

# Definition and Prediction

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[ 0 : 00 ] Let's turn now to Luke's Gospel as we continue with our study of Luke's Gospel in chapter 22 and these verses that we've read from 24 to 38.

It's very obvious by now that the pace is quickening for the Lord, that the shadows are deepening, that Calvary approaches with all that that means, and that he is concerned to teach his disciples these things that he tells them before they find his departure from them, and before he goes out to face what he must face in his death on the cross.

And as you look at these deepening shadows and the pace that quickens in the way that this account is given by Luke, it makes it all the more important and all the more solemn indeed that we realize the Lord is so concerned to pass on these details to them, despite the fact that he knows that his own end is so near, that his own agony is so near, his own death on the cross.

And three things on the passage we have tonight, in that instruction that he gave to the disciples. First of all, he defines the idea of greatness.

What is greatness? What makes a person great? How do you define what a great person is? What is greatness? What is greatness? What greatness is? What greatness is?

[ 1 : 37 ] What greatness is as far as he is concerned. Secondly, Christ instructs Peter. It is not simply a warning, though there is that in it.

There is a prediction there of how Peter will in fact find certain aspects in his own future, in the near future. But there is also teaching and instruction for him as to how the Lord is going to use him for the strengthening of his fellow disciples.

And thirdly, Christ predicts trouble ahead for the disciples. In verses 35 to 38, we will find that the Lord brings them to think about how because they are joined so closely to him and are followers of his, that the difficulties, the trial, the opposition that he must face, as it will intensify, as he is numbered, as he says, with the transgressors, that too will mean for them an increased hostility from those who are opposed to him and to his followers.

So these three things, Christ defines greatness, he instructs Peter, and he predicts trouble ahead. Let's look at these in turn and as they are connected together.

We read here that a dispute arose among the disciples as to which of them was to be regarded as the greatest. What a time to have a dispute on such a topic.

[ 3 : 14 ] It's not good at any time to have a dispute on that sort of topic, to have an argument as to who is the greatest.

Such things should be far from the minds of the Lord's people. It's not a matter of who is the greatest. As Jesus has said to them, what you've got to understand first of all is what greatness is and what greatness is about.

Here are these disciples, the Lord teaching them, having taught them already about what lies ahead of himself, how he must go to be taken into custody by his opponents, by his enemies, how he's going to be accused, how he's going to be put to death.

All of that he's told them and they know that it's imminent, they know it's near. And yet what are they doing? They're actually having a competition, if you like, as to who's the best disciple.

That just doesn't fit in at any time with the Lord's people, but it fits in even less so at a time such as this, when they are with their Lord and he is about to suffer the sufferings that he's going to endure for them.

[ 4 : 30 ] And that's why the Lord responds in the way that he does. He says, Which of the kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them?

And those in authority over them are called benefactors. But not so with you. Rather let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the youngest as the one who serves.

Now the crucial verse here is actually verse 27. And especially the very last part, the very last sentence of verse 27. But I am among you as the one who is serving.

That's really what the Lord is building up to, as he deals with this unseemly dispute, this rivalry amongst them, this competition as to who's the best disciple.

What he really wants to draw their minds to is a definition of greatness, as they see it preeminently in himself. Because greatness is not strutting your stuff and sticking your chest out and saying, I'm going to die better than my fellow disciples.

[ 5 : 39 ] I'm the number one disciple. No, the Lord is saying, Greatness is in the opposite direction. Greatness is downwards, not upwards. Greatness is to do with things like humility and meekness.

Greatness is to do with service especially, not being served. That's why he's saying, The kings of the Gentiles are called benefactors by those who are under them.

Because they receive things from them. And the kings of the Gentiles demand that they be called benefactors. That those who receive so-called gifts from them are indeed indebted to them.

They are those who benefit from their effort. The kings demand to be called benefactors. If you were living in North Korea tonight, you would regard the leader of North Korea.

All these people are in fact programmed mentally to think of him as the great benefactor. He demands their allegiance.

[ 6 : 47 ] He demands that they serve him. He demands the preeminent place. He demands that they regard him as above themselves. And beneath serving them, he wants them to regard them as the great benefactor.

That's what he's saying in the kings of the Gentiles. That's what it's like. But it will not be so with you. It will be the opposite with you. See, the values of the world, the values of what is against God, the values of those forces that actually don't like God's terms, the values of the world are the opposite of those of God's people.

At least that's how it should be. Because that's how God defines it. And what Jesus is saying is that who is in fact the greatest then?

Is it the one who sits at the head of the table and is served? Is it the one who reclines along the table? Remember the disciples have been reclining at the table at what he has made into the Lord's Supper.

Who is the greatest at that table? That's what the disciples are disputing over. And they're looking at one another in competition and they're trying to work out who's the number one disciple.

[ 8 : 10 ] Who is the greatest at the table? The greatest at that table is the head of the table. The Jesus who is their master. Why is he the greatest?

Well, he says, it's not the one who reclines at table who is the greatest but the one who serves. I am among you as the one who serves.

You know, there isn't a bigger text in the whole Bible than that. There isn't a bigger text in the whole Bible than that.

It's not very long. There's only a few words to it. But is it packed with important theology or not? Aye. Who is this person?

That's the question that Luke has been bringing up for us as we've gone through this book of Luke. Who is this man? Who is this figure? Who is this great person?

[ 9 : 13 ] Who is this man who works all these miracles? Who is this man who casts out demons? Who is this man who has unparalleled teaching? Who is this man before whom people stand amazed at what he does and what he says?

He's a servant. He's the son of God but he's a servant. That's what makes it so amazing. That's what makes the definition such a critical one, such a challenging one.

Here is no less a person than God. No less a person than the son of God. The one who made the universe. The one for whom all things are made.

Not just by him were they made. They were made for him. And what's he doing? Well if you go to John's Gospel and that fits in here you have to take it with you.

John's Gospel chapter 13 tells us about something that happened right at this moment. Jesus put off his outer garments.

[ 10 : 16 ] He took a towel. He wrapped the towel around himself. And he began to wash the feet of the disciples.

I am among you as the one who serves. There shouldn't be anything more amazing to our minds tonight than that verse.

I am among you as one who serves. Nothing should be so astounding to us as that the Son of God came to this. That the Son of God willingly stooped to this.

That the Son of God is the greatest example of service. And that in being the greatest example of service he is the greatest example of greatness.

Because that is what greatness is about. And Jesus is saying to them well if you want to dispute about who is the greatest among you look at me. If you want to dispute and come have a competition about who is the best disciple let it be answered this way.

[ 11 : 26 ] The best disciple is the one who is most like me. In terms of my service my being a servant my coming to give myself to others and for others.

If we insist tonight on thinking of greatness and trying to apply greatness to ourselves it is not a good idea anyway.

It does not fit very easily with the idea of being a servant of Christ. But if we insist on it on asking what makes me great well this is what makes me great.

that I am prepared to follow Christ to the extent that I will wash the feet of others that I will put myself out for them that I will do things which are distasteful that I wouldn't choose to do myself but because he demands it I will do it.

That is greatness. That is greatness defined by God defined by Christ. And that is why he says then you are with those who have stayed with me in my trials and I assign to you as my father assigned to me a kingdom that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

[ 12 : 51 ] In other words he is saying to them because you are with me as my disciples as servants with me in this great task because you have stood by me in my trials up to now I assign you a kingdom.

In other words the word assign there means what you do when you sign out a will to pass something on to someone else. It is a covenant word. It is a word where Jesus is really building into this the idea that he is now actually making out his will spiritually for his disciples for his people and oh how much that contains it is nothing less than the kingdom.

I am making it yours I am assigning it to you I am giving it over to you as my father gave it over to me. You see he is saying greatness is not keeping things to yourself.

What makes a person great is that he is prepared to give away for the benefit of others that he is prepared to give himself and herself as Jesus did for the benefit of others.

Whenever you find that description of a great man or a great woman whenever you find the world's ideas of what makes people great whenever you find celebrities presented to you in the news or in magazines or wherever it is as people who are reckoned in the eyes of the world to be great put them alongside Jesus.

[ 14 : 30 ] Ask yourself where do they fit in with his idea of greatness and you won't have to do that for very long before you realize how completely opposite is the world's idea of greatness to that of true greatness as you find it in Christ.

Are we prepared tonight to be great people do we want to be great people do we want to be known as great people well if you want to be known as great in the eyes of the world forget about discipleship forget about being followers of Christ forget about giving yourself out to the good of others forget about being like Christ in terms of a servant but if you want to be great in the eyes of God if you want God at the end of things to say well done good and faithful servant the more you are like Christ the greater you will be in the eyes of God and that's what he says greatness is about it's there patterned on himself it's a matter of giving of serving of being there for others and then he instructs

Peter Simon behold Satan demanded to have you that he might sift you like wheat but I prayed for you that your faith may not fail and when you have turned again strengthen your brothers now he obviously is anticipating that Peter will deny him because he goes on to say there before the cock will crow this day you will deny three times that you know me but it's interesting how the Lord puts it because the Lord is saying to Peter that there is a much greater contest going on here than between disciples or on a human level and there is a much wider contest than simply between Satan and Jesus because the contest of battle even though it's a cosmic one has brought the disciples into it the Lord's people are involved in that battle with evil with darkness with sin with the

things that

Satan himself engineers and continues to use in his strategy and the Lord very solemnly says to Simon here to Peter that Satan has demanded to have you and the important thing there is the you is plural that he might sift you plural like wheat the Satan's aim you see is to get in amongst all the disciples his aim is not just at Peter his aim and his purpose has all the disciples in view he's not just narrowed his focus onto Peter he has all the disciples in view and his aim as he has them in his sight is to actually scatter them sift them like wheat you know what happens when wheat is sifted it's just thrown into the air it's thrown around it's disturbed and that is what

Satan's plan Satan's sights are set upon all the disciples Satan demanded to have you that he might sift you all like wheat there's an interesting reference there of course we're not going to go into but notice how the Lord is telling Peter and telling us as well about things that go on without our notice things you cannot see things in the unseen world of spirits people don't believe this but here is a window into it that God has given us so that we will believe it and believe it so that we will come to cling to Christ because this activity still goes on Satan still desires to have the Lord's people scattered and sifted and thrown about and troubled and agitated and divided and in fact he has been given by God permission to do so that's what the word demanded means in the original [19:15] Greek of the text it means Satan has asked and it's been granted and that's very solemn you go back to the book of Job in the Old Testament and you find an interaction between Satan and God with regard to God permitting him to have access to Job and what the Lord is saying to Peter here is very similar Satan demanded to have you he came to ask for access to you all because he intends to sift you like wheat and it's been granted and although that's very solemn and perhaps even disturbing there's also something of huge comfort to God's people and it's this there are no sufferings or temptations that meet the people of God out with what God has permitted there are no temptations and no sufferings meeting the people of

God to be experienced by the people of God out with what God has permitted God sets the limits God is in control of them God has actually determined what is and is not acceptable to him as far as Satan's work is concerned and although the disciples are going to be scattered they're all going to forsake Jesus and flee Jesus says but I have prayed for you how does Jesus counter the demand the plan the aim of Satan by praying for one of the disciples the very one who's going to deny him and yet that's the one that Peter that the Lord prayed for because in the recovery of Peter in Peter turning back again to the Lord in Peter coming to repent of his denial in Peter coming again to be established by Jesus in the way of discipleship that's the way that

Jesus has chosen to counteract the plan and to overthrow the plan of Satan isn't that interesting isn't that significant why is it interesting why is it significant because for one thing Satan must have thought when Peter denied the Lord I've got him now and he must have been absolutely confounded when after Peter came back to the ways of the Lord and been reestablished by Christ he became the great leader of the early apostolic church this very man this man for whom Jesus prayed and the fruit of that prayer is that in Peter's recovery Satan's plan was destroyed it was a very short term success for Satan if indeed success it was the disciples in that immediate time of the crucifixion they forsook

Jesus and fled but after the resurrection after Pentecost after things had moved on in God's great plan Satan's plan was overthrown it had been completely and utterly overcome and one of the chief means of overthrowing it was this very man Peter and you see it's so important that we realize that Jesus prayer is in the past it's complete that's the way it's put there I prayed for you that your faith may not fail Peter was going to fail his allegiance was going to fail his confession was going to fail his witness was going to fail but his faith was not to go away altogether his faith would not fail or ebb or run out because

Christ's prayer protected him we mentioned this morning how Christ as our high priest makes intercession he ever lives to make intercession for his people and that's an example of it there as you look into through this window into the eternal things the spiritual things that Jesus is revealing to us Satan demanded to have you Satan made request for you disciples he's saying and he intends to sift you like wheat but against that to counteract that I've also made request I have prayed for you Peter and when you are recovered strengthen your brothers it's so important to realize that all our strength all our sufficiency is in Christ not in ourselves doesn't matter what gifts we have tonight doesn't matter what

[ 24 : 43 ] God has given us in the way of intellectual gifts or gifts of speaking or any other gifts whatever they might be these at the end of the day can never be our security our security is within the intercession of Christ within Christ remembering of us within Christ praying for us you've got to be inside the prayers of Christ you've got to be inside the intercession of Christ and you get inside the intercession of Christ if I can put it that way by having Christ as your savior by being found in Christ because it's very obvious that Peter's own ability and especially his own sense of ability is not going to be anything like enough it's going to fail him critically at that crucial moment Peter said Lord I am ready to go with you both to prison and to death Jesus said

I tell you Peter the cock will not crow this day until you deny three times that you know me he began by saying Simon Simon a very solemn duplication of his name Simon and that this was what the Lord what Satan had demanded and getting access to the disciples but I have prayed for you and there's Peter's response but Lord I am ready to go with you to prison and to death and the Lord says not now Simon he says Peter Peter the word Peter means the rock that's why Jesus gave him the name but how unlike the rock he's going to be during this time of critical failure in his denial of Christ Peter the cock will not crow this day till you deny three times that you know me in other words Peter when he reconsiders the whole thing he'll come to realize as never before how absolutely dependent he is on the prayers of Christ on the intercession of his savior and the Peter that you see afterwards it's not the Peter who actually confidently says I am ready to do this whoever else will deny you I will never do it he's the one who did it his own strength failed and he came to realize that but for the prayer of Christ he would have been completely gone altogether there's a lot in that for us tonight and as we consider what he said to Peter and the aims that Satan has for all of God's people at all times let's not forget where our protection is this congregation is no different to any other indeed the more united you are the more likely it is that Satan's aim will be at you that Satan will have us in his sights that he will be concerned to sift us like wheat that he will be concerned to actually bring things about where in a competition as to who is the greatest disciple who is the best disciple we will end up with disputes and with cliques and with all kinds of things that will not serve the gospel or the unity of the church of God or ourselves and our progress spiritually we have to every single day look to the Lord and to his intercession never think of yourself I can do it I'll manage I'll pull through somehow you won't you might in some things in this life but you will not in the most important things you need Christ you need his strength you need his sufficiency you need his intercession without it we are completely vulnerable to Satan and even ultimately to the wrath of God Christ instructs Peter it's interesting that this recovery of Peter when you trace it out then in scripture afterwards and into the book of Acts and into the two letters the first letter especially that Peter wrote you can see how wonderfully what Jesus said here came to be true because when you read through first Peter and it's a good exercise just read this little passage again verses 31 to 34 of Luke 22 and immediately you finish reading it read through the whole of first

Peter it's not a very long letter and then look for the evidence in it of where Peter strengthens his fellow disciples all the way through that letter it's absolutely packed with strengthening for his fellow Christians where did he get the ability where did he get the capacity this man who denied the Lord three times despite his own self confidence where did he get the ability where did he get it he got it from what he learned through his fall and for what was answered by God in response to his Lord's intercession and when you and I have difficult times and when you and I are conscious of spiritual failure spiritual decay times of disobedience times when at least in our own private hearts we have denied the

[ 31 : 08 ] Lord we have not been what we should be we have failed what do we do with it do we despair do we give up do we say what's the point of course not what we say is let me remember Peter what use did he make of it it gave him the strength not only to progress his own spiritual life but to be a huge support to others who are in need that's what makes a disciple after all you don't live for yourself you live for your Lord and for others greatness Peter Peter is great why is he great well he's great because of the way that he strengthened his brothers having learned from his mistake and his fall so

Jesus instructs Peter just as he defined greatness and finally he predicts trouble ahead he said to them when I sent you with no money bag or knapsack or sandals did you lack anything and they said nothing in other words he's preparing them for what he's going to say next he begins it like this think of the time that I sent you out on a ministry in my name you didn't go with money bags

knapsacks sandals did that mean that you were really lacking things no they said we lacked nothing we had everything we didn't well he says now let the one who has a money bag take it likewise a knapsack let the one who has no sword sell his cloak and buy one for I tell you that this scripture must be fulfilled in me and he was numbered with the transgressors for what is written about me has its fulfillment in other words what he's really saying to them is look these things are going to be fulfilled in me in these terrible events that are just immediately about to take place

Isaiah 53 is an interesting fact that Isaiah 53 here by Luke is seen as particularly applicable to Christ and that verse especially let's say she was numbered with the transgressors Jesus reading the book of Isaiah knowing it so well knew that this meant himself that he was the one who was to be numbered with the transgressors but what he said to the disciples is because you are joined to me because you have followed with me in my trials as he said earlier because people will recognize that you belong to me that you're my people that you're my disciples that you are associated with this troublemaker Jesus they're going to look at you as troublemakers as well so you're going to need to be prepared you're going to need to have more than you had before you're going to need to be defended you're going to need to be protected and I don't think he meant by saying let himself sell his cloak and buy a sword that he meant literally a sword as if they were going to advance by using weapons of that kind because in verse 51 he tells the disciple there one of them struck the seventh of the high priest and cut off his right ear but Jesus had no more of this and he touched his ear and healed him and when you look at the equivalent passage in

Matthew chapter 26 Matthew 26 has an additional few details to that where in verse 52 Jesus says then Jesus said to put your sword back into its place for all who take the sword will perish by the sword do you think that I cannot appeal to my father and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels but how then should the scripture be fulfilled that it must be so it may well be that he did say to them that they needed physical protection as well but what is really especially important for them is to be prepared spiritually because they will need the strength that only he can give them to face up to the challenges that will come their way they too will be regarded as troublemakers like their lord was if they have persecuted me he said they will persecute you if they have kept my word they will keep yours also do not be surprised he said if the world hates you and there are elements in the world because the world is moved by satan in many of its anti-godly activities and what

Jesus is saying to us tonight is don't be surprised if you need protection spiritually and strengthening to live as one of my disciples don't be surprised if you have hostility against you when the world recognizes that you actually are associated with me because that is in fact what will happen and of course as we've said many times before the Lord did not say this so that anyone would be put off becoming a disciple so that we would conclude well if that's going to be the case I certainly don't want to be a disciple what the Lord is doing is telling it as it is so that we will not be surprised and so that we will have our strength from him especially and that it will make us stay even closer to him than ever before there is the Lord teaching a teaching about greatness what is it who has it why is it important to understand what it is a teaching about how we need to beware of Satan beware of his purpose his aims beware of what he has in his sights and what he intends to do a teaching about the Lord's intercession the Lord's wonderful protective care of his people the success of the

[ 38 : 11 ] Lord's intercession the power of Jesus intercession the overthrow of Satan's plans by something that you yourself would think would never be the means of overthrowing plans made up by Satan a failed disciple but that's what Jesus uses and we're all failed in one way or another and yet we are the kind of people that the Lord uses to advance his kingdom to overthrow Satan and the prediction of trouble ahead will the troubles will always be there but so thankfully will the Lord himself so thankfully will the Lord's power be there for every time we need it and we need it all the time when they said to him here are two swords he said it is enough what he meant was enough of that this is not about physical violence militant

Islam just as Islam in the past seeks to advance its cause by violence by perpetrating atrocities in the name of Allah by seeking to advance the kingdom of Allah at the expense of people's lives Jesus is saying my kingdom is not like that he is the king of peace after all as we saw this morning and his people have to be the people of peace and the advance of his kingdom is not by violence or physical means of that kind but by spiritual weaponry by prayer by serving him by humility by self denial by love by regard for your fellow human beings by being like

Jesus himself let's pray Lord our gracious God we do thank you that you have given us the great example in yourself that we are to seek to follow each and every day we give thanks Lord as that example is in your word that the record of your word is accurate and true that we can depend upon it we thank you that you are more than an example to your people that you are the one who is the foundation for their lives so that they need not rely on their own strength as they seek to follow your example that they come to rely upon yourself that they are thankful for being within your intercession Lord give us we pray that prayer each day that your servant the thief had on the cross Lord remember me and we pray that you would remember each of us that we within your intercession may truly find the safety and refuge that we require help us to be your people in the world a people who are marked by the greatness of humility by the greatness of servitude by the greatness of being less and considering ourselves to be least of all disciples grant these mercies to us we pray for  
Jesus sake Amen