

How many of you are sports fans? How many of you are movie fans? How many of you are music fans? Well, I think that includes about all of us here. And whether it's sports, movies, or music, all of those disciplines have their share of good and bad. And when you think about it, all of those disciplines have awards for the "greatest" in their field. No doubt, we too, have a short list of the greatest film, the greatest athlete, actor, musician, or song that has impacted our lives.

You might even say that we are obsessed with greatness. And that's not a bad thing. We all want to see and be a part of the greatest things humanity can achieve. And humanity has achieved a lot. Why not celebrate and glory in those achievements? And even better, what if we could be an integral part of a great achievement?

James and John from our gospel had gleaned that their friend Jesus was destined for greatness. Either Jesus would use his power to overthrow the Romans and set up a new kingdom for the Jews, or something like this mysterious nonsense about “rising from the dead” he had been talking about, would come to pass. Either way, they wanted **in**. They wanted to share Jesus’ greatness; they wanted to be **relevant**. And don’t we all? Yet, **relevance**, has little to do with **greatness**. That’s where James and John got things mixes-up and confused. And so do we.

In today's world, "greatness" and "relevance" are synonymous. Somehow, if you make the news, if you show up on TMZ or ET, then you're someone who matters, you're someone whom people take notice of (and perhaps care about). But Jesus reminds us that attention and prestige, fame and greatness; they have *little* to do with each other in the realm of what *really* matters. In the end, it is God's attention and *His* last word about *us*, that actually matters.

So what's God interested in? Ultimately, God is interested (believe it or not) in our **happiness**. Jesus tells us plainly that he has come, and has come so that we might have life, and have it in abundance; both in this life and in the eternal life to come. Unfortunately, like James and John, we attribute much more significance to the life we experience in **this** world. And that's understandable, because this world is all we really know for sure.

But if we search our hearts, we know that there is an emptiness, a longing, a ***holy longing*** (if you will), that this world cannot satisfy. James and John mistakenly thought that honor and prestige were the solution or remedy for this unquenchable void we all experience in this life. But Jesus, the true great one, shares with them and us, the truth that in the eyes of God, ***greatness*** is the result (not of acquisition) but rather of “giving oneself away.” When you examine the history of Christianity, “giving one’s self away” is the resume of every saint, and for true happiness as well; both in this world and in the world to come.

As St. Augustine once well-pointed out, “Our hearts are restless, oh Lord, until they rest in you.” There is no award, esteem, recognition, promotion, or position in ***this world*** that will satisfy the **restlessness** that drives us to achieve greater and greater status. Today, Jesus tries to save us the time and ***wasted*** effort of trying to attain that “insufficiency of everything attainable.” In the end, it is only God who satisfies the **drive** for significance and security. And God’s way of achieving it is totally different.

God's way is sacrifice. God's way is giving of ourselves, offering ourselves in service and for the good of others. Why? Because that's the way He is. God needed to do nothing for us. But in **His** greatness, God chose to subject himself in his son, Jesus, his greatest treasure, to the fickleness of human esteem and understanding. For God, greatness lies not in what one can achieve for oneself, but in what one can do for others, (namely) his beloved children, who yearn and thirst for His love and validation. When we give of ourselves for this cause, we enter the true realm of greatness, and come to understand that in giving ourselves "away," we are configured to Christ (the greatest person who ever lived) and find a place next to Him; who gave everything away for us and for the salvation of the world.