

July 25, 2021

ASKED & ANSWERED

...Shifting our mindset from expectation to revelation



"Now there was also a dispute among them, as to which of them should be considered the greatest.

Luke 22:24

Special Music: "Less Like Me"

Zach Williams

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hawc0emHq8c>

Question 4

Luke 22:24 Now there was also a dispute among them, as to which of them should be considered the greatest.

Answer 4

Luke 22:27 "For who is greater, he who sits at the table, or he who serves? Is it not he who sits at the table? Yet I am among you as the One who serves."

THEY STAND BEFORE ME

The man stands before me
Rank...
The stench of the street
Pushes back my compassion.
His ragged clothes
Betray him.
No one would choose to live this way
Obvious fraud, betrayer of his own soul

The woman stands before me
Decorated...
It is obvious
That she has passed sentence upon herself.
Her revealing clothes
Betray her.
It is clear how she makes her living
More commodity than human being.

The man stands before me
Reeking...
Of cigar smoke
And the perfume of joy juice.
His pin-striped suit
Betrays him
As unscrupulous and deceitful
Not to be trusted.

**The woman stands before me
Hollow...
Eyes of foggy mist,
Arms hidden, bruises masked,
Her business suit
Betrays her.
Lost in the non-purpose of her success
Head in the clouds.**

**The man stands before me
Broken...
Dusty blood-stained robes
Eyes soft and forgiving
His peaceful truth
Betrays Him.
A servant to all around Him
Both Shepherd and Lamb
Savior and Servant
God's answer.**

THE FIRE

Two managers stood toe to toe in the dark warehouse. There had been a small fire in one of the trash containers. The fire itself had not really caused any damage, but it had set off the sprinkler system and the warehouse floor was covered with water. Busy bodies could be seen working in a flurry in the background.

The two managers were not happy with each other. Bill, the warehouse manager, was anxious to get the water cleaned up and the lights back on. Charles, the safety manager, was more interested in getting to the bottom of how the fire had started and who was responsible. Both men completely ignored the work happening around them as they each stamped their feet and yelled at the top of their voices, neither hearing what the other was saying. Like two bucks brandishing their antlers over the affections of a doe, they stood their ground. If they could have, they would have drawn lines on the floor. Although their entanglement did not include fisticuffs, their tongues were sharp and their voices loud. They seemed totally oblivious to anything except their own altercation.

They danced back and forth, kicking water, barking and snarling, each trying to establish a dominance in the situation. Each thought the other had entered their domain. Bill felt that Charles should wait until they got everything cleaned up before trying to figure out what had happened, while Charles wanted work brought to a stop, and the area cordoned off so that He could properly

examine everything and figure out what had caused the problem so that it never happened again. Neither was willing to give an inch.

Bill called Jack, his shift foreman, over. “Jack, I want this mess cleaned up immediately!” And Charles yelled back, “Don’t you dare, Jack. I need to know what happened before you clean everything up!”

“But, sirs...” Jack started

“Jack, if you cannot get it done, I will find someone who can and you can start looking for a new job,” Bill yelled again without taking his eyes off Charles. Charles engaged with Bill’s staring gaze and shouted, “Jack, you will cease your activity immediately or there will be extreme consequences, the least of which will be your immediate termination.”

Jack looked back and forth at the two who refused to engage in contact with him. He felt very much like the third wheel on a date or maybe a ping pong ball to be battered about. Rather matter of factly he stated, “Gentlemen, neither of your positions is relevant. The water has been cleaned up...” about that time, the lights came back on and Jack continued, “...and the lights are back on.”

“Thank you, Jack.” Bill said, still not taking his eyes off Charles.

“And now we will never know what happened,” Charles continued as his gaze never wandered from Bill, “Jack, you’re fired.”

“Well, I don’t want to stand in the way of you two as you bicker, but I want to let you know that Janice was at the welding table and spark managed to fly into

the trash bin. There was a bunch of sawdust in the trash bin from work earlier today. That is what set off the fire. Everything Janice did was within protocol. We have moved the welding table back and moved the trash bin to another location. The problem is noted, and we shouldn't have this happen again. Everyone is back to work and production is still within quota. Now gentlemen, you can go back to your arguing. I need to clean out my locker.”

And with those words, Jack walked away.

Have you ever been close to or involved in a situation like this? One where the people that were supposed to be solving a problem are simply too busy arguing with each other while someone with lesser authority just jumps in and takes care of the problem? Nothing irritates a manager more than someone who oversteps his authority to get the job done. But, you see, that is the difference between acknowledging that there is a problem and taking ownership of that problem.

I sat on a help desk for years and learned some very powerful lessons. One of the major things that I learned was when a customer calls with a problem, they are looking for someone to take ownership of that problem. And if they call five or six times with the same problem, then the real problem isn't a technical issue at all, it's an ownership issue. Someone who takes ownership of a problem either deals with the problem or delegates the issue to someone else, but they always follow up to ensure that the customer's problem is resolved. The difference between a good customer support person and a GREAT customer support person,

is issue ownership, a driving desire to get the customer taken care of, not just pass the problem along. When the customer calls, they don't necessarily think that the customer support person has all the answers, but they believe the support person is going to find a way to solve the problem. They call with the understanding the support person is in their corner. The support person is the customer's voice into the company.

For some reason, we have created an environment where we believe that our leadership potential is solidified by our position; that somehow having a title means that people should do what we say. It is a poor company environment that tells employees that they should do whatever their manager tells them, no matter the consequences. In places where this type of hierarchy exists, the opinions of the employee, even if the employee is better versed in the issues, doesn't matter. Unfortunately, in this environment, if the problem is solved, then the manager generally gets the credit, but if the problem goes unresolved, it is the fault of the employee.

I don't mean to digress here, but it is important to understand the dynamics of situations like this. The incident in today's lesson occurs near the end of Jesus' earthly ministry, during the Lord's Supper. Jesus and His disciples have been engaging each other and the populous as for the last three years. Three long, hard years. Jesus has healed the sick, raised the dead, fed the hungry, mended broken hearts and broken minds. He has given them a new magnifying glass for understanding scripture. He has taught his followers that He is there to redefine the system, to shine a light into the dark areas, to help them clear the cobwebs from their fuzzy thinking. He has also shown them that His presence among them

changes everything. His teaching goal has been to broaden their minds to the point that they no longer find purpose in serving themselves, but instead, give of themselves to serve others. After all, couldn't they see that Jesus spent every waking moment serving the people around Him, either by teaching them or meeting their needs? Every story had a lesson. Every poor, sick, or broken person that they met was an opportunity to turn sadness into joy, sickness into health, anger into peace and present the nature of God to a confused world.

And here they all sat at this pivotal moment in history as Jesus teaches them the greatest lesson of all, the lesson of the table. And they sit there squabbling among themselves over a topic that had been brought up numerous times and always dismissed by Jesus. They wanted to know who was the greatest among them. Who was Jesus' favorite? Who would sit in the best chair? Who would have the greatest stature? Who were they all going to follow when Jesus wasn't around? Who would have the authority to hire and fire disciples? Who would sit on the left? Who would sit on the right? Who would get a shiny crown and a long white robe? Who would get a colorful medal to wear around their neck? Who would get to hold the scepter? Who was going to be the most important among them?

Jesus has told them that the barrel is on fire, and they are arguing about who gets to make the decision about what to do. Not about what needs to be done unless it helps establish that they are the ones to make the decisions. They are claiming some man derived, implied hierarchy. Jesus is trying to get them to understand as long as the fire is burning, none of that matters. The argument, which is contrary to everything that Jesus has been teaching them, becomes more

important than the fire that needs to be dealt with before it causes harm. Does it really matter much who sits where, if the warehouse burns to the ground while they stand there arguing?

What we hear going on sounds something like this:

"I am about to die. Judas, you are going to betray me. Peter, you are going to deny me. Thomas, you are going to doubt me. And most of you are going to desert me. But it is supposed to be that way. I have explained all of this to you. I will die. I will take away the sins of the world. I will bleed and hang on the cross, scourged and humiliated before all of mankind. I will rise again on the third day. I will come back from the dead. I will spend a little more time with you and teach you some new things and then send you into the world.

And you sit here arguing among yourselves about who is the greatest. Have you not listened to a thing I have been telling you?

For who *is* greater, he who sits at the table, or he who serves? *Is it not he who sits at the table? Yet I am among you as the One who serves.*"

In other words, we all believe that it is the one sitting at the table, sitting at the front of the church, standing at the front of the line, occupying the biggest office, has the most employees, the one with the best sales figures, the one at the podium, the one commanding the most attention, the one the camera is focused on, the one with their picture in the paper, the one with their own television show, the quarterback, the coach, the movie star, the celebrity; together we lift these people into the limelight because we believe them to be greater.

Jesus understands how the world works. He understands this is how society as a whole treats celebrities and how children grow up believing this is the good life. If we are professional athletes, rock stars, politicians, movie stars, business leaders, or wealthy innovators then we will be greater.

What we fail to understand is that the adoration of people is insignificant when compared to the Kingdom of God. The love exhibited towards us by our fellow humans is nothing compared to the love shown us by our gracious and loving God. If we see God's love as pure sugar, then the adoration of man is less than a generic sugar substitute. And yet, we buy into it. Our understanding of greatness is firmly planted on this orb spinning in space.

Do you remember the old Gatorade commercial, [*I want to be like Mike?*](#) Growing up, weren't we all given to looking up to role models? A lot of dreams were crushed if our favorite athlete's face failed to make it onto a Wheaties cereal box.

I want to be like Michael Jordan

I want to be like Amelia Earhart

I want to be like John Kennedy

I want to be like Martin Luther King, Jr.

I want to be like Neil Armstrong

I want to be like Princess Di

I want to be like Bill Gates.

The list goes on and on. And while I believe that it is good for us to do our best at whatever we do, when we place a human being in that position of role model, we will always be let down. Humans are not perfect. They are fallible. And often when they are at the top of their game, they feel superior to everyone around them. They teach the lesson that if you are the best at what you do, money and fame will follow. Often, these same people did great things with their fame and wealth. Others, not so much.

In church, children are often pointed in another direction and taught to believe:

I want to be like Billy Graham

I want to be like Albert Schweitzer

I want to be like Mother Teresa

I want to be a preacher, teacher, nun, priest, missionary

We recently talked about something Paul said in His first letter to the Corinthians, Chapter 3:

3 for you are still controlled by your sinful nature. You are jealous of one another and quarrel with each other. Doesn't that prove you are controlled by your sinful nature? Aren't you living like people of the world? 4 When one of you says, "I am a follower of Paul," and another says, "I follow Apollos," aren't you acting just like people of the world?

5 After all, who is Apollos? Who is Paul? We are only God's servants through whom you believed the Good News. Each of us did the work the Lord gave us. 6 I planted the seed in your hearts, and Apollos watered it,

but it was God who made it grow. 7 It's not important who does the planting, or who does the watering. What's important is that God makes the seed grow. 8 The one who plants and the one who waters work together with the same purpose. And both will be rewarded for their own hard work. 9 For we are both God's workers. And you are God's field. You are God's building.

And yet, knowing this, we still feel it is important to get the credit, to sit at the table being served, to compare our greatness with others:

I give more than he does.

I sing louder than she does.

I did this, but nobody else did.

I do this, but you only do that.

Paul is telling us that it doesn't make any difference who gets the credit, who gives the most, who sings the loudest. The goal is the same, Advancing the Kingdom of God. Why can't we find a way to celebrate the successes of others without tearing them down behind their backs? Why can't we find joy when we see the Kingdom moving forward, even if we had nothing to do with that particular action? Why can't we find a way to provide encouragement even if we agree with everything that someone else believes in? Why can't we see the Kingdom of God for what it truly is, different parts, different beliefs, different ordinances, different worship, different kinds of leadership, and different kinds of ministries all working together towards a common goal of sharing the love of Christ, feeding the hungry, healing the sick, giving water to the thirsty and bringing the Good News, the Gospel of Jesus Christ, to person on this planet?

When people argue about things like “who is the greatest,” several things occur.

1. The real work is left to the people who see the problem and try to deal with it.

2. The severity of the argument can keep people from joining in at the table, even though they are invited.

3. Things get out of hand, things are said that shouldn't be said, actions taken are regretted, reputations are tarnished, and there is a loss due to collateral damage.

I feel fairly certain that Charles regretted firing Jack in our story today. He could have recanted, but his pride got in the way. There's a good chance that other productive workers left the company after the way Jack was treated. Our disciples let their pride get in their way and those at the table suffered for it. Can you envision what it must have felt like to be called out by Jesus at the Last Supper? When we understand that Jesus calls us to serve, we have to put our pride in a trunk, lock it up and put it away so that it stays out of reach.

Paul tells us in his letter to the Galatians : "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." The focus being that we are one is Christ Jesus. It is the common bond of the blood of Christ that overrides all of our differences. It is that common vision among us, of Christ and the Cross, that challenges our pride and arrogance. It will not be us who decides where we sit in heaven. Our earthly concept of traditional roles and values will be

irrelevant. We are talking about being in the presence of the Creator of the Universe, not dining at Rosie's on a Saturday afternoon.

So let us each strive to put aside our petty jealousies, our piety, our self-admiration societies. Let's kick ourselves off the pedestals that we have planted ourselves on. And once we level the playing field for everyone, let's grab each others' hands, and lift the name of Jesus the way God intended. Let us be constantly looking for ways to help those around us, bringing them and ourselves is closer alignment with Jesus Christ, Our Savior. Let us bury our pride as we engage in the practice of servanthood, the way our Savior taught and exemplified.

AMEN

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