

HUMILITY IN 2 ODD OBJECT LESSONS

OPENING STORY:

An ancient Indonesian fable tells of a turtle that could fly. He would hold on to a stick with his mouth as the stick will be carried by geese. But one day, the turtle heard the onlookers on the ground saying, "Aren't those geese just brilliant!" His pride was offended that he shouted, "Hey this was all my idea!" Of course, because he opened his mouth, he lost his grip, and he fell down. His pride became his downfall.

INTRODUCTION

Notice that our text is entitled, "Jesus Predicts His Death a Second Time." Because in essence this is a continuation of our text last week: that Jesus will be crucified, executed, and die. And I wish I could tell you that it was a successful learning session with Jesus' disciples. But it was not. Which justify the need for Jesus to say it the second time. But their response in today's text is a new awful low: they held a debate.

It was a debate something seemingly more important than God's plan for the redemption of humanity. Something more urgent than supporting Jesus' intent to go through incredible suffering. They need to settle among themselves, who among them is the star, the big shot, the top dog! Or the CEO that will get the corner office (so to speak). Our text says, "they were arguing who among them is the greatest." And truly, nothing is more important than that, right? Well at least, that is what they were thinking. Jesus, as a response, gave 2 of the most powerful, and yet "odd" object lessons that day. Which was probably what they needed to hear, and what we, 21st century readers, need to be reminded of every now and then.

1. THE LESSON OF SERVANTHOOD

v.35: Anyone who wants to be first must be the very last, and the servant of all.

While Jesus was saying this, it is not impossible that there were actual servants in the house, washing someone's feet or preparing their meal. Some of them were born to slavery. Some captured in war, some sold to escape poverty. But in Jesus' eyes they were not wretched and pitiful. Rather they were the embodiment of humility and meekness. They were manifestations of true inner greatness.

APPLICATION

But even today servanthood and greatness can be regarded as from two opposite poles. Its like saying: if you want to be a champion, don't compete aggressively. Or if you want to win an argument, don't speak assertively. Or if you want to be on top, don't climb any social ladders. Rather find the nearest mop, and start cleaning up the floor. Or give a huge amount but don't tell anyone about it. Or choose your family, over compensations or career promotion. Sometimes servanthood will sound so naïve, so odd, or even foolish in today's manmade success-standard. But it seems that for Jesus, IT IS NOT!

Because greatness is not always found in the seats of honor.

Greatness is not always present in the hall of fame, or seen on our huge TV screens.

Rather it is enjoyed by those who discovered the joy of contentment

It is relished by those who don't always need to protect their pride or ego.

Those who don't demand for fame or recognition to satisfy their self-worth.

And so here is to times that that you took the posture of servanthood:

At times that you decided to forgive and just let go.

At times that you were willing to give way, for the sake of others.

Or at times that you have to give up the comfort of being at home, so you can serve the homeless and the hungry in our food bank.

And even those times that you have the chance to take the credit, but you humbly gave God all the glory and honor.

And when at times you feel unappreciated, undervalued or unrewarded, may you also be reminded that there is a God who doesn't sleep nor slumber. God sees your servant's heart. And in God's book you are doing great things in this kingdom of light!

2. THE LESSON OF CHILDLIKENESS

Notice I did not say, "childish", but I said child-like. "Childish is a posture of the heart that says no to anything unlike or unfamiliar. Childish is the stamping of the foot; and the folding of the arms" (Rob Bell). Childlike is the joyful openness to the wonder of life all around us. Childlike is that condition of simplicity and purity.

In a period when a child's voice is seldom valued...in a society when a child is very unlikely to be an object-lesson for the topic of greatness, Jesus put a child in the middle anyway and declared, "Whoever welcomes these little children in my name welcomes me. And whoever welcomes me, welcomes the one sent me."

And in Matthew's version of this same story, Jesus added, "Because unless you become like little children, you will not see the kingdom of heaven."

APPLICATION

Is Jesus inviting us this morning to remember the benefit of childlikeness?

The benefit of inner peace when we choose to let go and just let God.

The benefit of reconciliation when we extend our hands of forgiveness and pardon.

The benefit of pure joy when we choose the attitude of wonder, and childlike awe.

Walt Streightiff: “There are no seven wonders of the world in the eyes of a child. There are seven million.”

And so may we receive today the blessing and joy of childlikeness:

Peace in the midst of difficult situations. Trust in the Father’s care.

Love, through a child’s eyes: that is, with no labels, no stereotypes, but only pure acceptance of others. And thus, we truly will be known as children of the Kingdom of God.

CONCLUDING STORY

Max Lucado writes about a big-muscle man named Daniel who was swindled by his own brother. He vowed that if he ever saw him again, he would break his neck off. But Daniel became a believer and started attending church. But some reason, he still found it hard to forgive his brother. One day, the inevitable transpired. This is how Daniel described what happened.

I saw my brother, but he did not see me. I felt my fists clench, and my face get hot. My initial impulse was to grab him around the throat and choke the life out of him. But as I looked into his face, my anger began to melt. For as I saw him, I saw the image of my father. I saw my father's eyes. I saw my father's look. I saw my father's expression. And as I saw my father in his face, my enemy once again, became my brother.

And maybe in many cases, that is where the strength of servanthood lies. To see the image of our Father and Creator on the face of the people we loved, or the people we have disagreement with, or the people we serve in our food bank.

Our next hymn will say: Together we serve, united by love...to learn to let that love shine through, until we see Christ in each person we meet.