

Matthew 18:1-5 Sermon

Introduction: Today we are continuing our series on “The Life of Jesus: Matthew Edition.” Since Christmas we have gone through Jesus’ birth and early life in 1-2, his preparation for ministry in 3-4, his public solo ministry in 5-9 including his demonstration of authoritative teaching in 5-7 and his demonstration of power in 8-9. We have looked at his public ministry with his followers in 10-15, now we are still in his public ministry with his followers but the geographical center of Matthews Gospel is going to change. Up to Matthew 16 the geographical center is Galilee, but in Matthew 16 Jesus gives the first prediction of His death and resurrection and now we will see the gravitational pull switch from Galilee to Jerusalem.

Last week we looked at Matthew 17 and the transfiguration when Jesus takes Peter James and John up to the mount and peels back the layers of creation and reveals to them His divine glory.

Since the transfiguration a few things happened that are important to the dialogue we see between Jesus and His disciples....

Read and briefly explain those passages

So as we go through Matthew 18:1-5 we are going to look at a few things 1st
What are the disciples really asking, 2nd What is Jesus' response 3rd why is
this important today?

So lets pray and then look at Matthew 18

Read the word: Matthew 18:1-5

At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?"² He called a child, whom he put among them,³ and said, "Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.⁴ Whoever becomes humble like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.⁵ Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me.

- To get a better idea Mixed accounts
 - Matthew: The disciples come and ask Jesus

- Luke: On the way to Capernaum Jesus is able to tell their inner thoughts and knows they have been arguing and address their question
- Mark: The disciples argue on the way to Capernaum Jesus asks them about it.
- Harmony: The disciples were arguing about who was the greatest on the way to Capernaum once they got to the house Jesus asked them about it because he knew their inner thoughts and when he confronts them they finally come clean and ask the question.
- In the middle of this argument between his disciples Jesus calls over a child
 - Mark: Takes the child in his arms
 - And teaches the disciples
- He doesn't answer the question they are asking he answers the question they need to hear
 - They are asking who among them is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven
 - He tells them unless they become like the child they won't even enter the kingdom of heaven.

- In fact the one who humbles themselves like the child Jesus is holding is the greatest
- And whoever welcomes a child on behalf of Jesus welcomes Jesus

So What Are The Disciples Really Asking?

- Where do they lie in the pecking order
 - What is their ranking?
- Kingdom of Heaven: Not a clear idea
 - Acts 1:6
 - Earthly Kingdom
- Jewish Rabbis with their disciples
 - Humility: ironic
 - Jesus does not give clear answers
 - Those who receive reward in the kingdom of heaven
 - The poor in spirit
 - Those persecuted for righteousness

- Whoever does and teaches others to do the commandments
- The one who does the will of the Father in heaven
- Some outside of Israel with great faith
- Those who acknowledge Christ before others
- Whoever welcomes the disciples
- Whoever gives a cup to a little one in the name of a disciple
- The righteous
- Those who will be the least or not enter the kingdom of heaven
 - Someone who breaks the least of the commandments and teaches others to do the same
 - Someone whose righteousness does not exceed that of the disciples
 - Those who do not have faith
 - Someone who loves their father and mother more than Jesus
 - Evildoers
- On top of all this
 - Peter, James and John Transfiguration

- The failure to cast out the demon
- Jesus and Peter paying the same tax
- The disciples are probably frustrated
 - Jesus answers Pastorally: He has said what was important for the person at that time to help them better embrace God and His kingdom.
 - They want clear answers
- The readers would be frustrated
- We get frustrated
 - (saying poop)
 - Go and make disciples: 10 steps for church Growth
 - Be filled with the Holy Spirit: 7 steps to receive the holy Spirit
 - Do not forsake the fellowship of believers: Holy Days of obligation

So What Are The Disciples Really Asking?

- The disciples are asking where they rank in the Kingdom
 - Because they want to ensure that when the Kingdom comes they will be placed in a position of power and authority
 - (Stock Dilution)

What is Jesus' Response?

- Read Jesus' Response
- The disciples want to know who is the greatest. Jesus says they won't even enter unless they change and become like the child resting in his arms
 - Odd statement
 - The disciples have seen these amazing things
 - Trapped in thought patterns of a broken world
 - Thinking of an earthly kingdom defined by
 - lust for power
 - struggle for position
 - envy of status
 - ensuring that they get what they deserve and their stock is not diluted
 - kingdom of heaven is defined
 - not by position but by the presence of God
 - your citizenship is not defined by status or influence but by love and loyalty to the king
 - When Jesus called the child over and he rested in his arms
 - He didn't ask why me and not other children

- That is our eternal hope
 - Adam and Eve
 - Greatness in the kingdom is not defined by exercising power but by dwelling at harmony in the presence of God. Being aligned with his will, and his passions, and desires, but submitting perfectly to God and enjoying His presence.
 - If the disciples want to enter the kingdom of heaven they must abandon their worldly desires, through off envy, pride, self glorification, and the struggle for power.
 - Embrace the presence of Jesus as the child does.
- He is not commanding the disciples to be naïve but to properly judge what is important to God and submit their hearts so that what God deems important they deem important as well.
 - What does a small child do when faced when uncertainty
 - Look to their parent
 - Although they may not understand the plan and the details
 - They have faith in the person
 - But if you enter the kingdom with the thoughts
 - of what in it for me?

- What do I have to do to ensure that my end game is met?
- What formula do I have to follow to ensure that my picture of what the kingdom should be is made manifest?
- My stock doesn't get diluted
 - Then uncertainty comes and the Kingdom of heaven is unclear our whole foundation is shattered.
- We can see this in the way the disciples are arguing
 - Free them from the thought patterns of a broken world and align their thoughts, their desires, and their passions with God's
- Jesus tells them to embrace children such as this one
 - Not as a means to the end of advancing their position
 - But because children matter to Jesus
 - Children matter to the Kingdom of heaven
 - If the disciples were to run and grab a child then ask where they rank they would be missing the point

What is Jesus' Response?

Stop worrying about their position, and stop fighting to get what they deserve and instead put all their efforts towards knowing God, loving God, and reflecting his heart by serving even the least among them.

Why is this important for us today?

- We too get trapped into the thought patterns of a fallen world
 - I need to volunteer this much
 - I need to give this much
 - We weigh ourselves down
 - But Jesus said my yoke is easy and my burden is light
 - He says come to me all who are weary and I will give you rest
 - He says I desire mercy not sacrifice
 - Good works are a reflection of God's work in us and not a list of requirements to be a good Christian
 - "Daniel and the List"
- This is not permission to abandon the law of Christ but to fall more deeply in love with the law giver.
- Service and ritual and disciplined devotion are important and beautiful because they help to enrich our relationship with Christ, but when they are used to bandage over insecurities or feeling of

insufficiency they can be just beautiful distractions from the God we are called to love.

Challenge:

- Last week I challenged to all to give something up for Lent
- But I don't want lent to be one more thing on a list of things to do
 - Check your thoughts
 - Give yourself permission
 - Ask the lord
- The challenge for us as a church is to Know God, Love God, and as a reflection of that relationship and an out pouring of his love alive in us to serve others...
 - Diapers and wipes
 - Nursery
 - Families
 - We want to be a community of people so moved by the love of God that we reflect his love to the world

The disciples were asking who was the greatest, they wanted to know where they ranked and how to advance their position

In response Jesus said become like this child, desire me more than position, more than power, more than pride, and then he called them to value the Children who offer the least amount of tangible amount of productivity to society as an reflection of God's heart to all people to himself from the least to the greatest.

We are called to do the same to Know God, Love God and Serve others.

Let's pray