

"The Upside-Down Kingdom"

Salome, the mother of James and John, two of Jesus' original apostles, came to Jesus with a request. She entreated Jesus to give her two sons the highest positions in Jesus' kingdom, to sit at His right and left. This was a very bold appeal... Why did she think that her two baby boys were entitled to such a position? Maybe they were handsome... Maybe they were the smart, athletic, and the best fishermen in the land... We do know they were probably good fishermen, since their dad, Zebedee, ran a fishing business (Matthew 4:21-22). This family very well could have been "well known" in the region of Galilee and carried a prominent reputation. Certainly, some of these factors contributed to Salome asking Jesus this. Whatever the case was in her prideful petition, this set the stage for Jesus to teach one of His deepest truths about His Kingdom.

Matthew tells us that Jesus called his disciples to Him and said: *"You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. It shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be your slave, even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many"* (Matthew 20:25-28). Jesus taught and exemplified in His own life that His Kingdom is an "upside-down Kingdom." The way up is the way down. The high positions in the Kingdom are for those who have sacrificial love. The ones who serve when no one is watching. The ones who wash feet. Turn the other cheek. Have an "others-first" mentality. Give, expecting nothing in return. Lend both their tunic and their cloak. They don't just go one mile, but they happily go two miles. They show mercy to the needy. They choose to ride the donkey's colt and not in the royal chariot. They take their cameras off selfie mode. They aren't motivated by applause, recognition, and the praises of men. Rather, they carry the cross of Christ for His name's sake and not their own.

Now as I type this, I see my own need for repentance and this gospel reminder that the greatest in God's kingdom is the one who serves! And I am convinced we all need this Kingdom refresher because we are surrounded by a culture that promotes self. And that teaches the rhetoric that if you have more money, treat people unfairly, rise to the top (even if you had to cut corners), store up your materialistic treasures, and walk in pride, well then, you have clearly made it... Well, Jesus says that may be so in the kingdom of this world, but His kingdom is not of this world (John 18:36).

Salome had it wrong. The Savior had it right! Pride leads to destruction (Pro. 16:18). Humility comes before honor (Pro. 15:33). British theologian John Stott once wrote: "At every stage of our Christian development in every sphere of our Christian discipleship, pride is the greatest enemy, and humility is our greatest friend." Don't let the enemy bite you with pride. Befriend a humble heart; befriend the humblest of all, Jesus. Pride wants the throne. Humility takes up the towel. Pride says: "Look what I deserve." Humility asks: "How can I serve?" Go be great. Go be Kingdom of God Great. Go be a servant!

Respect the Blood,
Dalton Mathis