

Christ Teacheth Humility

by C.I. Scofield

True greatness is achieved through suffering and service, not mere royal favor or ambition.

Scripture: Job 8:6, Matthew 1:1, Mark 10:35, Luke 14:12, Luke 19:12, Romans 8:18, 1 Corinthians 3:11, Revelation 3:21

Topics: "Humility In Prayer", "Suffering And Service"

Description

C.I. Scofield preaches on the lesson from Mark 10:35-45, highlighting the misconception of prayer as a means to fulfill personal desires and ambitions, emphasizing the importance of true submission to God's wisdom and love in prayer. Jesus teaches that true greatness in His kingdom is achieved through suffering and service, not through seeking positions of power and authority for self-gratification. The path to the throne in God's kingdom is paved with humility, sacrificial service, and a willingness to endure suffering for the sake of others.

Transcript

(Mark x:35-45.)

I. The Analysis.

1. The underlying weakness of most prayer (verse 35).-- See below.
2. The law of exaltation in the kingdom (verses 36-44). --Suffering and glory are inseparable. The highest places in the kingdom are for those who have drunk deepest of Christ's cup of suffering for others, and have been most conformed to Christ's death (John xviii:11; 2 Cor. iv 17-18; Phil, iii:10; Col. i:24).

II. The Heart of the Lesson.

Not, if the lesson committee please, a lesson in humility, except in a very secondary sense, but, rather, a radiant light upon the pathway to the only true greatness.

A great deal of sermonic condemnation has been visited upon the sons of Zebedee because of the ambitious request: "Grant unto us that we may sit, one on thy right hand, and the other on thy left hand, in thy glory." After all, they were only a little more outspoken than the rest of us. Before any man presumes to make a text for moralistic platitudes out of James and John let him be very sure that ambition and vanity and the itch for applause and greed of place are wholly cast out of his own heart.

For, first of all, the theory of prayer propounded by these brothers is an exceedingly popular one. No theory concerning prayer is more widely taught to-day than that if we can only bring enough faith to bear on God. He must "do for us" whatever we desire. Nay, more, we are instructed that if we cannot come by this all victorious faith, the fault, the most grievous fault, is ours. Our failure to harness omnipotence to our orphanage, or our school, or our mission, is proof positive that some secret sin is preying upon the very vitals of our spirituality--for Bildad the Shushite is always with us. "If thou wert pure and upright, surely now he would awake for thee and make the habitation of thy righteousness prosperous" (Job viii:6).

At bottom all this may cloak a lust for spiritual eminence, the true phrasing of which would be: "Master, we would that thou shouldest do for us whatsoever we shall desire." The very core of true prayer is utter submission to God's better wisdom, more perfect love.

Note with care our Lord's answer. He by no means denies that there are real distinctions, veritable thrones of power in His kingdom. Rather He points out the way to them. But it is not the way of the world. The world's great ones exercise lordship over them. The whole desirableness of earthly greatness lies in the power to make others serve the possessors of that greatness. Strip a king of his authority, take from him his palaces, his armies, his servants, his pomp and state, and, except for the vanity of his empty title, he would fling away his crown. That kind of greatness Jesus neither desired nor offered to others.

And yet He, too, was on His way to a throne, and an earthly throne at that (Matt, i:1; ii:1-6; Luke 1:31-33; Acts xv:16, 17); and not only so, but part of His mission to earth was to gather out from amongst the sons of men those who will sit with Him on His throne (Rev. iii:2i; Luke xiv:12, 19). Indeed, those very men, James and John, are to have thrones of peculiar distinction (Matt, xix:27,28).

Now, then, was their petition amiss? No doubt their thought was of an immediate setting up of the Messianic kingdom, and of obtaining such a place in that kingdom as would be the gratification of a mere fleshly vanity. But, deeper than their misconception of the time of the manifestation of the kingdom was their misconception of the moral conditions of that kingdom. They thought to gain its distinctions by mere royal favor; they had to learn that those distinctions are not in the gift of the King. His salvation is indeed a free gift, but every crown, every plaudit, must be earned. The kingdom distinctions are offered only as a reward for suffering and service (Luke xix:12-19; 1 Cor. iii:11-15; ix:19-25; 2 Tim. iv:7, 8; Rev. ii:10; Rom. viii:18). This is the twofold lesson of co-crucifixion (verses 38, 39) with Jesus, and of accepting as the only highway to the throne the path of lowly service. It was Christ's own pathway, and along that via crucis must all pass who would sit at His right hand.

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