

"33 They came to Capernaum; and when He was in the house, He began to question them, "What were you discussing on the way?" 34 But they kept silent, for on the way they had discussed with one another which of them was the greatest. 35 Sitting down, He called the twelve and *said to them, "If anyone wants to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all." 36 Taking a child, He set him before them, and taking him in His arms, He said to them, 37 "Whoever receives one child like this in My name receives Me; and whoever receives Me does not receive Me, but Him who sent Me." 38 John said to Him, "Teacher, we saw someone casting out demons in Your name, and we tried to prevent him because he was not following us." 39 But Jesus said, "Do not hinder him, for there is no one who will perform a miracle in My name, and be able soon afterward to speak evil of Me. 40 "For he who is not against us is for us." Mark 9:33-40, NAS95.

Ver. 37. Whosoever receives one child like this, that is, any believer, who is like such a child for humility, meekness, and lowliness of mind; and so the Syriac version renders it, "one like to this child": and so the Arabic and Persic versions; for it cannot be thought that Christ's meaning is, that whoever takes up any little child, embraces, and takes notice of it, as he did, does what is after related; but that whoever shows respect, and performs the least office of love and kindness to the lowest believer, comparable to a little child, for the above excellent qualities, and he does this, says Christ, in my name; on account that he belongs to Christ, is one of his, bears his image, partakes of his grace, is loved by him, and shall be glorified with, him: such is Christ's great regard to his humble followers, that he takes it all one as if done to himself: he receives me; this humble believer, being a member of his, and like unto him, and respected by him; and whosoever shall receive me; Christ, in any of his members: receives not me; that is, not him only; for he does receive him, otherwise there would be a contradiction in the words; but his meaning is, that he does not hereby receive him, by receiving one of his, nor him so much, as his Father: but him that sent me; for as showing respect to one of Christ's members, is showing respect to him; so showing respect to Christ, is showing respect to his Father, from whence he came, by whom he was sent, in whose name he acted, and whose work and service he was concerned in.

For whom did Jesus come from heaven? For the great philosophers from Greece and the emperors of Rome? No. Did he come for the powerful and the mighty and the righteous? Not that some like that would not become His. He came to seek and save

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the lost whether they were lepers and the outcast, zealot nationalists, fishermen, a
self righteous Pharisee named Saul of Tarsus - these are the people he came to serve,
and most were in the eyes of the world.

"18 For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who
are being saved it is the power of God. 19 For it is written, "I WILL DESTROY THE
WISDOM OF THE WISE, AND THE CLEVERNESS OF THE CLEVER I WILL SET ASIDE." 20
Where is the wise man? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not
God made foolish the wisdom of the world? 21 For since in the wisdom of God the
world through its wisdom did not come to know God, God was well-pleased through the
foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. 22 For indeed Jews
ask for signs and Greeks search for wisdom; 23 but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews
a stumbling block and to Gentiles foolishness, 24 but to those who are called, both
Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. 25 Because the
foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.
26 For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the
flesh, not many mighty, not many noble; 27 but God has chosen the foolish things of
the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to
shame the things which are strong, 28 and the base things of the world and the
despised God has chosen, the things that are not, so that He may nullify the things
that are, 29 so that no man may boast before God. 30 But by His doing you are in
Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and
sanctification, and redemption, 31 so that, just as it is written, "LET HIM WHO
BOASTS, BOAST IN THE LORD.'" 1 Corinthians 1:18-31, NAS95.

Let's make a cultural leap back two thousand years to the middle east? It was one of
the best places in the world to be born but still a fearful place for a child. Babies were
aborted, children, especially baby girls, were exposed, that is, left outside overnight in
the cold without any wrapping for ravenous animals to destroy. Young girls and boys
were sex toys, sold into slavery to brothel keepers. The virtues of childhood weren't
trumpeted in those days. The children's charter was unknown. This was a society with a
high infant mortality rate, where the demand for work was so great that parents
couldn't be sentimental about kids. Children were considered 'not to have arrived'.
They made no economic contribution at all. They took, took, took, and needed as soon
as possible to start putting in the family pot. They were insignificant and a burden to
many parents.

The Lord Jesus takes one such anonymous child to use as an example.

Where did the Son of God himself go? Where the darkness was; where men dragged a

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woman before Jesus and told him they were going to stone her to death there and
then; where soldiers blindfolded and hit their prisoners; where death was by crucifixion,
and where they lashed men's backs until the blood ran. That's where he came. In the
midst of them he preached so freely, "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy
laden and I will give you rest."

So Christ must get this point across to Peter and the Twelve. In the house in which
they are sitting is a child. Jesus draws him into the circle, and then he picks him up in
his arms. He says to them, "This is the sort of person we welcome into our circle."

What does the Lord Jesus do in his house in Capernaum? He takes a child in his arms. I
don't read of him taking the chief priest in his arms or that he was touchy-feely when a
centurion had come to talk to him. I am not told that he embraced a ruler of the
synagogues. He didn't take people like that into his arms, but we are told that here in
Capernaum he took a little boy and hugged him, and he told his disciples that these are
the ones we welcome. "We always have room for the insignificant and the vulnerable
and the ones no one else wants. If you welcome them then you are welcoming me. I
identify with them. All those who believe are bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh -
however bad the past, however vile they've been, they are mine." When Saul of Tarsus
was indiscriminately taking and killing the powerless little people who loved Jesus that
same mighty Lord Christ met with him on the road to Damascus and halted him in his
tracks; "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" he asked him. Jesus stood in
solidarity with those who had entrusted themselves to them.

In the tremendous day that lies ahead of us all the Lord Jesus will say to many of his
people whom he will welcome into heaven, "I was once sick and in prison and naked and
hungry and all alone but thank you for coming to help me." And when they protest and
ask him, "When did we do that to you?" Then he will say that when they welcomed his
suffering sick people then they were welcoming him. The Lord's people don't sound like
the good and the beautiful and powerful people do they. To welcome that kind of

people is to welcome the mighty Lord of glory, the King of kings before whom the seraphim cover their eyes, the Creator of the heavens and the earth, the Judge of all mankind. And to welcome the Son of God is to welcome God the Father who sent him into the world. Your welcome goes right to heaven itself. It links you with Almighty God. If you understand what I am telling you then you are a great person, but if you do what I am telling you then you are a greater person. That is what greatness is. It is a willingness to be last in the eyes of the world. It is a life spent serving men and women in the name of Jesus Christ. It is a life spent welcoming the needy and vulnerable and the world's untouchables in the Savior's name, because when you welcome them you welcome him and welcome the one living God who sent him to be the Savior of all who believe in him.

35 Sitting down, He called the twelve and *said to them, "If anyone wants to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all." **36** Taking a child, He set him before them, and taking him in His arms, He said to them, **37** "Whoever receives one child like this in My name receives Me; and whoever receives Me does not receive Me, but Him who sent Me."

In order to correct the immature and foolish thinking of His disciples, Jesus sat down to teach them His truth. When a rabbi sat, in those days, he assumed a place of authority over his students. When Jesus sat down, His men knew they needed to listen!

When Jesus begins to teach, He speaks of a great paradox. He tells them that the way to greatness is through serving others. He tells them that the door to the first place is located in the servant's quarters. The word "servant" in verse 35 is the same word translated "deacon" elsewhere in the New Testament. The word refers to those "who wait tables". The literal meaning of the word is "to kick up dust". It is the image of a servant kicking up little puffs of dust as he moves from one duty to another.

Jesus is teaching His men the truth that true greatness is achieved through the humble service of others. That is a lesson that has been lost in our day. Some people think they deserve respect and preferential treatment just because they occupy a certain position. If you attend preacher's meetings you encounter this attitude all the time. There are some men who walk around like little peacocks, waiting for others to fawn

If you really want others to respect you, serve them. Put them before yourself and meet their needs, forgetting about your own needs. Give them the first seat, without wanting anything in return. When we humble ourselves, the Lord will exalt us in due time, Matt. 23:12; 1 Pet. 5:5.

To put an even finer point on what He is teaching, Jesus takes a child and places him before the disciples, v. 36. He tells them that if they will “receive” a child in His name is, in fact, “receiving” both the Son and the Father Who sent Him.

The word “receive” carries the idea of “displaying hospitality”. In those days, hospitality was everything. When a person showed up at your house, you were expected to “receive” them and serve them, meeting all their needs.

Jesus is telling us that when we serve the least among us, we are in reality serving Him. By serving Him, we are serving His Father as well.

Jesus could have just told them this. Why did He use a child? I think there are several reasons. First, children in that society were at the bottom of the social ladder. They were viewed as mere property and largely ignored by most adults. Second, Jesus used a child to teach His disciples about service because children really can't do anything for adults. A child can't enhance a person's position in society. A child cannot add to your success. A child can't make you more important in the eyes of the world. However, a child can teach you much about ministry!

Think about it, every parent in this room knows what happens when you have a new baby. That child demands everything! From day one it must be served, every need must be met by a willing adult. Children come into our homes and they take constant care and attention. If they are ignored, they let you know all about in loud and irritating fashion. When parents have children, they learn what giving and service are all about. When that child is born you give and you give and you give. When that child grows, you give and you give and you give. Often, even they reach adulthood, you give and you give and you give.

cannot serve us in return. That is a lesson we all need to take to heart. Too often, we only serve those who can do something in return for us. The Lord would have us reach out to those who are the neediest. He would have us serve those who cannot or even will not serve us in return. He desires that we do as He did and give our all for those who may break our hearts in return.

Often the church will reach out, but when we do, we often reach out to people who are like us. We look for those we think will be a blessing to the church. We want people with money, talent and potential. We look for people who can help us become a success.

Jesus, on the other hand, had a habit of reaching out to people who could do nothing for Him in return. (Ill. Jairus' daughter; The Widow of Nain; The Gaderene Demoniac; Bartimaeus; the Dying Thief, etc.)

Jesus set the example for us. He was a servant of the neediest people of all. He was a servant to those who could never repay Him. He was a servant to those who would fail Him, deny Him, and dishonor Him. He was a servant to you and men when He died on the cross, Mark 10:45.

We need to set our hearts on those who need Jesus, without regard for what they can bring to the table or contribute to the church. We need to fulfill our Lord's command to "Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled," Luke 14:23. We need to wash the feet of those around us, regardless of their position in society, their ability to help us, or their power and influence. We need a heart that is willing to serve the least among us for the glory of God alone!

38 John said to Him, "Teacher, we saw someone casting out demons in Your name, and we tried to prevent him because he was not following us." 39 But Jesus said, "Do not hinder him, for there is no one who will perform a miracle in My name, and be able soon afterward to speak evil of Me. 40 "For he who is not against us is for us." 38-41

When John hears the words of Jesus, he brings up an incident that had occurred

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sometime earlier, v. 38. Apparently, the disciples had encountered a fellow who was casting out demons in the name of Jesus. This fellow was successful because the verse says that “he was casting out devils” in Jesus’ name. But, because he “followed” not Jesus and His men, the disciples rebuked him and told him to stop what he was doing.

John is saying, “Jesus, we saw a fellow who was using Your name to cast out devils. But, we set him straight! He wasn’t doing it like we do it and we let him know that our way is the only right way that it can be done. He’s out of business!”

Jesus responds by telling them to let people like that alone, v. 39. If they are doing good works in the name of Jesus, they are not against Him, but they are working for Him, v. 40. Jesus goes on to tell His men that even if someone just gave a disciple a cup of water in the name of the Lord, that person would surely be rewarded for their service, v. 41.

There are several lessons here for the modern church, if we are willing to receive them. Often, we are just like the Lord’s disciples. If a church, a ministry or an individual doesn’t do everything just like we do them, then we are quick to condemn them. We are quick to judge them. We are quick to lash out against them. We are quick to try and silence them. There are a few truths we have forgotten!

No church, no preacher and no ministry has an exclusive lock on the truth. Some may have a clearer, more mature and accurate understanding but.... In other words, God did not establish us as the final determiner of who is and who isn’t serving the Lord. Truth is always much bigger than our grasp of it! The primary thing is whether or not the Lord is being glorified.

Jealousy over the things of God is nothing new - **Joshua and Moses, Num. 11:26-29;**
John the Baptist, John 3:26-30.

When it comes to churches, one size does not fit all – Not everyone responds to the way we do things here. This church isn’t for every believer!

As much as it may irk us at time, God does use folks who do things differently than we

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do. We need to be careful that we do not judge a church, a ministry or a preacher just because they are different than we are.

There are things that go on in other churches that I just don't like. But, I am forced by this passage to remember that even if I may not like this or that about a church or a ministry, if they love Jesus and preaching His Gospel, we are branch offices of the same business! We are still on the same team, even if I do not like their methods.

I am not condoning what they do; all I am saying is that we must understand those ministries will give an account to God and not to us. Our duty here is for us to be the kind of church He wants us to be. In other words, we are to worry about our own business first. And, we've got enough here to keep us busy for the rest of our days!

In the end, every church and every ministry must be judged by the kind of people it produces – If a ministry produces worldly people, it is of the world, no matter what they claim. If a ministry produces Godly people, it is a tool God is using, no matter how we feel about it!

Conc: During the Revolutionary War General George Washington walked up on a group of men who were trying to pull down a tree. They were almost able to get the job done, but they lacked just a little strength. It appeared that the help of just one more man would be sufficient to get the job done.

Washington noticed their commanding officer standing off to the side, shouting orders.

“Why don't you help them?” Washington asked.

The officer responded indignantly, “Sir, I am their commander! I give the orders and they do the work!”

Hearing that, Washington got off his horse, took off his coat, rolled up his sleeves and gave the tired men the help they needed to complete their task.

When they were finished, Washington looked at the officer and said, “Sir, if your men need any further assistance, please call on me at any time.”

The officer said, "Thank you friend, and where may I call for you if I need you?"

Washington said, "You can find me in the commanding General's tent."

With that he rode off leaving the astonished and embarrassed officer in his wake.