

THE GOSPEL OF MARK "Status & Cliques"

OBSESSION WITH STATUS

*There is a **'competitive spirit'** with the disciples that keeps being exposed.

1. They argued among themselves over who forgot the loaves (8:16)
2. They argued with the teachers of the law when they failed to exorcise an unclean spirit (9:14)
3. They argue who is the greatest (9:31)
4. They argue with successful exorcists who do not follow them (9:38)
5. They snort at a woman who displays extravagant devotion to Jesus and denounce it as a waste (14:4-5)
6. At the last supper Peter boasts that he will outdo all the other disciples in remaining faithful to Jesus (14:29)

*All three passion predictions include the disciples voicing their ambition for status and prestige.

1. Peter's rebuke of Jesus following Jesus' first passion prediction (Mark 8:31) was prompted by the assumption that Messiahship entails privilege and not suffering.
2. Jesus speaks of his humiliation and suffering as the Son of Man (Mark 9:31) and they argue who is the greatest.
3. Jesus talks of his passion again which follows the request of James and John to sit on his right and left in Heaven. (Mark 10:35-45)

*This teaching within the Jewish community concerned rank, placement, and self-importance.

*Jesus speaks of surrendering his life and the disciples speak of fulfilling theirs.. He counts the cost they are counting seats.

Mark 9:33-41 (NIV)

⁽³³⁾ They came to Capernaum. When he was in the house, he asked them, "What were you arguing about on the road?" ⁽³⁴⁾ But they kept quiet because on the way they had argued about who was the greatest. ⁽³⁵⁾ Sitting down, Jesus called the Twelve and said, "If anyone wants to be first, he must be the very last, and the servant of all." ⁽³⁶⁾ He took a little child and had him stand among them. Taking him in his arms, he said to them, ⁽³⁷⁾ "Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me does not welcome me but the one who sent me." ⁽³⁸⁾ "Teacher," said John, "we saw a man driving out demons in your name and we told him to stop, because he was not one of us." ⁽³⁹⁾ "Do not stop him," Jesus said. "No one who does a miracle in my name can in the next moment say anything bad about me, ⁽⁴⁰⁾ for whoever is not against us is for us. ⁽⁴¹⁾ I tell you the truth, anyone who gives you a cup of water in my name because you belong to Christ will certainly not lose his reward."

The Rule of the Community at Qumran prescribed the proper order of procession in entering the Rule. First priests, then Levites and "third place all the people shall enter the Rule, one after another, in thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens, so that all the children of Israel may know their standing in God's community in conformity with the eternal plan. And no one shall move down from his rank nor move up from the place of his lot." 1QS 2:19-23

JESUS REDEFINES

*At no point does the way of Jesus diverge more sharply from the way of the world than on the question of greatness. He does not repudiate it, he redefines it. The challenge is to be great in the thing that matters to God.

*The word for servant is "diakones" – word for one who waits tables. It refers to personal devotion in service as opposed to service as a slave or for hire or as a priest. Generally people considered service as demeaning and undignified. Again Jesus redefines service as a visible manifestation of the reality of God's love. Greatness in God's economy is reserved for every believer in the common and simple tasks of serving others.

*This high-low status is repeated through out the gospels, Mark 10:43-44, Matthew 23:11-12, Luke 14:11, 18:14, Matthew 20:16, Luke 13:30, John 13:12-17

ILLUSTRATION OF A CHILD

*Jesus takes a child – who were not considered obedient, trusting, simple, innocent, pure or humble. The point is the insignificance of the child on the honor scale. The child had no power, no status and few rights. A child was dependent, vulnerable, entirely subject to the authority of the father. If one wants to be great then you need to shower attention on those who are regarded as insignificant. Jesus shows his 'great' disciples to show humble service for the humble. The greatest thing they can do is serve the insignificant, those with no influence, no titles, no priority and no importance except to God.

JESUS CLIQUES

*Here is a question – how did the disciples (we) stop the guys casting out the demons. Did they chase him off – did they cast the demon out of them?

***"Prickly Pride"** They do not want to share their power because it might undermine their status. If we can't do it then we don't want anyone else to do it either. God ranks things differently. God can use anyone.

*Jesus basically says that anyone using Jesus' name and things happen are empowered by God. 1 Corinthians 12:3

*Making known the name of Jesus is more important than their distinctions. Philippians 1:12-18

*"Cup of water" – God keeps track –

keeps track of tosses and turns and good deeds done. Psalm 56:8

1 Corinthians 12:3

⁽³⁾ Therefore I tell you that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, "Jesus be cursed," and no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit.

"Many who God has, the Church does not have; and many who the Church has, God does not have."

Augustine

APPLICATION