



Loving Jesus, Loving People, Plowing a Counter-Culture

SERMON TEXT: Matthew 18:1-14

KEY POINT: The Kingdom of God is a community of people who value and welcome humility.

FOR LEADERS

- **Weekly Resources:** As a reminder, the weekly resources (discussion guides, group videos, podcasts, etc.) are posted for you each week both on the Realm Leader’s Group, as well as on our website at emergencenj.org/weeklyresources.
- **Boxes of Love:** Boxes of Love are due this week! Please remind the folks in your group that if they took a box, to please bring it back this week!

GETTING STARTED

- [1] Communities Video:** Watch this week’s community extras video.
- [2] Icebreaker:** What’s your favorite season of the year? Are you mourning the Summer, enjoying Fall, looking forward to Winter?
- [3] Opener:** How did your own personal study go in the workbook this week? Was there anything that you found particularly eye opening?

HUMBLE LIKE A CHILD

In our passage this week, the disciples ask Jesus about what it means to be “great” in the Kingdom of God, and Jesus addresses their inquiry by redefining their perspective of what greatness really is.

Ask for a volunteer to read Matthew 18:1-6.

- [1]** What do you think it means to be “great” in our world today? Give some examples of people who are regarded as great in the eyes of popular culture.
- [2]** How do you think Jesus’ definition of greatness compares to that of popular culture?
- [3]** When, if ever, is it a bad thing to seek greatness, and when is it a good thing?

It’s easy to speculate about why Jesus chose a child as a role model for greatness, but as Ryan observed, Jesus himself gives us the reason in verse 4: Children are humble.

- [4]** What does it mean to be humble? Give an example of someone you would consider to be a good example of humility.
- [5]** In your opinion, how should we understand what it means to both be great and humble?

Leaders: *Despite the disciples’ poor inquiry (and probably poor motivation) regarding greatness, Jesus doesn’t rebuke their desire for greatness, but their perspective of it. We should all seek to be great in the Kingdom of God! But we should understand what that means. Greatness in God’s Kingdom doesn’t have to do with affluence, indignation or power, but rather love, humility, and care. Greatness and humility are not at odds with one another but are actually linked. Remember Jesus words to us – “In the Kingdom of Heaven, the first shall be last and the last first.”*

WOE TO ONE BY WHOM TEMPTATION COMES

Ask for a volunteer to read Matthew 18:7-9.



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Last week in our study we looked at a section of Scripture where we see Jesus’ response to a common religious practice known as the “two drachma” tax, or temple tax. This week, Ryan summarized that Jesus was willing to forego his privileges as the Son of God in order to not place unnecessary stumbling blocks in front of those he came to reach. In verses 7-9 this week, Jesus reiterates this with a warning.

- [6]** What does it mean for something to stand as a “stumbling block” in the kingdom of God?
- [7]** Two specific stumbling blocks that were mentioned this week were race and politics. How might these two things function as stumbling blocks?
- [8]** What other things do you know that function as stumbling blocks to you or for others seeking the kingdom of God?
- [9]** In what ways do you feel that some of these stumbling blocks are perpetrated by you, your church, or others you know? What can we do to help remove them and/or better obey Jesus?

Leaders: *A stumbling block is anything that might dissuade someone from seeking Jesus or otherwise cause someone to stumble in their pursuit of God or His Kingdom. One example might be a man who does not normally struggle with drinking alcohol choosing to exercise his freedom to drink in the presence of a recovering alcoholic. Is it a sin for a man to responsibly enjoy an alcoholic drink? Perhaps not, but to knowingly do so in the presence of someone who does struggle with alcohol is not only ignorant, but (according to Jesus) behavior that is not fitting for God’s Kingdom. Today, as Ryan mentioned in the sermon, another critical example would be what we share (or don’t share) via social media. The question we should be asking ourselves is, “Is what I say, or how I act, or what I post putting a hurdle between someone else and God?” Have you ever stopped to consider that perhaps some things you say, or some things you do, or some things you wear or some freedoms that you exercise are causing others to walk away from God and his people? Because in this passage, Jesus is warning us that we’d be better off tying a large rock around our neck...*

LEAVING THE NINETY-NINE

In the sermon this week, Ryan pointed out that the shepherd leaving the ninety-nine not only refers to God’s attitude toward the lost, but also that it should instruct us as well. Like Jesus, we also should be willing to go out of our way to reach out to those who’ve “gone astray.”

- [10]** Where, in your own life, are you seeking those who don’t yet know and love Jesus? How can you be more effective in this?
- [11]** Who in your life represents someone who has gone astray? What can you do this week to go after them?

PRAYER

- [1]** Pray that the Lord would help you to model an attitude of heartfelt humility in your life and in your relationships. Pray also that God would kindle (or re-kindle) a childlike faith that is fully dependent on God.
- [2]** Pray for those in your life who’ve gone astray, who need a shepherd to go after them. Then pray that God would equip you with what you need to be that shepherd.