

Humility

Luke 9:46–50

Then a dispute arose among them as to which of them would be greatest. And Jesus, perceiving the thought of their heart, took a little child and set him by Him, and said to them, “Whoever receives this little child in My name receives Me; and whoever receives Me receives Him who sent Me. For he who is least among you all will be great.” Now John answered and said, “Master, we saw someone casting out demons in Your name, and we forbade him because he does not follow with us.” But Jesus said to him, “Do not forbid him, for he who is not against us is on our side.”

Main Point

True humility values all people and receives other Christ followers.

I. Introduction

- A. There are two men who have significantly influenced me personally and my thinking: John MacArthur and R.C. Sproul. Both men were dear friends albeit from different theological spectrums (e.g., baptism). In spite of their differences they were dear friends (R.C. referred to MacArthur as his “foxhole buddy” in the theological battles they faced together). They modeled a love for each other and for the gospel in spite of living geographically far apart and being in different denominations.
- B. What is true greatness? Jesus answers this question in our text today. True greatness is recognizing the dignity and value of all people (made in God’s image) as well as welcoming other believers.

II. Exposition

A. The Disciples’ Dispute (9:46–48)

1. The Problem of Greatness

- a) Following Christ’s pronouncement of His impending betrayal, the disciples focus on which of them would be great.
- b) Such a self-centered approach marked much of the disciples’ perspectives and discussion before the Lord’s passion.

2. The Reception of All

a) Jesus’ Perception

- (1) The Second Person of the Godhead *knew what they were thinking in their hearts*.
- (2) Luke emphasizes the ability of Jesus to perceive the innermost thoughts of people—thereby demonstrating His proper place to make judgments about the intents of their hearts.

- b) Jesus' Illustration
 - (1) In Luke's historical narrative he placed the healing of a small boy just prior to this account of the disciples' argument.
 - (2) Jesus summons a young child from the crowd and displays him before the disciples.
 - (a) This would be significant for their day because children were not considered important or significant.
 - (b) Jesus frequently referred to children throughout His ministry (e.g., Luke 18:17).
 - c) Jesus' Point
 - (1) Jesus took one of the "insignificant" (unimportant) of His day and taught the disciples the importance of humility, value, and acceptance.
 - (2) True greatness is not establishing a value scale system on creatures made in God's image. *All humans are valuable—from the youngest to the oldest.*
 - (3) The monarch who humbly esteems the peasant is the one who is truly great.
- B. The Disciples' Defense (9:49–50)
- 1. The Disciples Condemn
 - a) John (one of the Sons of Thunder) recounts to Jesus about a man who was performing exorcisms.
 - b) The disciples who closely followed Jesus were unable to cast out demons in the most recent account (9:37–45) yet someone who was "not in the circle" seemed to have success—all in the name (i.e., the authority) of Jesus.
 - c) The disciples actively sought to prevent the man from his endeavors, an act likely motivated by pride as evidenced by the emphasis in the previous three verses.
 - 2. The Master Responds
 - a) Jesus gives John a command and a reason:
 - (1) Command: *Do not hinder the man.*
 - (2) Reason: *He is not against us, he is for us.*
 - b) The principle Jesus applies should be rehearsed repeatedly in the ears of the church: Those who are true followers of Christ are true brothers and sisters whether a part of our "close-knit" group or not.

III. Truths

- A. Humility values all people.
- B. Humility receives other Christ-followers.