that, and it's all future tense. "...and they will kill him." ... "And when he is killed, after three days he will rise." There's the future tense there, but when He talks about going to be delivered, it's the present tense. It's happening now; it's this kind of present passive as He explains it. This is something that is taking place this very moment as we speak. This is His plan. This is His path before Him.

In fact, one way to even see this is just in the geography, if you think of it. The first time He spoke of this plan, the first time He spoke of His mission, He's all the way north in Caesarea Philippi; that's when He lays it out there - I'm going to get arrested - I'm going to suffer and die - I will go to the cross - I will be resurrected. He lays it out and explains it there. That's where He says it is necessary for this to take place. This is not just something that's going to happen because Jesus lacks the power to prevent it. It's the plan of God. It is necessary. Then, here we are encountering it a second time, and we're down, we're further south in Galilee. We're in Capernaum that He's stating this now a second time, that this is what is going to happen, and the way He says it has that kind of idea of it progressing even further along. The Son of Man is being delivered. This is what is taking place. As we started up north and we're descending south, I'm on My way to be delivered. In fact, the third time that Jesus will predict again His suffering, His death and

resurrection, they'll be even further south in Judea, close to Jerusalem which is where this would all take place at the end of the gospel.

It's all moving towards it. Of course Jesus knows this, but as He speaks, He's intentional with laying it out when they're furthest north. Speaking of it again, when they're in Galilee, not to do public ministry, but in a private setting on their way south, and they are moving. There is no agenda for Jesus to hang out more in Galilee and to start up His public ministry again. He has no desire to do that. He's done that. He's now spending these final moments, in His mind, with His disciples. He's making good on these little events and teachable moments that He gets with His disciples as they ultimately move towards Jerusalem which is where Jesus would know and ultimately give Himself as an act of service, giving His own life. This is the reminder they needed, and He will continue to remind them of this as they move and travel south.

Finally, verse 32, we see the reluctance - the reluctance of the disciples to comprehend and actually get what He's talking about; "But they did not understand the saying, and were afraid to ask him." They still didn't know what He's talking about. They still had a hard time actually comprehending all this. And it's difficult; there's so much for them to process. They're thinking of all the miracles that Jesus has done. They're thinking of the glory He displayed even on the mountain not too long ago when He was transformed before them, and the voice of God was booming, and Moses and Elijah were there, and they're thinking this is wonderful. This is what we expect of the Son of Man. This is what we expect of the Messiah, the kingdom, the glory of God to reign on this earth, and to put all other kingdoms to nothing, but then Jesus goes on and says something like this again, that He must suffer, and He must die. And so, how do they respond? They're not getting it. They're not understanding. It doesn't fit in their mind, in their kind of framework, of how all this should happen, and as it says, they're afraid to ask Him. And you can kind of imagine why because the last time this was challenged, it was Peter, and how'd that go for him? Not very well. Right? When Peter challenged Jesus on this and said, surely not. You're not going to die. No. Jesus has to rebuke Peter. So, once He speaks of this again and predicts His death a second time here to the disciples, they've learned one lesson. They've just learned to shut up, kind of keep their mouth quiet, and go, okay, ahh, He's saying that again, and I'm not sure how this is going to play out, but we'll act like those silent children in

the classroom that pretend like they understand what the teacher's saying, but really, they're just there, and they're afraid to ask a question and look dumb. This makes all the more sense with what Peter had done earlier.

As we progress, we don't just see this kind of ultimate reminder of the service that Jesus displayed in His life, that He would go to the cross. As He teaches and continues to remind them of that, we see the teachable moment progress as the principle of service is laid out in verses 33-35, the principle of service, and this comes at a strategic moment because of how the disciples act and what they do in verses 33-34. In verses 33-34, we see discussing the greatest - discussing the greatest - how the disciples conduct themselves. We read, not only were they in Galilee, but (verse 33) "...they came to Capernaum. And when he was in the house he asked them, 'What were you discussing on the way?' But they kept silent, for on the way they had argued with one another about who was the greatest. His discussion is quite timely. It's quite perfect for Jesus to jump on it and to use it as a teachable moment. Obviously, they were coming from far north up in Caesarea Philippi and then coming on down to Galilee and eventually here now to Capernaum, a city that they had frequented often, where Jesus did a lot of miracles. He hung out there. He did a lot of teaching in Capernaum, as well as Corazon and Bethesda, but this one, no doubt, was a city that got a lot of Jesus' ministry.

They're back, and it even says they're "...in the house..." So, what house was it? It could've been Peter's house, actually. It could've been that they're back in Peter's house as they were in Mark 1 where we saw them there, and He was healing Peter's mother-in-law. So, a familiar location, but they're staying in the house. They're trying to remain unnoticed as Jesus does His ministry. And He asks this question, a question which He already knows the answer to because the very fact that He is omniscient, and He does have the knowledge; "...he asked them, 'What were you discussing on the way?' " What were you guys chatting about? Obviously, He could've approached this differently. He could've said, you know, I need to talk to you guys about something. I heard you guys. I have really good listening; I don't know if you're aware of this. But He chooses to address it in this way. He chooses to throw out a question. He chooses to get them to think. He chooses to actually get this to stir in their mind a little bit. "What were you discussing on the way?" What were you chatting about on the way?

And they knew. And our text tells us, "...they had argued with one another about who was the greatest." They had become like the ESPN analysts, rattling off statistics about each other, about who the greatest disciple might be, who scored the most points, spiritually speaking, presenting their own case for greatness. Peter of course touting himself, talking about, hey, man, Jesus gave me a cool name. That's pretty awesome. I was the one that got the answer right and correctly identified Him as the Messiah. That's got to count for something. And, obviously, the other disciples pipe up and say, yeah, but He also rebuked you afterwards because of what you tried to do. You're not that great, Peter. What about John? Yeah, He's another one. I mean, He's the one whom Jesus loved as we find out from other places, and he was also on the mount of transfiguration to see all that, and they start to just have this discussion and possibly, not just because they are filled with wanting to decide who's the greatest among them, but also this concept of the kingdom coming. So, if Jesus does in fact set up the kingdom now, if there is this glorious display now, and we get to be a part of it right now, who's going to be the greatest? And their attention, their focus is on themselves, and they spend their time looking at their selves, thinking about their selves, discussing and analyzing their selves, and who is the greatest.

Our question is how could they do this? How could they do such a thing? How could they dare to engage in such a discussion in light of what Jesus has just done, predicted His own suffering, death, again for the second time. It's like they didn't hear it at all, and our text is clear, they didn't understand. They clearly were not understanding Jesus' words because they could hear Him say something like that, and they could just go right into their own conversation about who is the greatest among them. It's a completely ironic situation. Jesus talking about His own death, clearly the Messiah, yet His own suffering, and here these men are talking about which of them is the best. Obviously, when Jesus throws this question at them, "What were you discussing on the way?" When He throws that out there, you can imagine the guilt and remorse that just kind of hits them. No one even tries to speak up and explain themselves. Well, you see Jesus, ah, people have been wanting to know which of us is the greatest, so we were trying to give them an answer. Or, you know... they have nothing to say. They have nothing to say. They feel shameful for actually having such a conversation, and Jesus provokes that with this simple question, "What were you discussing on the way?"

At this, Jesus now has their attention, easily has grabbed all their attention, and He can go into actually more teaching here, and that's what He does in verse 35 with defining the greatest - defining the greatest. We read on in verse 35; "And he sat down and called the twelve. And he said to them, 'If anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all.'" So, "And he sat down and called the twelve." And people have different thoughts on this. Did they leave the house? More than likely not, more than likely, they're still trying to remain in a private setting. But this concept of sitting down often is associated with when one begins to teach. That's what we see in Scripture and other places. In the synagogues, they had the Seat of Moses, as they called it - when someone sat down in the Seat of Moses to explain the Scriptures to the people on Sabbath days. Or, often times in Jesus' own life and ministry, we see Him sit down and begin teaching people, whether that's on a boat, on the mountain side and now here in a house. So, potentially, Jesus has got their attention, and now He sits down, calls them to Himself to give this lesson, to give this important principle that they needed.

Just the way that He starts teaching - they don't respond to Him, and it's not like He says come on guys, someone tell Me, seriously, someone tell Me. I want to know "What were you discussing on the way?" He just sits down and starts teaching, and the very nature of what He says, the very nature of what He puts forth shows I know what you were talking about, and I'm going to address that head on; "If anyone would be first..." He addresses exactly what they were talking about. What was that, the greatest? Who's the greatest? You want to talk about that? You want to talk about if someone wants to be the greatest? Let's talk about that. And Jesus sits down and takes this opportunity relevant to their exact conversation. and the principle He gives is so counter-cultural, they weren't ready for it; "If anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all." Think of where the disciples were at. First of all, just feeling stupid that Jesus knew exactly what they were talking about. Jesus knew their conversation, and they have to immediately feel just so guilty for having a conversation among themselves that reeked of arrogance and trying to find out who the greatest is.

It's a shameful moment for the disciples, but then on top of that, what Jesus actually teaches flips the paradigm of true greatness completely. It flips the standard. It turns it on its head from what they would know and understand. He makes their entire discussion that they had, not only shameful, but void, completely empty and worthless. Everything you guys were trying to use as

a proof or an evidence, of who the greatest is, is actually worthless because you're looking at it wrong. You're measuring it inappropriately. You're not using the right standard. You see, greatness cannot be measured in this typical fashion that the world uses, that the disciples were using, that we still use today, the go to things of how to measure greatness, the money and wealth, the success and the accomplishments, the fame and the popularity, all these things, the typical things we cite as a reference for someone that's truly great or something that's truly great.

Jesus addresses this; "If anyone would be first..." If anyone desires to be most prominent, if anyone desires true greatness - for them at their time, they're thinking of the rulers among them. They're thinking of the persons of authority, the ruling priests, the leaders, the aristocrats, the people of influence, and the people with money and power. He says if anyone would actually be most prominent, truly great, "...he must be last of all..." ... "...he must be last of all..." He must be the least of everyone. True greatness comes to the opposite of the expected. The last or the least was someone with no rank, no authority, no privilege at all. An obvious status that humans were trying to avoid, and they did not covet that lowliness.

It's interesting. It's really another paradox that Jesus was throwing at them. If we look back in Mark 8, He predicts His own death, and then He gives them the paradox saying, if you want to save your life, you must lose it. And now, here we are as a second prediction of His death, and then He gives another paradox here - if you want to be great, you must be least. You must be last of all. It's interesting that He adds though, I mean the expression, the principle would flow very nicely if it was just "If anyone would be first, he must be last of all...", end. That'd be good, but He really wants to make sure that it's communicated, what He means by "...last of all...", by "least of all," and it's that phrase that He adds on there; "...and servant of all." It must be not just "...last of all...", but "...servant of all." He's helping His disciples to understand what He's actually saying - the practice of servanthood is what further explains what it means to be "...last of all..." A real definition of true greatness. True greatness, prominence, not in the way that you guys think of it, it comes in the way that is lowly and serving, something that would completely mess with their heads as Jesus said this.

A fantastic challenge for you and I today; you see, because it's simple, if we don't allow God to define the terms, then someone else will define the terms

for us. So, if we don't allow God to define greatness, someone else will define greatness; and that tends to be what the world has put before us, and it's subtle, and at times we don't even recognize it, but it's just been based on what, really, greatness is; and it has nothing to do with what God has said about true greatness. I mean, every day when people wake up, they don't say to themselves I want to have a terrible life today. No, people wake up, and they want a good life. They want a great life. They want the best that they can possibly have, and so where do they go to define that great life? What is it around them that actually gives them the meaning and the definition of that great life? It's just what has been put before them, what they encounter in the world. So, people seek after the typical things, the best possible education, the best and most high paying job that has the most prominence, the most influence, the neatly put together perfect family, the social life that is thriving, relationships that are doing well, vacations to no end, financial securities. They're untouchable, and in the world's definition, they're great, but that's the problem, isn't it? It's the world's definition.

The problem with all those pursuits as the world has portrayed them is that they revolve around you. It's self-seeking and self-serving. Even if these pursuits are achieved and fulfilled in this lifetime, they don't amount to true greatness because all the world has done is set a path before people that is filled with these things and then labeled it great; and just because they labeled it great, doesn't mean it actually is, because God's the one that gets to set the terms. God's the one that gets to actually give the definition. God's the one that decides what really true greatness is. So, these people run down these paths, and they go for it, and they fill their time and their life and their energy with these pursuits all for themselves, thinking they're great only to come before God and realize they're so small, insignificant, worthless. On the other hand, Jesus gives the definition for true greatness, and (hint), it has nothing to do with you. It has nothing to do with self but has everything to do with others and serving others, those above pursuits, you know, the job, the family, all these different things, the education - those are fine and necessary, but they can be pursued in a different manner, in a manner that's not for self, not self-seeking, not self-pleasure, not self-serving, but for others.

And this is what Jesus is in fact modeling as He is going to the cross. He's not only speaking it, He's showing it as He displays true greatness. It is thinking of others. It is giving up His own life. And it's exactly what Paul

continues to teach us after Jesus did this. In Philippians 2:3-8, Paul's words are a perfect treatise on this; "Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross." You want true greatness? Look at Christ, the perfect example of true greatness because He humbles Himself to the point of a servant, and isn't this exactly what Jesus is saying? You want to be first? You got to be least of all. You got to be servant of all, and Jesus is essentially saying you got to follow Me and see what I'm doing.

And so, you ask, okay, I think I'm understanding this idea of not thinking of myself but looking outward and thinking of others more, that concept of service, I'm getting it a little bit, but how far do I go? I mean, to what end (right?) serving others? What does this look like? How far am I supposed to take this? And this is exactly what Jesus addresses next in our passage. In verses 36-37, we find the practice of service - the practice of service. We read on in Mark 9:36-37; "And he took a child and put him in the midst of them, and taking him in his arms, he said to them, 'Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me, and whoever receives me, receives not me but him who sent me.' " So, Jesus predicts His own death and suffering. He confronts the disciples and their discussion about the greatest and what true greatness is. And then He moves to this object lesson, this very practical object lesson for the disciples to learn and for you and I as well. He grabs a child. He takes a child as they're in the house, sitting there, probably Peter's house, could be even Peter's child walking by, and He takes this child and puts him in the midst of everybody for them all to see, and not just setting up the child and saying take a look at this child, but even embraces this child, hugs him, in this object lesson.

And we have to ask why? Why would Jesus do this. Is this connected at all, or is this like a completely different subject? Well, what's going on here? We do sing the song, "Jesus Loves the Little Children." So, that's maybe, somewhere, somehow connected in here. This is coming right off what He's talking about of being a "...servant of all." So, why would Jesus use an

example of a child? How are children viewed at this time? There's a little disconnect from you and me as a first-world reader from western civilization here in America, 2017, reading this and first century Israel - a little different. Alright? A little different with what people had and how they functioned economically and even social status. So how was a child viewed in their time? Children were insignificant in their culture. People were not as, and children especially, were not as pampered, and dare I say spoiled (right?) in their time. The middle class, so to speak, looked very different. Right? All of this, we have so much ability to get children and to spend time with children and to even prop up and give them toys they will never even use. Right? We are so able to do this and to put so much attention on children. In their time, they didn't have those resources. That wasn't really available. In fact, their view of children wasn't as high even. I mean, if you were trying to advance in society at that time, children would not be your main focus. Right? You're not going to try to win a crowd and a following with the children. It's not the case. In fact, there's even Jewish literature that talks about how disgraceful it is to try and talk baby talk. Right? They kind of look down on that concept, so to speak. So, children were kind of ignored and really they were just waiting to eventually come to a point where they're contributing and doing more and inheriting and taking on the father's job and responsibility. So, children were looked down upon. What they ought to do was just give respect to the adults. Every adult expected the respect of children and their submission.

So, this view of children shows you what Jesus is doing here. What He's done is He's taken one of the most insignificant people possible, and He's put it in front of the disciples, a child. How far should your service go? Is that your question? To what end should you serve? You should be willing to be least and servant to such a child as this, an insignificant child. What will they give you in return for their service to them? Nothing. They're a child. They can't provide for themselves. They can't reward you for it. That's not the point. You think, the disciples are standing there as Jesus is talking about serving and becoming the servant of all, and they're thinking, you know what? We could probably serve each other as fellow fishermen here, as disciples, and I could learn to maybe set down some of my rights for the sake of my fellow disciples here. Yeah, that's possible. But Jesus goes that's not enough. That's not what I'm talking about. I said "...servant of all," and I really need you to understand that. So He takes a child and uses this insignificant child as this teaching point. How far does your willingness and

service of others go? To the point that you would serve someone that gives nothing to you in return, a servant of insignificant children? I know what you're thinking. Aw, man, I'm not good with children. Man, this is going to be hard. That's not Jesus' point. Jesus' point is to show that there is no end to this. It doesn't matter who it is. The way that Jesus treated people was a servant. He was a "...servant of all," to His disciples. He even offended people with how much He served even women around Him, and His willingness to associate with children shocked disciples and those around Him.

And He gives the principle after this object lesson of a child in verse 37; "Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me, and whoever receives me, receives not me but him who sent me." He's basically giving another paradox here. He's already stated things like "... whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it.", and if you really want to be great and first, you must be a "...servant of all." And now, He states, really, to receive the least significant, then you will be received by the most significant. Be willing to serve the least significant, like a child, and you will be received by God on high, a most honorable and welcomed relationship. So, this concept of service doesn't really have an end to it. It extends to all, and it doesn't matter someone's status of any sort. A wise person once said that perhaps a helpful way to view people is thinking about whether or not it's entitlement or investment that is going through your mind. Are you entitled to the respect of the people around you? Are you entitled to their time, to their money? Are you entitled to their acknowledgement of you? Or, is it an opportunity for you to invest and to pour yourself out for these people. Do you see people (no matter who they are - it doesn't matter their age - it doesn't matter their gender - it doesn't matter any of that) you will serve to no end? You will pour yourself out, and this is exactly what Jesus modeled.

He owned everything being God as we saw; yet He gave to no end. He gave of Himself. He served. He invested in others. What is true greatness? It has nothing to do with us. It has nothing to do with what we can give ourselves or what we can show or display. It has everything to do with what we can give to others, how we can serve and be a servant of all. May that be a description of us individually as people and all together as a church.