

Introduction:

- The question of, "Who is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven?" Was raised in 18:1-4. And will be brought up again in 23:8-12
- "The natural human concern with status and importance is clearly one of the most fundamental instincts which must be unlearned by those who belong to God's kingdom." France, R. T. (2007). *The Gospel of Matthew* (p. 755). Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publication Co. And Jesus has been taking the 12 through some extreme unlearning.
- verses 25 and 26 set up the sharp antithesis between how earthly kingdoms and authority structures operate vs. how God's operate. Jesus' words, "*But among you it will be different.*" Could have been used multiple times in chapters 18-20.

I. Jesus Predicts His Death 17-19

- A. I find it interesting that Matthew puts Jesus' prediction of his death between these two thoughts: 1. We left everything, so what is in it for us? 2. Can we sit at your right hand and at your left? Can you see how 'polar' opposite the kingdoms of men and the kingdom of God operates?
- B. In this frame work Matthew creates the perfect setting to make a point. Jesus first predicts his death in Mt 16:21, again in 17:22-23. But this time, (Mt 20:17-19) is the most detailed of the three predictions. Three things are happening in vs 17: Matthew wants us aware of movement.
 1. They are going up to Jerusalem
 2. They are on their way
 3. Jesus is speaking privately to them in the midst of a crowd. We know there is a crowd because of what Mark writes and also Matthew lets us know later they are walking in a crowd. Why would Matthew leave that out? He wants the reader to hear his words!
- C. The Review and emphasis. Mt 20:17 reviews things already said.
 1. 16:21 tells of the Pharisees involvement in His death.
 2. 17:22-23 the theme of betrayal is introduced
 3. 20:18-ff we get the same but with more detail. Vs 19 actually summarizes what we will read in chapter 27.
 4. Mt 10:38 "*Take up your cross.*" Is starting to seem very real. The cross to the Jew was way different than the jewelry to the Gentiles.
- D. Verse 28 will actually introduce the purpose of his death. "We have known of the *necessity* of Jesus' death since 16:21, but here for the first time, almost in passing, is an epigrammatic explanation of its *purpose.*" France, R. T. (2007). *The Gospel of Matthew* (p. 755). Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publication Co.

II. Breaking the Mold vs 20-26

- A. What is your request?

1. Their request seems to ignore what Jesus has just said about His own destiny. And most of all it is poorly timed insight of what He has just said about his own death.
 2. Their understanding:
 - a) He is messiah 16:16-17
 - b) He is Son of Man Dan 7:13-14
 - c) Now the move towards Jerusalem makes kingly authority that much closer. Neither momma nor sons have a clue about what is about to happen.
 - d) Plus 19:28 they heard Jesus say something about sitting on 12 thrones.
 3. Their request is to have one brother on the right the other on the left. Matthew uses this language clearly to relate it to the two thieves later on... "*one on the right the other on the left.*"
 4. Why would they even ask such a question? Well, in 19:30 Jesus says to Peter, those who are first will be last...In 16:22 Peter make a dumb move in rebuking Jesus, ...in 16:23 Peter is rebuked by Jesus very hard...the door 'appears to be opening' for them.
- B. Are you able to drink the cup?
1. Jesus' kingship is closely tied to suffering. In fact, it is through the cross (cup) that the throne is achieved. Therefore Jesus question: Are you able to drink the cup of suffering?
 2. The cup in the OT is mostly used to speak of suffering. (Ps 75:8; Jer 25:15-29; Ezek 23:31-34 etc.).
 - a) If James and John had truly understood the cup they would never have asked the question.
 - b) Their answer is very sincere though. They have not been tested up to this point. That does not happen until (26:56) where they are all scattered.
 - c) What Jesus says in vs 23 lets them know they are out of line.
 - (1) You will drink the cup
 - (2) And it is not mine to give you. That is up to the Father.
 - (3) Again, the 'honor' to be beside Jesus on the right or the left is reflecting the cross. (27:38)
- C. The fact that the others (pl) were angry, lets us know they were still in the worldly mold wanting status as well. And Jesus prepares once again to bring them into alignment.
1. "In response to the disciples' concern for status, Jesus sets out the radically different value-scale of the kingdom of heaven." France, R. T. (2007). *The Gospel of Matthew* (p. 759). Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publication Co.
 - a) The way of the world is laid out. It is the 'great ones' vs the 'little ones. (10:42 cup of cold water to least.; 18:6 millstone to those who make little ones stumble, 10 don't look down on little one, 14 Father loves the little ones).

- b) Human society needs properly structured authority, of course, but Jesus' emphasis here is on the way that authority is exercised. France, R. T. (2007). Gospel of Matthew. (p. 759). Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publication Co.
 - c) The two Greek verbs, "lord it over" and "impose their authority on" are both compounds beginning with *kata-*, "down:" They use their position at the top to "bear down on" those below them in the social scale. This natural human pecking order is found, of course, not only among "the great", but at all levels in society, play-grounds, work place, and even families.
2. 26-28 Jesus gives the alternative, the kingdom culture. "You" is not just the 12 but all who come into the Kingdom.
- a) The demand is to become like 'children' no social status/authority.
 - b) diakons - servant - one who waits on tables, serves food...does things for other people not for self.
 - c) doulos - slave - someone who is not free to do what they wish. They are at the bottom of the 'pecking order'...Therefore the last shall be first. IF you really want a place of authority then become a slave to others. IF there is to be any ambition in the service of God it is to serve others.
3. vs 28 The Son of man is to become the supreme example of this!
- a) He served all humanity.
 - b) *"Though he was God, he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to. Instead, he gave up his divine privileges; he took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being. When he appeared in human form, he humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal's death on a cross."* (Philippians 2:6-8, NLT) Even here it is to provide a model of Christian living.
 - c) His death is made to be seen as the supreme example of unselfish service! A RANSOM for many. His death secures our freedom.
 - d) The understanding then becomes, Jesus' death will bring deliverance to many, and we the reader are likely to remember the earlier explanation of the name Jesus as the one who "will save his people from their sins." (1:21)
- D. 29-34 The healing of the two blind men comes at the end of all the Gospel accounts of Jesus journey to Jerusalem.
1. "The story thus appropriately rounds off the journey section of Matthew's narrative by providing a practical example of the reversal of values in the kingdom of heaven which has been the dominant theme of the last three chapters." France, R. T. (2007). The Gospel of Matthew (pp. 764-765). Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publication Co.
 2. And the men with their sight 'followed Jesus'.