

## Who is the Greatest?

The gospel for this coming Sunday (Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost) is Mark 9:30-37. There are two narratives in this text.

The first account is about Jesus once again foretelling his upcoming death and resurrection. The disciples are still clueless but are afraid to admit that they don't understand what Jesus is talking about.

While Jesus is trying to prepare them for upcoming passion, they are engaged in a discussion about which of them was the greatest of their group. Jesus asks them what they are arguing about on the road. It wasn't that he didn't know but because He knew they were coming up with wrong answers, he wanted them to put the question to Him. Then he does what he does on numerous times, Jesus takes time to teach them about what greatness is all about.

Greatness according to a fallen world comes by climbing over others, pushing yourself up by putting others down, building your strength on another's weakness. God turns conventional wisdom upside down. In God's kingdom, precisely by placing oneself beneath the weakest, a person gets ahead and becomes great.

Jesus uses children as an illustration to make his point. Jesus takes a very young child perhaps even an infant and places him in their midst. This child represented not even a hint of power. Children have been and continue to be taken advantage of and harmed. They also are the most gullible in life and have great trust in what they are told. Jesus is teaching the disciples to eschew power and to have faith in his gospel actions.

That Jesus used a child in illustrating his answer brings a needed lesson to our own age, an age with so many unwanted children, with a murderous mania for aborting children. What greater reason can we have for sharing the gospel?

Prayer: Lord, forgive us for our battles over greatness. Remind us that you alone are great, for you have served the least among us. Amen. (TLSB)