

GREATNESS IN THE KINGDOM IS MISUNDERSTOOD

Matthew 19:13 - 20:34; Mark 10:13-52; Luke 17:11 - 19:27; John 10:40 - 11:54

STRUCTURE

Key-persons: Jesus, the grateful Samaritan, the rich young man, the brothers James and John, and Zacchaeus

Key-locations: The road from Ephraim to Bethany, along the border between Samaria and Galilee

Key-repetitions:

- Criticism/anger: Jesus criticized the ungrateful Jews who were cured of leprosy (Lk 17:17); Jesus was angry with his disciples who rejected the children (Mk 10:14); after James and John asked for privileged places in Jesus' Kingdom, the other disciples were angered (Mt 20:24); the crowd criticized Jesus when he went to Zacchaeus' house (Lk 19:7).

- Kingdom/Kingdom of God: A Pharisee's question and Jesus' answer (Lk 17:20-21); one must receive the Kingdom like a child (Lk 18:15-17); it is hard for rich to enter the Kingdom (Lk 18:24-27); those who sacrifice for the Kingdom will receive benefits (Lk 18:28-29); James and John wanted the highest place of honor in Jesus' kingdom (Mt 20:20-23).

- Followed Jesus/Converted: the faith of the grateful Samaritan made him well (Lk 17:19); in the parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector, the tax man went home justified (Lk 18:9-14); a person must enter the Kingdom of God like a little child (Lk 18:18-17); the rich young man refused to follow Jesus (Lk 18:15-23); Zacchaeus received salvation (Lk 19:1-10).

Key-attitudes:

- The seriousness of Jesus when speaking about the Kingdom and about his death.

- The serenity and magnetism of Jesus, the storyteller, when he told parables.

- When cured of leprosy, the gratitude of the Samaritan in contrast to the nine ungrateful Jews.

- Jesus' astonishment at the nine ungrateful Jews who were cured of leprosy.

- Jesus' indignation toward his disciples when they

rejected the children.

- The rich young man's feeling of deception when Jesus told him to sell everything and to give the money to the poor.

- The disciples' astonishment when Jesus said it was difficult for the rich to enter into the Kingdom of God.

- The disciples' fear when they accompanied Jesus on the trip to Jerusalem.

- The selfishness of James and John when they asked for privileged positions in Jesus' Kingdom.

- The anger of the other disciples toward James and John after the two asked for special privileges.

- The joy of Zacchaeus when Jesus went to his home, in contrast with the disgust of the crowd that followed Jesus.

Initial-situation:

During the third year of Jesus' public ministry, he made three trips to Jerusalem to participate in three religious feasts. The first trip was for the Feast of Tabernacles.

Jesus' second trip to Jerusalem was for the Feast of Dedication. When he claimed that God was his father, the Jews picked up stones to kill him.

Then Jesus went across the Jordan River to the place where John had been baptizing in the early days. Jesus left that place to return to Bethany where he resurrected Lazarus from the grave (Jn 11:1-44). The Pharisees and the Sanhedrin began to plot to kill Jesus (Jn 11:45-53). Therefore, Jesus withdrew to a region near the desert, to a village called Ephraim (Jn 11:54).

Initial-problem:

Jesus began his trip to Jerusalem for the Feast of the Passover by traveling along the border between Samaria and Galilee.

Final-situation:

Jesus continued traveling to Jerusalem for the purpose of attending the Feast of the Passover.

BIBLE STORY

Jesus began his third trip to Jerusalem by traveling along the border between Samaria and Galilee (Lk 17:11) in order to encounter women from Galilee (Mk 15:40-41) who would travel with him to Jerusalem for the Feast of the Passover.

Ten Lepers Healed Lk 17:11-19

Jesus was entering a village when ten men with leprosy met him. They stood at a distance and shouted, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!"

Jesus looked at them, and said, "Go, show yourselves to the priests." And as they went, they were healed.

One of them realized he was healed; he returned, shouting praises to God. He knelt at Jesus' feet and thanked him; he was a man from the country of Samaria.

Jesus asked, "Ten men were healed! Where are the other nine? Why is this foreigner the only one who returned to give praise to God?" Jesus told the man, "Get up and go; your faith has made you well" (Lk 17:11-19).

Teaching: Coming of the Kingdom of God Lk 17:20-37

The Pharisees asked Jesus when the Kingdom of God would come. Jesus replied, "The Kingdom of God does not come in a way that can be observed, nor will people say, 'Here it is,' or 'There it is,' because the Kingdom of God is within you" (Lk 17:20-21).

"When the Son of Man comes, things will be just as they were in the days of Noah. People were eating, drinking, and getting marrying up to the day Noah entered the ark. Then the flood came and drowned them all.

"Things will be just as they were in the days of Lot. People were eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building. But the day Lot left Sodom, fire and sulfur rained down from heaven and destroyed them all (Lk 17:26-29).

"Things will be just like this on the day the Son of Man comes. The person who is on the roof of his house should not go down to get anything. Likewise, the person who is in the field should not go back to the house for anything. Remember Lot's wife! Whoever tries to keep his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life will preserve it. I tell you, on that night two people will be sleeping in the same bed; one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding grain together; one will be taken and the other left" (Lk 17:30-36).

Parable: The Pharisee and the Tax Collector Lk 18:9-14

Jesus told a parable to some who thought they were better than others and who despised everybody else, "Two men went into the Temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood in front of everyone and prayed about himself, 'God, I thank you that I am not an evildoer or an adulterer like other people. I thank you that I am not like that tax collector. I fast twice a week and tithe on all my income.'

"But the tax collector stood a distance from the people. He did not even look up toward heaven. He pounded his chest and prayed, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner.'

"I tell you that the tax man, rather than the Pharisee, went home with God's approval. For everyone who honors himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be honored" (Lk 18:9-14).

Jesus Blessed the Children Mt 19:13-15; Mk 10:13-16; Lk 18:15-17

People brought little children to Jesus to have him touch them. The disciples scolded the people. Jesus became indignant (Mk 10:13-14; Lk 18:15).

Jesus called the children to him and said, "Let the little children come to me; don't hinder them, for the Kingdom of God belongs to such as these. I tell you the truth, you will never enter the Kingdom of God unless you enter it like a little child" (Lk 18:16-17).

Rich Young Ruler Mt 19:16-30; Mk 10:17-31; Lk 18:18-30

A certain rich young ruler asked Jesus, "Good teacher, what must I do to receive eternal life?"

Jesus answered, "Why do you call me good? No one is good; only God is good. You know the commandments, 'Do not commit adultery, do not murder, do not steal, do not give false testimony, honor your father and mother.'"

The young ruler answered, "I've obeyed all these since I was a boy" (Lk 18:15-21).

Jesus looked at him and loved him (Mk 10:21).

Jesus told him, "You still lack one thing. Sell everything you own and give the money to the poor. You will have riches in heaven. Then come, follow me."

The ruler heard this and became very sad, because he was wealthy (Lk 18:22-23).

Jesus looked at him and said, "It's very hard for the rich to enter the Kingdom of God! Indeed, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter God's Kingdom."

The crowd heard this and asked, "Who then can be saved?"

Jesus replied, "What is impossible with people is possible with God" (Lk 18:24-27).

Peter told Jesus, "We left everything we owned to follow you!"

Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, everyone who has left home or wife or brothers or parents or children for the sake of the Kingdom of God will receive much more in this present age and, in the age to come, they will have eternal life" (Lk 18:28-30).

Jesus Predicted His Death for the Third Time Mt 20:17-19; Mk 10:32-34; Lk 18:31-34

They were on their way up to Jerusalem. Jesus privately told the Twelve, "We are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests, religious leaders and scholars. They will condemn him to death and then hand him over to the Gentiles, who will make fun of him, spit on him, whip him and kill him. Three days later he will come back to life" (Mk 10:32-34).

The disciples did not understand any of this. Its meaning was a mystery to them. They didn't know what he was talking about (Lk 18:34).

Request of John and James Mt 20:20-28; Mk 10:35-45

The mother of James and John came to Jesus with her two sons. She knelt before Jesus and asked him, "Promise me that these two sons of mine will be given the highest places of honor in your kingdom. Let one sit at your right and the other at your left."

Jesus told them, "You don't know what you are asking." He asked James and John, "Can you drink from the cup I am going to drink from?"

They answered, "Yes, we can!"

Jesus told them, "You will indeed drink from my cup, but it is not for me to grant who sits at my right or left. My Father will make that decision" (Mt 20:20-23).

The ten others heard about this and were angry with the two brothers. Jesus called the disciples together and said, "You know that the foreign rulers have power over their subjects, and their high officials exercise authority over them. It won't be that way with you. If you want to become great, you must become a servant of the rest; if you want to be first, you must be a servant to the others. The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mt 20:24-28).

Jesus and Zacchaeus Lk 19:1-10

Jesus was passing through Jericho. Zacchaeus lived there; he was chief tax collector and was wealthy. Zacchaeus wanted desperately to see Jesus, but was a short man and could not see over the crowd. So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree so he could see Jesus when he passed that way.

Jesus reached the tree, looked up and said, "Zacchaeus, hurry down. I want to be a guest at your house today." Zacchaeus hurried down and gladly welcomed Jesus.

All the people saw this and complained, "He has gone to be the guest of a sinner."

Later that day, Zacchaeus stood up and said, "Lord! I will give half of my possessions to the poor, and I will pay back four times as much to everyone I have ever cheated."

Jesus answered him, "Today you and your family have been saved; you are a true son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost" (Lk 19:1-10).

Jesus continued on his journey up to Jerusalem to attend the Feast of the Passover (Lk 19:28). Jesus taught his disciples and the people as he traveled.

GENERIC DIALOGUE QUESTIONS

1. What catches your attention in the story?
2. Is there anything in the story that is hard to understand?
3. Who are the main characters in the story?
4. What problems did the characters face?
5. How did the characters face their problems?
6. How have you faced similar problems?
7. Is there someone in the story who is similar to you or who is different from you?
8. What does the story tell about God?

SPECIFIC DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What does the healing of the ten with leprosy reveal about the relationship between thankfulness and faith?
2. What is Jesus' feeling toward those who hinder children from coming to him?
3. Why is it hard for the rich to come to Jesus?
4. What did Jesus teach about how to become great in his kingdom?
5. How did Zacchaeus become a follower of Jesus?

LIFE-LESSONS

1. Gratitude to God is rarer than faith. The nine ungrateful lepers had faith in Jesus' words (Lk 17:14). People with leprosy were required to stay a distance away from others. If a leper were cured, he was required to present himself to a priest who would declare him clean (Leviticus 14). Jesus sent the ten lepers to the priest before they were healed. They responded in faith and went. The Samaritan was the only one who showed gratitude (Lk 17:15-17).
2. When Jesus returns, there will be a precise separation. Some will be taken to be with him; all others will be left behind (Lk 17:26-35).
3. The main lesson from the parable of The Pharisee and the Tax Collector is that those who take pride in their achievements will be cut off from God; but, those who are ashamed of their actions, yet beg God for mercy will be accepted by him (Lk 18:9-14).
4. When people make it difficult for children to come to him, Jesus becomes angry. Jesus was angry with the disciples who wanted to prevent the children from coming to him (Mk 10:14).
5. The rich young man committed four mistakes; each one was corrected by Jesus (Mt 19:16-21):
 - He was mistaken about Jesus as a person, considering him a good teacher. Jesus corrected him (Mk 10:17). Jesus is good because he is God; if he is not God, he is not a good man (Mk 10:18);
 - He was mistaken about how to obtain eternal life,

supposing that he could obtain it by doing good things (Mt 19:16). Jesus corrected him by confronting him with the high demands of the Divine Law (Mt 19:17);

■ He was mistaken about himself, thinking that he had kept the Law of Moses (Mt 19:20). Jesus corrected him, testing him as to his love for his neighbor (Mt 19:19) and his works for justice (Mt 19:21). Jesus opened his eyes to his failure (Mt 19:22);

■ His greatest mistake was his attachment to wealth which led him to reject the invitation to follow Jesus (Mt 19:21-22). Nobody can serve two masters, wealth and God (Mt 6:24).

6. People who are social outcasts because of their political views, immorality, or life-style need to know that Jesus seeks to have fellowship with them. Jesus went to the tax collector Zacchaeus' home. The Romans levied heavy taxes on nations under their control. Zacchaeus was a Jew by birth who worked for Rome. He was considered a traitor. It was known that tax collectors made themselves rich by cheating their fellow Jews. In spite of the fact that Zacchaeus was both a cheater and a turncoat, Jesus went to his home and gave him salvation (Lk 19:1-10).