

Power & Position

by Erlo Stegen

The sermon emphasizes the importance of humility and serving others, rather than seeking position and power, as Jesus teaches through the story of the mother of Zebedee's sons.

Duration: 58:36

Scripture: Matthew 18:1, Matthew 19:30, Matthew 20:24-28, Mark 10:43-45, Luke 9:46-48, John 13:14-15

Topics: "Christian Life"

Description

In this sermon, Jesus addresses the issue of power and authority among his disciples. He contrasts the worldly way of exercising authority with the way of the kingdom of God. Jesus teaches that greatness in his kingdom is not achieved through lording over others, but through serving and sacrificing for others. He uses himself as the ultimate example, stating that he came not to be served, but to serve and give his life as a ransom for many. Jesus also highlights the importance of hearing his words and putting them into practice, rather than focusing on external blessings or positions of honor.

Transcript

We thank you, Father, for the earth is yours and all that dwells therein. We thank you that even when your enemies try to stifle your work and to stamp out the fire, it is just water which changes into oil on the fire and it burns ever brighter and goes throughout the world. Amen.

Let's read from Matthew 20, from verse 20. Then the mother of Zebedee's sons came to him with her sons, kneeling down and asking something from him. He said to her, What do you wish? She said to him, Grant that these two sons of mine may sit, one on your right hand and the other on the left, in your kingdom.

But Jesus answered and said, You do not know what you ask. Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink? And they said to him, We will indeed be able to. And he said to them, You will indeed drink my cup and will be baptized with the baptism that I am to be baptized with.

But to sit on my right hand and on my left is not mine to give, but it is for those for whom it is prepared by my Father. And when the ten heard it, they were moved with indignation against the two brothers. But Jesus called them to himself and said, You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them.

Yet it shall not be so among you, but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be the first among you, let him be your slave. Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.

Let's speak about this matter which I have read. It contains many themes, themes and lessons. Themes that are of great importance to the one who is earnest with the Lord.

Of course if you don't mean business with God, ignore it. Like was said, just ignore it. If you have trouble in Africa, just come here.

You need to do what the Lord shows you to do. Forget about me, you don't have to repent to impress me. I don't need your repentance.

You need to mean business with God. Wherever you are, whatever you are doing, you must be responsible to Him. Now let's just take a few points and have a closer look at them.

Then the mother of Zebedee's sons came to him asking something from Jesus. This contains important matter of great importance. A woman comes with her two sons, the sons of Zebedee.

The son of Zebedee is called Jacob. The son of Zebedee is called John. The son of Zebedee is called Jacob.

The son of John is called John. J.J. you could call them James and John. The mother came to Jesus kneeling down at his feet.

In Zulu it also means she worshipped. So, kneeling and worshipping before the Lord. Coming with her sons.

And they bowed, paying homage to the Lord, asking something from Him. And what does she ask of Him? What do you think? And Jesus asked her, what do you say? Why does Jesus ask her, what do you say? Was it perhaps that she said it in whispered tones, that it wasn't completely audible? And Jesus asks of her, what do you want? Was Jesus ignorant of what she wished? No, Jesus knows exactly what we wish. From afar, He knows the inner thoughts and motives of the heart.

I don't know whether this mother of the two sons who were apostles, whether she was embarrassed about the crowd and didn't want them to hear what she was asking Him personally. Because there are some things that you would rather whisper into a person's ear because it's confidential, it's private. And should they hear what you ask, they may get upset.

There is something she seeks of Jesus. What is it? Jesus asked her, what do you say? Jesus asked her, what do you say? Let no one think less of women and think that they are useless. And you men don't ever think that they are lesser beings.

They are able to do things. After all, remember the serpent, when he wanted mankind to fall into sin, he approached the woman, he knew that if he could get her, he's got the husband too. To some men, I'd like to say, they're not as stupid as you think.

A woman has an immense potential to be a powerful woman. There is no power in the hand of God or in the hands of Satan. So don't look down on them.

The old serpent worked in Eve, even though she was clever, but she was deceived. Till she brought her husband down. In that scenario, the Bible says, it is better not to marry than to marry.

The Bible says, it is better not to marry than to marry. So she came with a wish, but she didn't just express her wish. There was a means to getting there, and this woman used the means of paying homage to him.

As you women may know, there's a means to an end. Now, in the same way, you'll find that it happens in the Christian world too. A Christian might come to you and whisper a very deep secret and say, it's just between you and me.

Don't dare tell a soul, let it just be subject matter for prayer. And it can cause schism. You find that there are cliques that develop, this group and that group.

But Jesus didn't allow. He refused to be drawn into the net. He refused to enter into this trap, like a fish or a frog or whatever might be caught in a trap.

So she comes secretly to him, but then he asks out aloud, what do you wish? And then the others around them took note, wondering what it was all about. What? And the Lord knows all about you and your secret strategies, your cunning devices. But Jesus stood at a distance and he refused to be drawn into this and said, what is it you wish? You'll never push Jesus into entering into what you insist.

He will never come and sit in your box that you make for him. Heaven and earth will pass away, it will still be around. And while you long since gone, he will continue.

And that box is your coffin. He won't enter with you into your death, no. He'll stand an oaf.

You'll die, but he'll carry on living. Jesus. Jesus.

Jesus said to her, what is it that you wish? Now the cat was out of the bag, it was open and it was exposed and everybody heard about it. He had exposed her. She had to come into the open with this matter.

And And Even those who were busy with other things and had not noticed the woman suddenly took note. Now they were interested because Jesus said it out aloud. And then they realized that this woman is not just paying homage.

She's come with some weighty matter. There's something behind this. A person might become ill from many different things.

It's The matter in her was something that was within her. She was pregnant, so to say, with this which needed to come out. And the Lord then said, let the matter out.

And the Zulus say, it may, if you give birth, it may be a human being. It may be a leg of one. Can be many different things that you come out with.

I don't take it literally, but figuratively. So somebody may say, well, what's it like about now? If you don't understand it, just put it aside. When you eat the chicken, take the bones of a fish.

Take the bones and put them to the side that they don't stick in your throat. Now, she had to bring this matter out. And it had to be done in front of all the others.

She said, Lord, I have this wish that for my two sons, they'd be with you in your kingdom, on your throne. One to your right and one to your left. Any parent wishes the best for their children? She wished for her two sons, James and John, the very best, that they'd both be in the kingdom of heaven.

One to the Lord's right and one to his left. She said, Lord, I have this wish that for my two sons, they'd be with you in your kingdom, on your throne. So she had a close relationship with her sons.

She wanted the best for them. And they were one with her in this matter. Like you find parents, they can stick to their children.

If they're not careful and they don't rule over their children, their children can rule them. So parents, be careful what you wish for your children. Now, the Lord responded and said to her, You do not know what you ask for.

It's also possible that she had been sent. Maybe one of the sons had said, Mom, you ask it. Like some people are afraid to do it themselves and they send someone else to do a proxy for them.

Like a murderer might send an assassin on their own behalf instead of doing it themselves. Jesus had already been describing this very issue regarding regarding position in chapter 19 and earlier on in chapter 20, you find what lessons he had been teaching them, but they didn't listen. They didn't learn.

It's as if though they had paid no attention to what he had just been saying or they were not completely satisfied with his answers. Could have been the other three possibilities. They didn't even understand what it was all about.

Maybe they weren't satisfied with it. Now, perhaps they had gone home after some of the earlier preaching and they had sat down and discussed the matter, perhaps with their mom, and discussed this about the twelve sitting with me in the kingdom. Along comes the scheming mother.

We don't know whether it was her scheme, her plan to ask this, or whether she had been prompted by one of her sons. But the Lord would have none of this secretive business. He wanted it to be out in the open.

The father's name was Zebedee and she or he was one at the crucifixion with the others, Mary and them. She was there as well. Some say that there might have been other relatives like sisters of Mary, Mary the mother of Jesus.

There are some that strongly believe that she was Mary, the mother of Jesus' sister. In other words, she was his aunt. Close family relations.

Oh, I'm going to interpret this into English. I'm sorry. Jesus said, you don't know what you're asking.

Are you able to drink the cup which I'm about to drink? The cup was to be his passion, the suffering and death. John and James said, we can do it. Jesus replied, you will indeed drink my cup.

And that's what happened because James was one of the first to be martyred. In the very first persecution, he was one who lost his life. John was about to suffer much as well.

Later on, especially when he would suffer on the island, he was referred to here when the Lord said, you will drink this cup. And that's what he had to endure, to drink the same cup of suffering. The cup was to be his passion, the suffering and death.

The Lord said, yes indeed, you will go through the suffering and the death that goes with it. But still, that doesn't mean that I can choose where you will sit. It is only the prerogative of the Father to choose who will sit on my right and on my left.

You see, she was wanting a position for her sons that was a little better and of greater esteem than the others. You know that here in the world, people will kill each other for better positions. Positions are sought after, fought after.

How awful it is if that same fighting, that same seeking for position is among Christians and in the Church of Christ. I was I was shocked to hear that at a certain election of a bishop in a church, some of the ministers of that denomination went to witch doctors prior to the election to try and get special powers and they had special mortar put on them to try and get this election and to get the seat, indeed which is the seat of Satan in that church. How will the Holy Spirit ever work in that type of atmosphere? It is like a candle that is burning, it just gets snuffed out.

And you find if you go and read in Matthew 18 verse 1 that there had been an argument among the Lord's disciples as to who was the most important and they asked him, Lord who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? Do you hear you Christians? Believers? Brethren? If you don't get rid of that attitude, if you don't have victory over this crave for position it will destroy you and you will be with Judas Iscariot in hell. Even if the saints are buried, they will be astonished in heaven to find that you are absent. We need to be saved from the craving for position and to be more highly esteemed than others within the kingdom.

Stud, the missionary to Central Africa, when he was about to depart, to die, he pointed out one who would take over his position. He pointed out Harrison. Harrison had a very low position at the time, he used to polish his shoes.

Charles Stud said Harrison will be my successor. When teams would go out with Stud, Harrison would remain behind to do the menial tasks like cleaning and polishing the shoes of the co-workers. The co-workers of C.T. Stud were busy with big services and preaching to large crowds, but Harrison didn't go along with those teams, he would remain behind.

Stud then announced, as he knew he was about to pass away, that his successor would be Harrison. Well, all hell was let loose among the co-workers when they heard that. Some deserted and said we cannot stay here.

Camping ship is a common thing throughout the ages and those who just desert their church and leave their ministry, it's been happening for a long time. Think back of Luther, Calvin, John Wesley and them. They knew what it was like to have people desert them.

Well, there must be the separation between the wheat and the chaff. The chaff has got to go and be burnt. The chaff has got to go and be burnt.

You can go and study some church history for yourself. What I've gone through is minor in comparison to those great men of God. Look, for instance, at the life of Calvin.

See how he was maligned and how he was attacked viciously in the press of his day. No good, no good. With the wrong motive.

your servant.

And whoever desires to be the first among you, let him be your slave. Just as the son of man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many. Who will be there? Who will be the greatest? It is he who serves the most.

Who will be the one in authority? He who is the smallest, the least. The one who gives his life up for others. Jesus gave this as an example, and he gave his life as the example, as a redemption, as a ransom to help many.

Who will be great among you? Who will be the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? The one who is the least, the one who is servant of all. The father notices such. Do you understand what the kingdom of heaven is like? The kingdom of Jesus? Blessed is the one who has an ear to hear.

Let me leave it there, and I'm going to ask the choir to come and sing a closing song. They said to Jesus, The crowds, as they listened to Jesus speak, they said, one person said, blessed is the one who gave you birth and who nursed you. But Jesus said, no, blessed rather is the one who hears my words and does them.

We ask you, Father in heaven, you, father of your only begotten son, send your Holy Spirit so that that which is spoken, you would apply it and it would bring forth much fruit. Amen.

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