

What are some common ways our culture defines 'greatness'?

Mark 9:30-37

³⁰[Jesus and the disciples went on] and passed through Galilee. He did not want anyone to know it;³¹for he was teaching his disciples, saying to them, "The Son of Man is to be betrayed into human hands, and they will kill him, and three days after being killed, he will rise again." ³²But they did not understand what he was saying and were afraid to ask him.

³³Then they came to Capernaum; and when he was in the house he asked them, "What were you arguing about on the way?" ³⁴But they were silent, for on the way they had argued with one another who was the greatest. ³⁵He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, "Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all." ³⁶Then he took a little child and put it among them; and taking it in his arms, he said to them, ³⁷"Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me."

James 3:13--4:3, 7-8a

¹³Who is wise and understanding among you? Show by your good life that your works are done with gentleness born of wisdom. ¹⁴But if you have bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not be boastful and false to the truth. ¹⁵Such wisdom does not come down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, devilish. ¹⁶For where there is envy and selfish ambition, there will also be disorder and wickedness of every kind. ¹⁷But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without a trace of partiality or hypocrisy. ¹⁸And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace for those who make peace.

4: ¹Those conflicts and disputes among you, where do they come from? Do they not come from your cravings that are at war within you? ²You want something and do not have it; so you commit murder. And you covet something and cannot obtain it; so you engage in disputes and conflicts. You do not have, because you do not ask. ³You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, in order to spend what you get on your pleasures. ⁷Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. ^{8a}Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you.

Mark Questions:

- What are you hearing in this text?
- Does it surprise you that the disciples soon after hearing about Jesus' impending death were arguing among themselves about who among them was the greatest?
 - Why or why not?
- Is it right to strive for this kind of greatness?
 - How can we do so in a humble, God-honoring way?
 - What would happen if we stopped striving for
- When do you find yourself comparing yourself to others?
 - What drives it?
- What is our obsession with being first?
 - What would happen if we weren't?
- In verse 35 Jesus says, "If anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all." What does that mean?
 - How does Jesus demonstrate this in his own life?
 - How does this help us understand what it means to 'deny ourselves, take up our cross and follow Jesus'?
 - When do you find it hardest to serve others and how does this passage motivate you?
- What are some ways that you/we can be 'the last of all and servant of all'?
 - What are some ways that you/we can serve those who 'belong to Christ'?
 - Who belongs to Christ?
- How are we at receiving children? In society? In worship?
 - How could we do it better?
 - Should they have a voice? If not, at what age?

James Questions:

- What key concept does James discuss in verses 13-18?
- How would you define "wisdom" based on this passage?
- How would you define "wisdom" based on this passage?
- How can there be two different sets of wisdom?
 - Can there be two almost opposite courses of actions that are both wise? How?
 - Where does worldly wisdom come from?
 - Is it really wisdom? If not, what is it?
- How can there be two different sets of wisdom? Can there be two almost opposite courses of action that are both wise?
- Where does worldly wisdom come from? Is it really wisdom? If not, what is it?