

Luke 22:24-38
September 6, 2020

Open with Prayer

HOOK:

Q: The world recognizes certain people as being “great,” whether it is in the field of sports, politics, medicine, business, or whatever. We even throw around the acronym “G.O.A.T” which stands for the “Greatest Of All Time.” What criteria does the world use to pronounce someone as “great” in their respective field? [Let people engage]

Transition: In today’s study, Jesus intervenes in a dispute the disciples are having as to who should be considered the “greatest” among them. You might wonder how this topic would even come up! My best guess is that once Jesus announced that one of them was going to betray Him, they not only began to speculate over who would betray Him, but they also began to consider who was the greatest. And it’s possible that there may have been some jealousy over the way they had been seated at the table. Jesus shares His definition of greatness. Let’s see what He says. Let’s begin.

BOOK:

²⁴ Also a dispute arose among them as to which of them was considered to be greatest. ²⁵ Jesus said to them, “The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who exercise authority over them call themselves Benefactors. ²⁶ But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves. ²⁷ For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as one who serves. ²⁸ You are those who have stood by me in my trials. ²⁹ And I confer on you a kingdom, just as my Father conferred one on me, ³⁰ so that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

³¹ “Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you (plural) as wheat. ³² But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers.”

³³ But he replied, “Lord, I am ready to go with you to prison and to death.”

³⁴ Jesus answered, “I tell you, Peter, before the rooster crows today, you will deny three times that you know me.”

³⁵ Then Jesus asked them, “When I sent you without purse, bag or sandals, did you lack anything?”

“Nothing,” they answered.

³⁶ He said to them, “But now if you have a purse, take it, and also a bag; and if you don’t have a sword, sell your cloak and buy one. ³⁷ It is written: ‘And he was numbered with the transgressors’ (Isa 53:12); and I tell you that this must be fulfilled in me. Yes, what is written about me is reaching its fulfillment.”

³⁸ The disciples said, “See, Lord, here are two swords.”

“That is enough,” he replied.

Process Observations/Questions:

Q: What did you most like about this passage? What resonated with you? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you least like about this passage? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you find in this passage that you didn't understand? [Let people engage]

Q: What do we learn about Jesus in this passage? [Let people engage]

LOOK:

Will you accept the world's oppressive way of honoring greatness? Or will you follow Jesus' example of becoming a servant and seeking the best for the "family"? Will you be part of the last who will become first? Or must you be first now?

Close in Prayer

Commentaries for Today's Lesson:

Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible Exposition Commentary (Vol. 1, pp. 266-268)*. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

Jesus revealed the disciples' worldliness (vv. 24–30). This was not the first time the disciples had committed this sin (Matt. 20:20–28; Mark 9:33–37; Luke 9:46–48), but in the light of what their Lord had said and done that evening, this latest exhibition was inexcusable. Perhaps the argument grew out of their speculating over who would betray Him, or there may have been some jealousy over the way they had been seated at the table. When you are interested in promoting yourself, it doesn't take much to start an argument.

Jesus had to explain that they were thinking like the unsaved Gentiles and not like God's children. The Romans in particular vied for honors and did all they could, legally and illegally, to win promotion and recognition, but they are not the examples for us to follow. As in all things, Jesus is our example, and He has completely reversed the measure of true greatness.

True greatness means to be like Jesus, and that means being a servant to others. A servant does not argue over who is the greatest, because he knows that he is the least, and he accepts this from the hand of God. Since all Christians are to be servants, there is no reason for us to compete with one another for honors and recognition. It is too bad that this competitive spirit is so strong in the church today as people promote themselves and their ministries as "the greatest."

Jesus closed this lesson on servanthood by reminding them of their future reward in the kingdom (Luke 22:28–30). In spite of their weaknesses and failures, the disciples had stood by Jesus during His earthly ministry, and God would honor them for their faithfulness. We should not mind being servants today, for we shall sit on thrones in the future kingdom! For that matter, our faithful service today is preparing us for the rewards we shall receive. Jesus has set the example: first the cross, then the crown.

Jesus revealed Peter's denial (vv. 31–38). It is interesting that this word of warning followed the dispute over who was the greatest! Imagine how the disciples must have felt when they heard that not only would one of their number betray Him, but that their spokesman and leader would publicly deny Him! If a strong man like Peter was going to fail the Lord, what hope was there for the rest of them?

The word *you* in Luke 22:31 is plural; Satan asked to have all the disciples so he might sift them like wheat. These men had been with Jesus in His trials (Luke 22:28), and He would not forsake them in their trials. This was both a warning and an encouragement to Peter and the other men, and our Lord's prayers were answered. Peter's courage failed but not his faith; he was restored to fellowship with Christ and was greatly used to strengthen God's people.

Peter's self-confident boasting is a warning to us that none of us really knows his own heart (Jer. 17:9) and that we can fail *in the point of our greatest strength*. Abraham's greatest strength was his faith, and yet his faith failed him when he went down to Egypt and lied about Sarah (Gen. 12:10–13:4). Moses' strength was in his meekness (Num. 12:3), yet he lost his temper, spoke rashly with his lips, and was not allowed to enter Canaan (Num. 20). Peter was a brave man, but his courage failed him, and he denied his Lord three times. "Therefore, let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall" (1 Cor. 10:12).

The word *converted* in Luke 22:32 means "turned around." Peter was already a *saved* man, but he would soon start going in the wrong direction and would have to be turned around. He would not lose the gift of eternal life, but he would disobey the Lord and jeopardize his

discipleship. Actually, all of the disciples would forsake Jesus, but Peter would also deny Him. It is a humbling lesson for all of us.

Our Lord's counsel in Luke 22:35–38 was not fully understood by the disciples, because they interpreted what He said quite literally. Peter's use of the sword in the Garden is evidence of this (Luke 22:49–51). The point He was making was this: "You are now moving into a whole new situation. If they arrest Me, they will one day arrest you. If they treat Me like a common criminal (Isa. 53:12), they will do the same to you; so, be prepared!"

During their ministry with Jesus, the disciples had been sent out with special authority, and they were treated with respect and appreciation (Luke 9:1ff; 10:1ff). At that time, Jesus was still a very popular rabbi, and the authorities were not able to attack His disciples. But now "His hour had come" and the situation would change radically. Today, God's people are aliens in enemy territory, and we must use our faith and sanctified common sense as we serve the Lord. This is a good warning to zealous people who foolishly get themselves into tight spots and then expect God to perform miracles for them. The Apostle Paul knew how to use the "sword" of human government to protect him and the Gospel (Acts 16:35–40; 21:37–40; 25:11; Rom. 13).

Their words, "Here are two swords!" must have grieved the Lord, for they indicated that the disciples had missed the meaning of His words. Did they think that He needed their protection or that He would now overthrow Rome and establish the kingdom? "It is enough!" means "Don't say anything more about the matter" (Deut. 3:26). His kingdom does not advance by means of men's swords (John 18:36–37) but by the power of God's truth, the Word of God that is sharper than any human sword (Eph. 6:17; Heb. 4:12).

Martin, J. A. (1985). Isaiah. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, pp. 259-260)

22:24–30. The disciples' arguing about **which of them was considered to be greatest** is surprising in view of what Jesus had just said about one of them betraying Him. **Jesus** then told them that such thinking is like that of pagans. The followers of the Messiah should not think about such things. Rather than wanting to be **the greatest**, His followers should each desire to be **the one who serves**. For Jesus was **among** them as **One who serves** (*diakonōn*, "serves in a lowly way," v. 27). The disciples should desire to be like Jesus. Ultimately, they will have places of honor in the **kingdom** because they were with Jesus **in His trials**. They will fellowship with Him **and sit on thrones judging** Israel's **12 tribes** (cf. Matt. 19:28).

22:31–34. **Jesus** revealed that **Peter** would deny Him three times that same night, **before the rooster crows**. However, He assured Peter that in spite of Satan's desire to **sift** the disciples (**you** is plural in the Greek) like **wheat** (i.e., to put them through difficult times), Peter's faith would not fail. He would be restored (**turned back**) and would be the leader of the disciples (i.e., the leader of the group of **brothers**). Peter protested, thinking that he was strong, stating that he would even go **to prison** or **to death** for Jesus.

22:35–38. **Jesus** pointed out to His disciples that they had never lacked **anything** while they were with Him and were sent out to minister for Him (cf. 9:3). However, now that He was to be taken away from them, they would have to make preparations for their ministries including **a purse ... a bag, and ... a sword** for personal protection. Jesus was about to die and be **numbered with the transgressors**, a quotation from Isaiah 53:12.

When the disciples responded that they had **two swords**, Jesus replied, **That is enough**. This response has been interpreted in at least four ways: (1) Some understand the words as a rebuke to

the disciples. If that were the case, then Jesus was saying, “Enough of this kind of talk!” (Leon Morris, *The Gospel according to St. Luke: An Introduction and Commentary*, p. 310) (2) Others understand the words to denote the fact that even two swords are enough to show human inadequacy at stopping God’s plan for the death of Christ. Swords could not stop God’s purpose and plan. (3) Jesus may simply have been saying that two swords were adequate for the 12 of them. (4) Others see the clause in conjunction with the quotation from Isaiah and understand Jesus to mean that by possessing two swords they would be classified by others as transgressors or criminals. This fourth view seems preferable.

Cabal, T., Brand, C. O., Clendenen, E. R., Copan, P., Moreland, J. P., & Powell, D. (2007). *The Apologetics Study Bible: Real Questions, Straight Answers, Stronger Faith* (pp. 1557-1558). Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers.

22:24–30 John 13:2–17 confirms that Jesus addressed the topic of humility and mutual service at the Last Supper, raising the plausibility of this episode from Lk, especially Jesus’ response to it in Lk 22:27. Mark 10:39–45 records a separate event and suggests that the dispute about greatness among the disciples was constantly simmering and surfaced again here as the obviously climactic events in Jesus’ ministry were unfolding. This was a major theme of His teaching and makes probable it achieved an established form during his lifetime, accounting for the similar language of Mk 10:42–44 and Lk 22:25–26.

22:34 For the various accounts Peter’s denial of Jesus, see note on Mk 14:27–31.

22:36 In contrast to His earlier instructions to depend on the kindness of others when preaching, Jesus now required His disciples to provide for themselves, including for their defense against enemies. He was in effect telling His disciples that their message would be met with hostility.

22:38 Jesus’ directive to take a sword does not contradict His ethic of non-retaliation (6:29), since Jesus rebuked Peter for using the sword to defend Him from arrest (22:49–50; Mt 26:52; Jn 18:10–11). Most scholars thus understand this verse as figurative. “Enough of that!” is taken as a rebuke of His disciples for taking Him literally (see Dt 3:26; 1 Kg 19:4).

Butler, T. C. (2000). *Luke* (Vol. 3, pp. 369–372). Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

22:24. The argument spread from who was the worst among them to who was the best. The implication of this argument rested on who would receive the highest offices in Jesus’ kingdom, as the following response shows.

22:25. Jesus’ kingdom was not like the earthly kingdoms they experienced. Gentile kings exercised domination, literally, “lord it over them.” Gentile authorities were called *euergetai*: “benefactors.” The term literally means, “ones who do good.” It was an honorary title that the government bestowed on princes, emperors, and the gods. Jesus ironically used a form of the Greek term for “called” that is probably to be interpreted as “have themselves called benefactors.” These people required recognition and glory for anything they gave or did for someone else. They bestowed the title on themselves. So in reality “benefactor” described a system that promoted injustice and unfairness. It was a system of “I will scratch your back if you will scratch mine.” It was a system of wealth limited to the few, and poverty shared by the masses. It was a system of a few gifts and an immense amount of oppression. It was a system

where the oppressed had to praise the oppressor for any small favor. It was a system without freedom, without opportunity, and without love and care.

22:26. Jesus' system was entirely different. The senior leader with the most experience must adopt an attitude as if he were the youngest with no experience, no leadership responsibility, and no honors expected. Whoever had decision-making responsibility should make those decisions as if he were a servant totally dependent on the decision maker. You do not seek for greatness or recognition, Jesus said. You seek for opportunities truly to be a doer of good for the rest of the "family."

22:27. Jesus turned the question on the disciples. You want to determine greatness, he observed. Who is greater—the one enjoying a banquet feast or the one serving it? The world says the one being served. Jesus' perspective was different. He stood as one serving the cup and the bread, not the one reclining at the table to be served. You must make a choice. Will you accept the world's oppressive way of honoring greatness? Or will you follow Jesus' example of becoming a servant and seeking the best for the "family"? Will you be part of the last who will become first? Or must you be first now?

22:28. Jesus recognized what the disciples had endured. They had stayed with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, in spite of the plots of the religious leaders, the fickleness of the crowds, and the difficult lifestyle with no financial resources, no place to live, and no guaranteed source of food. They had not fallen away in the time of testing (see 8:13). Many of his followers had turned back and rejected him, but the disciples had remained true—except for the betrayer.

22:29. Their faithfulness would not go without reward. Jesus came saying the kingdom of God is near. That meant God had given the kingdom to Jesus (see 1:32–33), and the kingdom was near any time and any place Jesus was near. Because of their faithfulness, Jesus would give them a kingdom.

22:30. The disciples will eat at the king's table. But they must remember that Jesus has just warned that he will not again eat and drink until he does so in the kingdom of God. He has thus described an interval, perhaps a long interval, before the banquet table is ready. Are they able to remain faithful during this interval?

22:31. Again, Jesus shifted the focus. He warned Simon Peter directly. The warfare with Satan that Jesus won and that Judas lost had started again, this time for Peter. Peter stood in Job's shoes. As the prime example of the righteous of his generation, he must pass Satan's muster. Satan wanted to accuse him and show him wanting.

22:32. Peter had an ally Job did not. Jesus was praying for him. This is a foretaste of Jesus' heavenly role as our intercessor (Rom. 8:34; Heb. 7:25). Here is a prayer of Jesus that was not fulfilled. Faith did fail Peter. Jesus knew it would. So Jesus encouraged Peter to come back from failure. Failure does not have to be the last word. Satan can win a battle and lose the war. After giving in to temptation, Peter could become stronger and become a source of strength for others. Failure need not be complete. Forgiveness is readily available. Here is the good news of the gospel for everyone.

22:33. Impetuous, brash, self-confident Peter did not get the picture. He vowed his faithfulness until death. He would endure all the persecutions Jesus described as signs of the end. He would be there to take one of the twelve thrones over the tribes of Israel. He did not mention Jesus' prayers. Neither did he mention his own prayers. He was confident he could do it. Later he would, but only after failure.

22:34. Jesus brought Peter back to reality quickly. You will not be faithful as you promise, Jesus told him. Today you will deny me three times. You will refuse even to acknowledge that

you know who I am, much less that I am your Lord. Be ready to face your weakness, Peter. The roosters will crow to greet the morning sun, but they might crow any time sooner. Jesus emphasized the immediacy of the denial in contrast to Peter's self-confident prediction about the future.

22:35. Now Jesus was ready to prepare the disciples for the immediate events leading to his death. He used their past history to prepare them for future actions. He had sent them on mission (9:3; 10:4) without essential supplies. They came back testifying how God had provided all their needs. They still remembered they had lacked nothing during their mission.

22:36. The present situation was quite different. Take whatever supplies and resources you have, Jesus told them. You will especially need a weapon for self-defense. Go sell whatever is necessary to get one. Satan had come after Jesus and his followers in full force. The persecution and arrests were about to begin. They must be ready to protect themselves.

22:37. The new situation was not coming because Satan had increased his power or because the Jewish religious leaders or the government of Rome had taken further control. All that would happen in Passion Week was under God's control. Scripture had already pointed to it. Persecution would come because the Old Testament prophets knew Messiah would be categorized with the outlaws and sinners (Isa. 53:12). Jesus claimed the messianic passage had to wait no longer for fulfillment. He was the one who fulfilled Scripture's messianic expectations—all of them. He would have to be seen as a criminal, an outlaw. To do so, he would have to submit to arrest, trial, and condemnation.

22:38. The disciples quietly took inventory: two swords among twelve (eleven) disciples. Jesus told them that would do; they need not go and buy others. Jesus' answer had an ironic twist. The two swords were obviously not enough to resist those who came to arrest Jesus. He used this irony to close the conversation.

The Holy Bible: New International Version. (1984). (Lk 22:24-38). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.