

## Greatness

25<sup>th</sup> week of Ordinary Time – Mark 9:30-37

In the current culture, greatness is a coveted thing. We admire those who are great in various areas of their lives. We think highly of those who seek to be the best in sports, in school, at work and in their personal quest to succeed. However, Jesus warns us this week that the definition of greatness is different in the Kingdom of God. This is a hard teaching to accept, much less live.

The twelve are on the road again this week. They are working their way, with Jesus, through the region of Galilee, a place considered impure, full of gentiles who do not fit into the ideals of the religious elite of the time. The gentiles are the very people who Jesus seeks out this week.

As the disciples travel with Jesus he, once again, teaches that **“The Son of Man is to be handed over to men and they will kill him, and three days after his death the Son of Man will rise.”** This second prediction story still confuses the disciples who do not understand what he is saying to them.

The disciples start a conversation amongst themselves. The gospel writer says that Jesus confronts them with the question, **“What were you arguing about on the way?”** Their conversation was obviously divisive, causing conflict between them because they were **“discussing among themselves on the way who was the greatest.”**

Jesus uses this as a teachable moment. He outlines that the Kingdom of God is not about who will be the greatest in human terms, but rather, who will live the Divine understanding of greatness. Jesus says, **“If anyone wishes to be first, he shall be the last of all and the servant of all.”** He illustrates this by taking a child, one who would have had no status or worth in the ancient world, and says, **“Whoever receives one child such as this in my name, receives me; and whoever receives me receives not me but the One who sent me.”**

This teaching tells us something about God and what God wants of us in our life. The way of the world is different, as it seeks fame, fortune and great status among people. The Divine ideal of greatness, is to live and serve as Jesus did, even to the point of death. This Divine greatness embraces the sacrificial life of being a servant to everyone. In doing so, we acknowledge that only God is great and we are but the servants of God’s greatness.

Blessings!

  
Sue Schettler