

Matthew 18

Notes:

Humans are competitive by nature, some more than others. In any way that we are different, we will find a way to compete. That can be useful and constructive when it comes to things like business. It can be fun or entertaining when it comes to sports or games. But as with all things, sin corrupts it and makes it harmful. That's what we see in the beginning of our text.

Matthew 18:1-11 - The King's Little Ones!

Scriptures:

Luke 22:24-26 - Now there was also a dispute among them, as to which of them should be considered the greatest. 25 And He said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those who exercise authority over them are called 'benefactors.' 26 But not so among you; on the contrary, he who is greatest among you, let him be as the younger, and he who governs as he who serves.

Mark 10:35-37 -

Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to Him, saying, "Teacher, we want You to do for us whatever we ask."

36 And He said to them, "What do you want Me to do for you?"

37 They said to Him, "Grant us that we may sit, one on Your right hand and the other on Your left, in Your glory."

Matthew 5:3 - Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

¹ At that time the disciples came to Jesus,

saying, "Who then is greatest in the kingdom

G3187 – "greater
adj. — greater in
size or
importance or
degree."

of heaven?"

Notes:

'Who then is the greatest...' This is something the disciples would sometimes discuss and argue about. Even on the evening of Jesus' betrayal, they are disputing this (Luke 22:24-26). I would be curious to witness how this dispute manifested. Was it each one of them claiming greatness based on how well they have followed Jesus. Was it one group putting one or more disciples ahead of others – those for Peter, others for James and John.

Jesus had just done the miracle of the coin in the mouth of the fish for Peter. Did that mean Peter was the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?

James and John expressed their opinion of this when they asked to be seated next to Jesus in His kingdom (Mark 10:35-37). This is a claim of greatness.

There is something hardwired into the human psyche that seeks greatness. We were created to reflect the image of God and God is great. Sin has corrupted the God-ordained desire to seek greatness for God's glory to seeking greatness for self-glorification.

Jesus is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. To be great, we must become like Him. The more like Him we become, the greater we are in the kingdom of heaven.

In the Sermon on the Mount, the very first Beatitude was (Matthew 5:3). I am so thankful that we have the Bible to remind us of these timeless truths. We can be so forgetful.

Scriptures:

² Then Jesus called a little child to Him, set

G3813 -

Notes:

What Jesus does here by using a child to illustrate His point was very unusual in their culture. In almost all the ancient world, children were not esteemed. They were often the lowest of the low in society. In the original language, the word translated as 'him' is in the neuter form, neither male nor female. It could also be translated as 'it'. The NLT translates this as 'the child'.

him in the midst of them,

Scriptures:

John 3:3 - Jesus answered and said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

³ and said, "Assuredly, I say to you, unless

Notes:

Jesus is speaking to His disciples. To be converted is to change. To change someone must be open to the idea that they need to change.

'will by no means' – There is no other way to do it. You cannot stay the way you are and enter the kingdom of heaven.

you are converted and become as little

G4762 – turn around, change one's ways, change. "to turn (change) v. — to undergo a transformation or a change of position or action."

Where most people struggle with the idea of greatness in the kingdom of heaven is that it might not include greatness in this life. I believe the greatest people in the kingdom of heaven will be unknown to us. They served God faithfully but in obscurity. For most people in this world obscurity is the opposite of greatness.

children, you will by no means enter the

'converted' – Before you concern yourself with greatness, you concern make sure you are in the kingdom. This requires a conversion from your previous unsaved state to a state that can enter the kingdom. What this means is that without conversion, without change, there is no salvation. You can't stay the way you were before you were saved and be saved. Jesus said something similar to Nicodemus (John 3:3).

kingdom of heaven.

Don't miss the phrase, 'and become like little children'. That is not an event, it is a process. We call that process sanctification. Once someone is saved, and they start changing, they begin a journey toward child-like faith. The more mature you are in your faith, the child-like your faith ought to be.

Jesus doesn't call them to perfect righteousness, abundance of good works, martyr-like self-sacrifice, or scholarly knowledge of the Scriptures. He calls them to child-like faith. Child-like faith might lead to those things, but that simple faith must be the basis for them.

Scriptures:

1 Peter 5:6-7 - Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, 7 casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.

4 Therefore whoever humbles himself as this

G5013 – “to humble
⇔ bring low v. — to
humble someone,
conceived of as
bringing the person
low or down.”

little child is the greatest in the kingdom of

heaven.

Notes:

Most of the disciples were common, uneducated men. There was nothing particularly special about any of them. What made them think they might be great in the kingdom of heaven? Being with Jesus resulted in them doing great things. All of them had been used to work miracles. Just the fact that Jesus chose them out of all those who followed Him to be His disciples may have led them to the false idea that they were great.

There is always a temptation to think too highly of yourself if God chooses to use you in some special way. Any time I am tempted to think that way I remind myself that God used a donkey to speak to the prophet Balaam.

‘humbles himself’ – this must be an act of the will. God can humble us and will if He deems it necessary. But His desire is that we would choose to humble ourselves (1 Peter 5:6-7).

This is one of the upside-down truths of our faith. Greatness is achieved through humility. Humility is deliberately making yourself lower. As we grow in humility, considering ourselves less and less, the greater we become in the kingdom of heaven. At the same time as we grow in humility, the less we care about greatness in this life.

Peter says that humility leads to God exalting us. As we grow in humility, we only desire that exaltation so that we can glorify God more effectively. But we must also acknowledge that exaltation may not be in the eyes of this world.

Everything about our lives, our thoughts, feelings, choices, behaviors come from within us and are motivated by one source or another – pride or humility. Before we were saved by Jesus, only pride motivated our lives. Once we were saved, humility was possible. Through sanctification, we become more able to choose humility, but the root of pride persists. Every choice we make, is to let pride influence, or to humble ourselves through the power of the Holy Spirit.

‘kingdom of heaven’ = Saved community under the kingship of Christ. Before concerning yourself about whether you are the greatest or not, you should make sure you are even a part of the kingdom of heaven by faith in Christ.

Scriptures:

⁵ Whoever receives one little child like this in

Notes:

G1209 –
welcomes. “to
receive (person)
v. — to willingly
permit access to
one’s company.”

My name receives Me.

Scriptures:

⁶ “Whoever causes one of these little ones

Notes:

‘little ones’ can be interpreted as children. It might also refer to those who are less mature in their faith, or to the marginalized due to some lack in their life.

Like little children, those who are not mature in their faith are vulnerable to those who might abuse or deceive them.

As mature believers we have a responsibility to help people into the kingdom of heaven and once there we need to guide and protect them until they are mature.

If, as mature believers, someone causes one of Christ’s little ones to sin, it would be better to die a horrible death than face your Savior with that on your conscience.

This may be suggesting that someone who claims to be a believer and leads less mature Christians to sin will face a horrible judgment.

G4624 – “to cause to sin
⇒ trip v. — to cause
someone to sin, often
with an idea of finality or
falling away; conceived of
as causing someone to
stumble and fall.”

who believe in Me to sin, it would be better

G4100 – trust in.

for him if a millstone were hung around his

neck, and he were drowned in the depth of

the sea.

Scriptures:

⁷ Woe to the world because of offenses!

G3759 – “horror
(interjection) n.
— an interjection
of grief or of
denunciation.”

G4625 – causes to
sin.

Notes:

‘Woe’ – In addition to an expression
of grief, woe can be a declaration of
doom when God is saying it!

For offenses must come, but woe to that man

by whom the offense comes!

Scriptures:

8 "If your hand or foot causes you to ~~sin~~,


Notes:

G4624 -

cut it off and cast *it* from you. It is better for


G1581 – do away
with.

G906 -

G2570 –
beneficial.

you to enter into  life lame or maimed, rather

G1525 -

G3588/G2222 –
the + life =
heaven.

than having two hands or two feet, to be cast

into the everlasting  fire.

G166 - eternal

G4442 -

⁹ And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it

Notes:

'hell' – "hell, Gehenna, a Hellenized transliteration of the Hebrew, "Hinnom Valley." A ravine just SSW of the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. A place of trash fires and perpetually burning rubbish, hence the figurative extension of a place of eternal punishment." Logos

out and cast *it* from you. It is better for you to

Jesus is not suggesting that we cut off our hands or pluck out our eyes. Our hands and eyes are just the vehicles that we use to sin; they are not the source of sin.

"Harming our physical bodies can never change the spiritual condition of our hearts." Warren Wiersbe

enter into life with one eye, rather than having

Jesus is telling us to be extreme in our efforts to make the corrections in our lives that cause us to sin and in context with the sins that we commit that might cause others to sin.

two eyes, to be cast into hell fire.

G1067 - Gehenna

G4442 -

Scriptures:
Matthew 7:1-2 - Judge not,
that you be not judged.
2 For with what judgment
you judge, you will be
judged; and with the
measure you use, it will be
measured back to you.

¹⁰ "Take heed that you do not despise one of

G2706 – "to
despise v. — to
look down on
with contempt."

Notes:
'do not despise' – Jesus taught that
we should not judge others
([Matthew 7:1-2](#)). To despise
someone to judge them as unworthy
or beneath you.

Every believer matters to God.
Regardless of how weak or
immature their faith might be.

these little ones, for I say to you that in

^Pheaven their ^Aangels always see the face of

G32 -

⁺My ^AFather who is in ^Pheaven.

Scriptures:

11 For the Son of Man has come to save that

Notes:

G4982 – bring
safely (to
kingdom of
heaven).

which was lost.

G622 – ruined (by
sin).

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