

## **Week 5: The Greatest in God's Kingdom [Pastor Lori]**

July 19

**Key Passage: Mark 10:42-45; Matthew 23:11; Philippians 2:1-8**

**Focus:** *What does greatness look like in God's Kingdom? Followers of Jesus often stumble over this question. Jesus' own disciples got it wrong. But Jesus modeled a greatness that was not of this world. This week we will discover what greatness looks like in the Kingdom and how one becomes truly great while serving Christ.*

### **INTRODUCTION:**

Good morning! Would you say thank you to our dancers for that beautiful reminder that apart from God we are nothing. We need His breath in all that we do. It is also a gentle reminder of His wonderful grace. Think about it. Breathing is not something earned. We don't wake up every morning and say, 'I hope I'm worthy of another breath today.' Rather, every breath is a gift from God.

In the same way, our relationship with Christ doesn't begin with striving. It begins with grace. We received God-given life not because we earned it but by His grace. We received His love, before we ever loved Him or did anything for Him." As we've been discussing throughout this series. God didn't breathe His life into us so it would stop with us. He breathes His life into us so that His life can flow through us and to others.

**Over the last four weeks, God has been building something great in us.**

In week one, Pastor Mark reminded us that everything begins with abiding. We don't produce fruit by trying harder—we remain connected to Jesus, and His life flows through us.

Then Pastor Theresa challenged us to move beyond "me" and embrace the power of "we." God's Kingdom has never been built by isolated Christians but by a united family.

In week 3, Pastor Earl reminded us that none of this is accidental. Before we were ever born, God created each of us with purpose. We aren't random people looking for meaning—we're people created for His mission.

And, last week Pastor Glenn, and Isaac, helped us see that God has uniquely gifted every one of us and has a place where those gifts bring Him glory and bless others.

This week ... We look to Jesus to discover what greatness looks like in God's Kingdom because He modeled greatness not of this world.

Let's pause and consider what we think is the greatest in the world. Okay, so I usually stay away from this stuff because frankly, I don't see the value nor do I have the stomach to watch folks beat on each other. But I must confess ... I watched some of the

UFC fights. What fascinated me wasn't even the fighting. It was everything surrounding it—the walkouts, the hype videos, the weigh-ins, the roaring crowds declaring who was already 'the greatest' before the fight even started. It made me wonder...who actually gets to define greatness. The Bible speaks about this ...

### **Mark 10:42-45**

<sup>42</sup> Jesus called them together and said, “You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. <sup>43</sup> Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, <sup>44</sup> and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. <sup>45</sup> For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

Jesus completely turns the world's definition of greatness upside down.

Paul then tells us exactly what that servant mindset looks like...

“Therefore, if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, <sup>2</sup> then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. - **Philippians 2:1-11**

<sup>5</sup> Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, <sup>6</sup> who, being in the form of God, did not consider it <sup>[a]</sup>robbery to be equal with God, <sup>7</sup> but <sup>[b]</sup>made **Himself of no reputation**, taking the form of a bondservant, *and* coming in the likeness of men. <sup>8</sup> And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to *the point of death*, even the death of the cross. <sup>9</sup> Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, <sup>10</sup> that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, <sup>11</sup> and *that* every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ *is* Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Highlight “made Himself of no reputation” taking the form of a bondservant. If anyone deserved recognition, it was Jesus. Rather, He willingly laid aside His rights in order to serve.

### **Hiddenness**

Hiddenness isn't God hiding us. It's choosing not to live for applause.

It asks the question, “Who am I serving?”

It's serving because someone needs help... not because someone is watching.

Jesus even taught, "When you give ... don't announce it.

When you pray ... go into your room.

Your Father who sees in secret ... Hiddenness isn't invisibility.

It's purity of motive and direction.

Like David in the caves and Joseph in prison, God often does some of His deepest work when no one else sees. We may experience long seasons of hiddenness and obscurity. These seasons are often viewed as times of preparation, refinement, and building deep, unshaken trust in God.

Hidden seasons reveal 3 things:

**Testing and Refining:** Hidden periods test your faith and reveal the true intentions of your heart. It helps strip away ego and the pursuit of status.

**Intimacy Before Impact:** God often uses quiet seasons to deepen your relationship with Him. By removing external validation, you learn to find your worth and joy in God's presence rather than in what you achieve.

**Authenticity:** A hidden life protects your spiritual integrity. When you are not performing for an audience, your acts of service become a pure expression of love and worship rather than a means to an end.

**Jesus says, Matthew 23:8-12.** <sup>11</sup> *The greatest among you will be your servant.* <sup>12</sup> *For those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.*

Greatness in God's Kingdom is not found in being noticed. It is found in humbling ourselves and becoming available to serve.

### **Availability.**

Then there is this thing called Availability. Availability in service asks the question, "Who am I willing to serve?"

### **What does Availability in Service actually look like?**

In spiritual contexts, availability says, "Lord, I hand my calendar to you." See, our availability is more important than our ability. It means prioritizing God's call over personal schedules and surrendering your time, talents, and resources so that we are instantly obedient and restfully present for His service.

**Surrender Our Calendar:** Putting personal priorities and busy schedules secondary to what God calls you to do in the moment.

**Embrace Interruptions:** Practicing the ministry of presence by viewing unexpected needs or interruptions as divine opportunities to serve rather than as annoyances.

**Surrender Our Resources:** Viewing your finances, energy, and time as gifts meant to be used for God's eternal purposes rather than just personal comfort.

The spiritual discipline of making yourself available—often referred to as a "ministry of presence"—is deeply rooted in scripture, notably found in the prophet Isaiah's immediate response to God's call in Isaiah 6:8 ("Here am I. Send me!") and Jesus' instructions to his disciples.

Jesus didn't simply teach hiddenness. He lived it. For thirty years He lived in obscurity. He often withdrew to pray. He healed people and sometimes told them not to tell anyone. Then when the Father called, He was completely available—even to death on a cross.

The Father's plan included years of hiddenness before public ministry. His complete availability carried Him all the way to the cross, fulfilling the mission the Father gave Him."

"Just as breathing isn't something we manufacture, neither is serving.

It's not about forcing it. It's not about performance.

God's Spirit breathes into us... and His life naturally breathes through us."

**Uncle Alan:** If you've ever come to church early, you've probably seen Uncle Alan. If you've ever come to church late, you've probably seen Uncle Alan. He's always in the parking lot or near the frontage of church directing traffic, holding an umbrella for folks, greeting and helping us in some way shape or form. When asked "Why do you serve?

His response is, "I serve God. I serve the church ... and I guess it helps me too." A man of few words but a great heart. To some that may not sound very profound, but I think that's exactly what faithfulness sounds like. Uncle Alan has been with us all the way back to the Iliahi Campus and served faithfully alongside many others. He never complains but serves wherever there is need. Even after being diagnosed with Parkinson's, he continues to serve throughout the week. He might be upset with me sharing. Every day not just NHCO, but the café, and his family. He watches over his uncles and aunty and helps to do yardwork and helps them take care of their needs.

While many are grateful, there are times when nothing is said. But that's not what he is seeking. His priority is God.

"The greatest people in God's Kingdom often aren't the most visible.

They're simply the most faithful."

Where is God inviting you to practice hiddenness this week? Where is He asking you to be available? Not so we can hold a title of being the greatest but rather we can shine God's light, in the best way we can, through our lives for His glory? Would you consider the verses we read earlier in Philippians 2 and how God may be asking you to embrace that in your life?

Church... After this we will leave and go about our business of the day. Tomorrow morning we'll wake up ... and God will give us another breath.

When He does ... don't let His life and grace stop with you.

Would you join me in prayer?

*Prayer: Lord, form Your mind in me so deeply that Your agenda becomes more important than mine. Make me available to the people You place in front of me, whether anyone notices or not. May Your life flow through mine for Your glory.*

## **Week 5 Discussion Questions**

The Greatest in God's Kingdom

Key Scriptures: Mark 10:42-45; Philippians 2:1-11; Matthew 23:11-12

1. How has Jesus redefined greatness for you?

Jesus says, "Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant." (Mark 10:43)

- How is that different from the world's definition of greatness?
- What challenges you most about Jesus' definition?

2. Hiddenness asks, "Who am I serving?"

Hiddenness isn't God hiding us—it's choosing not to live for applause.

- Where is God inviting you to serve faithfully, even if no one notices?
- Why do you think our motives matter so much to God?

3. Availability asks, "Who am I willing to serve?"

Our availability is often more important than our ability.

- Which area is most challenging for you right now? Why?
  - o Surrendering your calendar
  - o Embracing interruptions
  - o Surrendering your resources

4. Uncle Alan reminds us that "The greatest people in God's Kingdom often aren't the most visible—they're simply the most faithful."

- Who has quietly modeled Christlike faithfulness in your life?
- What have you learned from their example?

5. God didn't breathe His life into us so it would stop with us. As you look ahead to this week...

- Where is God inviting you to practice hiddenness?
- Where is He asking you to be available?
- What is one specific step you will take this week?

I pray your discussion time is filled with the leading of God's Spirit and may He bless you immensely with life-changing revelation. Blessings!