



**A BETTER
WORD**

THE GOSPEL OF MARK

A Study Through the Life of King Jesus | with Pastor Nick Gatzke

Jockeying For Position

Mark 9:30–41

THE BIG IDEA

True status in God's economy is found in serving people of all status for the sake of the gospel.

SERMON SUMMARY

We live in a glory-seeking, fame-starving society. There is a struggle in each of us to be known — and not just known, but recognized; not just recognized, but admired; and in that admiration, to be served. The disciples were not immune. Jesus had just told them a second time that he would be delivered into the hands of men, killed, and raised on the third day. And as they walked, they argued about who was the greatest.

Jesus sits down, calls the twelve, and says that anyone who would be first must be last of all and servant of all. Then he takes a child — the lowest rank in that culture, with nothing to offer in return — puts him in their midst, and takes him in his arms. Whoever receives such a child receives Jesus, and whoever receives Jesus receives the Father who sent him. When John objects that an outsider was casting out demons in Jesus' name, Jesus refuses to exclude him.

DIGGING DEEPER

1. Twice Jesus tells the disciples plainly that he will suffer, die, and rise. Verse 32 says they did not understand and were afraid to ask. What does their argument about greatness reveal about how little of his words had landed?
2. Why was status so important to the disciples — even among themselves? Pastor Nick noted that the status they wanted meant they desired to be served, not to serve. If you think too highly of yourself, you will always be jockeying for position. Where do you see that in your own heart?
3. Children in that culture had no status or honor — free labor, those who had not yet arrived, to be seen and not heard. Given that, what is Jesus teaching by placing a child in the middle of the twelve?
4. Read 1 Corinthians 12:12–18. Paul says God arranged the members of the body, each one as he chose. How does that answer the comparison that runs through your mind when you think, “I don’t know why she gets to do that”?
5. “The one who is not against us is for us” is often misused. Jesus is not saying that people ambivalent toward him belong to God’s family, or that theology doesn’t matter. What is he saying about who may serve in his name?

LIVING IT OUT

Pastor Nick shared Paul Metzger's account of driving an elderly Dr. John Perkins to a benefit dinner. Perkins admitted he was a hero in Mississippi now, quoted whenever the papers wrote about reconciliation. Then he looked out the window: "When I think about how many homes my fame has built for the poor, I realize my fame hasn't built any homes for the poor."

Heart Check: The celebrity leverages the gospel for his own benefit; the saint asks God to leverage his life for the fame of the gospel. The celebrity wants to be famous; the saint wants others to meet Jesus. Which have you been?

This Week: Identify one person with low or no status to you — someone who can do nothing for you and whom you tend to overlook. Serve them concretely this week, where no one will credit you for it.

REFLECTION & PRAYER

"And he sat down and called the twelve. And he said to them, 'If anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all.'"

— **Mark 9:35**

Confess where you have wanted to be recognized, admired, and served. Ask God to make you last of all and servant of all — and to give you real joy in it.

Your Prayer:

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