

## **Mark 9:33-40 – The Greatest Christian**

TSK, GreekLexicon, JFB, Handfuls, Rienecker, Robertson, Geneva, Vincent, Trapp, Clarke, Poole, Henry, Gill, Calvin, Gaebelin, Alexander?

Beloved in the Lord: Many people claim that Mohamed Ali was the greatest boxer (拳击手) that ever lived. He even called himself “The Greatest.” The crowds would chant his name when he entered the boxing ring (拳击场). But how did he become the greatest? He mercilessly smashed (重击) people’s face in with his fists in the boxing ring and he would cruelly taunt (讥讽) his opponents outside of the boxing ring. He made millions of dollars doing this. But his life was fleeting. He suffered brain issues, developed Parkinson’s, and then he died. His life came to nothing when he died. Worse, he did not know Jesus and his salvation (救恩). This is often how it is with other “great” people in the world. But what does the greatest Christian look like? Let us hear today from God Word concerning this matter.

Our headings are:

**Argument: Who is the Greatest?**

**Answer: The Greatest humbly trusts**

**Answer: The Greatest humbly serves**

Our goals are: That you will **have a full understanding of what true greatness is** and that you will **desire to be great** in serving Jesus.

### **Dispute: Who is the Greatest**

33 Then He came to Capernaum. And when He **was in the house** He asked them, "**What was it you disputed among yourselves** on the road?" 34 **But they kept silent**, for on the road they had disputed among themselves who would be the greatest.

**1. Jesus had recently told his disciples that he would soon be betrayed (背叛), tortured, and killed by the Jews in Jerusalem, but instead of being concerned that their teacher and friend would die in this horrible way, they instead argued about which one of them would be Jesus’ greatest disciple.**

**2. Why were they arguing about who would be greatest?**

Because they thought Jesus would establish an earthly kingdom, they became obsessed with (沉迷) being in the greatest position of authority, honor, and dignity, in that kingdom. They were so convinced (确信) of an earthly kingdom that they did not really think about Jesus being killed...even though he has said so many times. **Even after Jesus was raised from the dead, some of the men still did not understand** that his kingdom was spiritual kingdom instead of an earthly kingdom. Look at the proof.

**Acts 1:6** Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, "Lord, **will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?**"

**Instead of arguing with each other, they should have willingly given priority to the others,** not try to grab the better positions in the kingdom for themselves.

**Romans 12:10** Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor **giving preference to one another;**

**3. So after Jesus arrived in Capernaum, and after he went into the house where they were staying, he quizzed them about their dispute with each other.**

(Note how Jesus did not want to make a scene along road but waited until they were in a private place to talk about this issue.)

**Capernaum was an interesting place for the disciples to have this discussion as it was a flourishing city of Galilee,** situated on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee. Maybe this wealthy place gave the disciples hope for an earthly kingdom.

**Further, apparently, Jesus had come there to pay the tribute tax to Caesar.** This may have further stoked the idea that they did not want to pay taxes to a foreign nation, and they wouldn’t

have had to do so if Jesus established an earthly kingdom!

**4. The disciples refused to answer Jesus' inquiry, knowing that they would have embarrassed themselves for their selfishness.**

But of course Jesus knew what was in their hearts. Consider Luke's account of the same incident. Luke 9:47 And Jesus, perceiving the thought of their heart, took a little child and set him by Him,

**5. Lessons:**

**a. You have to give an account for every foolish dispute, every evil thought, and every sinful conversation you've ever had.** Jesus knows everything. It is useless to try to hide your faults.

**b. When you are obsessed with yourself – with your pleasure and profit- you quickly forget about the troubles of others.** You can push people aside or walk over them! And you can become resentful (憎恨的) to your Christian brothers. So remember Romans 12:10, and give preference to others! That is love.

**Answer: The Greatest humbly trusts**

35 And He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, "If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all." 36 Then He took a little child and set him in the midst of them. And when He had taken him in His arms, He said to them,

**1. Because Jesus knew his disciples' guilt, he sat down and took the time to explain who the greatest disciple was.**

He did not want to beat them down into the ground because of their sins. Instead,

**2. He taught his disciples that the greatest Christian was the one with the most humility.**

**Knowing important people (like Jesus) did not make the disciples great.** By saying this, Jesus dashed their operating theory to the ground quickly. He told them that the ones who wanted to be in first place would be put in last place...at least in his kingdom.

But don't think for a minute that the Lord was saying that they would be brought into his kingdom **by simply doing humble things.** Humility谦卑 is the result of salvation; humility does not cause salvation. There is no room for self.

**3. He taught his disciples that the greatest Christian was one who humbly trusts...like a child he set in their midst.**

While "little child" could be used figuratively to refer to a young Christian, it is not used that way here. This was an infant...young enough to sit on the Lord's lap. The child looks for help outside himself and trusts! **Look at what Matthew wrote about this.**

Matthew 18:3 and said, "Assuredly, I say to you, **unless you are converted (悔改)** and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.

**4. Jesus embraced the child to teach that infants instinctively humbly trusts; they were not pretenders (伪装者).**

Children are not egomaniacs (自大狂), fighting for the highest ranks. **They are TRUSTING.** 1 Corinthians 14:20 Brethren, do not be children in understanding; however, **in malice (作恶, 恶事) be babes,** but in understanding be mature.

This was not saying that children were perfect or innocent. Children are sinful from their mother's womb. But they were the best example of selflessness available...and that was why Jesus used children to teach about humility. So who is the greatest Christian? The one **who humbly trusts** the Lord like a child and depends on him.

**5. Lessons:**

**a. Teaching and disciplining take time, whether in your home or in church.** Don't rush teaching or discipline - especially with your children and your spiritual children. Cancel other unnecessary appointments to do these things. Guard against being too busy. Put the high priorities to these activities.

**b. Don't overkill when correcting your children. Sin already leaves a child – in age or in maturity – crushed.**

**c. Look at the Lord's obvious love for the covenant (圣约) child.** The Baptist (浸信会) says the child is an unregenerate pagan (未重生得救的异教徒) but Jesus treats him as a true covenant child.

**d. Here is the main point: The greatest Christian is marked by humility – humility in receiving salvation and humility in lifestyle – as a child trusts his parents.** It is easy to want to soar with the eagles than to suffer for sin, but you have to submit in humility to the things to which the Lord has called you!

### **Answer: The Greatest Humbly serves**

37 "Whoever **receives one of these little children in My name receives Me;** and whoever receives Me, receives not Me but Him who sent Me."

**1. Jesus then taught his disciples that the greatest Christian is not just the one who is like a child and humbly trusts him, but the greatest is also one who SERVES the child – the lowest one.** The one who receives (considers and helps) one of Christ's children, is in reality accepting Christ and showing his humility to Christ. And the one who receives Christ and his children is receiving the Father. The greatest one does not crave (渴望) the attention of the famous...the well-known...

**2. What is the source of humility that would cause the disciples to receive the child?**

The source of humility and service is love: Love of God. Love of your neighbor. Love (agape love上帝的博爱) is a self-sacrificing love...a work. Eg. He who desires to be a pastor desires a good **WORK** and a name of a pastor is "**MINISTER**." And **you can only know how to love when you experience the love in Jesus in your own heart.**

38 Now John answered Him, saying, "**Teacher, we saw someone who does not follow us casting out demons (赶鬼) in Your name, and we forbade (禁止) him because he does not follow us.**"

**3. Then came a seemingly out of place comment from John: "Someone was casting out demons, but we stopped him."**

But this is not out of place at all. This fit right into the disciples' arrogant傲慢的 thinking that they were the prominent 杰出的 ones who would get the prominent position in the "supposed" earthly kingdom that was going to come. And surely they did not want anyone cutting into their "rightful" place. (Maybe they felt entitled because they had "paid their dues.") But this man was a child of God who was really casting out demons. Demons don't cast out each other. The only difference is that this man was not part of the "official" group of Jesus' disciples. So they wanted him out...at least until the man could get their approval. Their control was too high a priority for them.

39 But Jesus said, "**Do not forbid him,** for no one **who works a miracle** in My name can soon afterward speak evil of Me. 40 "**For he who is not against us is on our side.**

**4. Jesus demanded that the disciples not stop the man who was doing this good work.**

John was probably hoping for a compliment (夸赞), but what he got was a rebuke! But John was prejudiced (有偏见的). This was like having a desire for denominational (教派的) domination (支配权). But think about what Jesus said: This man was **doing good work in**

Christ's name. This man would not speak evil of Jesus. This man showed he was on the Lord's side.

**5. Jesus demanded that his disciples should not see themselves as superior (有特权的) to other workers.**

The man didn't have to be a part of the close circle to work for Christ to work for Christ.

**6. Jesus further pointed out that the man and his disciples were on the same side; they were working for the same Lord.**

They were both delivering the Gospel and destroying the kingdom of Satan.

#### **7. Lessons:**

**a. The evidence of conversion (转变, 悔改) is seen in character (品格), not merely in confession (认信).** Talk is reasonably cheap. For a soldier to get honors (pay) he must first fight – fight his own selfishness and serve others. Let others see that your conversion is real by the way you treat others lower than yourself – children, new Christians, new Christians from different ethnic (种族的) backgrounds and politicians.

**b. Stay close with Christians, regardless of what denomination they are in.**

You are blood brothers with them. They don't have to be members of New Horizon or the URCNA. Work with Christians of other denominations. I believe our doctrines 教义 are better than most, but that must never, never, make you boastful. To look down on others is to be a bigot 盲目自大的人.

**c. In short, to be the greatest of all, you have to be the greatest servant of all men to all men.**

Meekness (柔和) and humility are the only ways for you to advance in Jesus' kingdom.

#### **Conclusion:**

Real Christianity is grounded on Christ alone...not anyone or anything else. When you are resting on Christ and are converted (Matthew 18:3) you will then **humbly trust him – like a child, and you will serve those in the lowest positions.**

Brothers and Sisters:

**1. There is nothing wrong in wanting to be great.** You should be concerned if you don't want to be great and accomplish great things for Jesus...

**2. But you can only be great when you are humble before the Lord and others– like an unpretentious 朴实的 child – who completely trusts his father. Specifically, you can only be great when you work lovingly and carefully serve children, new**

**Christians, the down an out, the poor, and the persecuted 被逼迫的人.** If you do these things you are on your way to being one of the greatest Christians! But remember: These things are all done to promote the glory of Christ and they require that you give up the things you love–your ambitions 野心.

**3. But instead of humbly trusting and serving, do you act as a stubborn (顽固的) old fool when you deal with your neighbor?** Do you treat children, new Christians, or the poor, as insignificant and unlearned, and keep them out from your circle? And do you think you must only meet and work with a small circle of family and friends? If you said “yes” to these questions, ask God to forgive you and then begin to obey him.

Finally, perhaps you are not a Christian. That means you don't have a concept of proper humility. You are “humble” because you want people to like you – to think or speak highly of you. You can only be properly humble if you experience the humility of Jesus' coming into the world to die for sinners. Then you can have the right motive 动机 in your humility. Then you can begin to serve others who are weaker than you. May you call on God to show you and help you to receive the humility and sacrifice of Jesus.