

Who is the Greatest? (11 min only)

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Preacher: Paul Dudley

[0 : 00] This is the evening service at Holy Trinity on the 13th of April 2003. The preacher is Paul Dudley. His sermon is entitled, Who is the Greatest?

and is based on Luke chapter 22, verses 24 to 38. In fact, they will be a part of judging Israel, the 12 tribes of Israel.

Not only that, we see there in verse 32, after Jesus is talking to Peter, He says, Once you have returned, strengthen your brothers.

Jesus knows that they will all fail. But He knows that they will turn back again. As we read through the rest of Luke and we look into Acts, we see that they do indeed become powerful leaders in the early church.

We see that they overcome their problem because they actually encounter the risen Messiah. And Christ, the risen Christ explains to them how everything is fulfilled in Him.

[1 : 27] We see in Acts at the beginning that they received the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. And through these two things, they become the powerful leaders of the early church.

Well, these things have been written down for us so that we may see some of their mistakes. So that we may see some of the changes that occurred in their life.

That we might know the truth about what it is to serve Christ. So what it is, what are we to learn from this passage here tonight?

Well, the first thing is, what is the way of true greatness? Well, our world tells us many ways of finding true greatness. In today's paper, I found this.

How I became a star. Tony Squire's 10 steps to TV success. Well, here it is. The way of greatness. The first thing is, apply for drama school and fail.

[2 : 25] Well, I never went to drama school, so I think I'm on that track already. The second thing is, go to uni and find some mates. Well, I went to university, I've got some friends. I'm still on that track, I'm doing okay. Write about television.

I haven't done that yet, but I think that would be fairly easy just to write down some of the shows that I like. I think I could still be on this path of greatness. The fourth thing he has here is, act like you know what you're talking about.

Number five, treat everything as an audition. Number six, stick to what you love, or others love it too.

Number seven, turn your weaknesses into strengths. Okay, be more excited than everyone. Well, I can almost cope with that one. That's all right.

I'm a pretty excited guy. That's all right. Number nine, respect the old masters. Hmm. Hmm. And number ten, know your product.

[3 : 24] Well, there we go. TV success, that's the ten steps. All the best for anyone who wants to get involved in television. How might we get greatness? I mean, the world tells us about the many ways of greatness.

As Vaughan said, it's through power, fame, through money, through having the biggest house, the fastest car. Perhaps it's having prowess on the sporting field.

In the business world. Perhaps it's the ability to influence others. It's very easy to look at the world out there and think, yes, they're all striving for greatness.

But when we try and put it onto ourselves, we don't think, oh, we're not striving for greatness. But I think we do it so easily in our own lives. How easy is it for us to blow our own trumpet?

For us to turn the conversation around so that rather than talking about others, we're talking about ourselves. How easy is it not to listen to what other people are saying, to ignore what they're saying and demand that everyone hear your point of view?

[4 : 31] What about those who are involved in leadership? Let's think about that for a moment. Are you more concerned about in your leadership status and rank? About the respect that people will give you or not give you?

Are you more concerned about serving others? I applied for the Air Force to go to the Academy for the Air Force.

They rejected my application. And it was a part of the end interview when they asked me, what was leadership all about? And at the end of it, they said, we actually don't think you understand what leadership is all about.

We think you better go away and think about it. I'm not sure what my answer is then. But I'm not sure that the answer that they would have wanted to hear is necessarily the answer that Jesus gives here.

Here we see Jesus saying, the way to greatness, it's a service. Of humble service. Let's think about our church.

[5 : 39] As I look around, often I feel like that people don't understand this very well. The picture that we have in the New Testament is that the church is a body, having different parts, all functioning together to serve one another.

When often we think about church, I think we often have a picture of there are some people who do serve. Oh, there's the person who preaches, the person who leads, the person who does music. Then there might be a person who prays occasionally or reads the Bible. But that's about it as far as service is. But I don't think that's the picture of the New Testament.

The picture is of a body all working together. Each one of us serving each other. By you coming each week encourages other people. By you praying for other people.

It's a way that you can serve. You don't have to have an upfront role to serve. Each of us can be a part of this humble service that Jesus speaks about here.

[6 : 50] Well, what about some of the things that Paul was talking about? Perhaps handing out some of the literature at Shopping Town. There are many different ways that we can serve.

That's the first thing. The second thing I want to talk about, a warning from this passage, is the warning of wanting God's kingdom here and now.

We live in a society that wants everything here and now. That God should answer our prayers in the here and now. In fact, it's crept in some of the theology of some of the churches.

It's called prosperity theology. It's that theology that says that everyone should have health and wealth now. That they're focused on the here and now.

That God will provide for everything that we need now here. It matters where you live, what you drive and how you look.

[7 : 56] The hope of prosperity gospel is discarded. Of that hope of looking forward to when Christ returns. I think we need to be careful of this theology.

Jesus showed that the way for the kingdom was through suffering. Through Christ's suffering. The disciples thought that it would come very soon.

They expected it to come triumphantly. And it did, but not in a way that they expected. The third warning that I want to bring to your attention is for us.

Do we accept the idea that we may be rejected and suffer as a cost of discipleship? Do you really count the cost of discipleship or serving God?

Are you prepared to suffer and die for Christ? Are you prepared to give up your career, your job, to be involved in full-time ministry perhaps?

[9 : 00] Or perhaps you might be prepared to give up half a day of your work so that you can go and teach scripture. Are you prepared to get up in the mornings earlier so that you can be praying for people?

Three weeks ago we asked for help for an autistic boy in the morning service. He needs help. The mother cannot sit and listen to the sermon while the little boy who is autistic runs around.

We needed a helper. Yet no one has come forward. How seriously are we prepared for the mission that is coming up in another couple of weeks' time? Are you getting out of your comfort zones to invite your friends, family and neighbours?

Do we really count the cost of discipleship? I think at its heart the question really is, is your life centred on Jesus' death and resurrection?

Do you understand fully what Christ came to do? Has that made an impact in your life? I love Easter time. As I was a child growing up, the Easter bunny would come and leave a little note telling us where the eggs were hidden.

[10 : 19] And so we had this huge running around our whole farm trying to find different clues to where the Easter bunny had hidden the eggs. I grew up to understand a greater richness of the Easter message.

And for 10 years prior to the last two years, we went up to Easter convention where we heard some great teaching, where we were reminded of Christ's death and resurrection.

My prayer for us this Easter is that we will come to understand the richness of Christ's death and resurrection for each one of us.

That it may make an impact on the way that we live our lives in serving him. I think it might show you a lot broader than that.

Alright. Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray.

[11 : 22] Come on, shall we? Thanks. Go. Thank you.

Thank you.