

SERMON

“THE FORMULA FOR GREATNESS”

Preaching text: Mark 9:30-37

We are a competitive people. I think of all the publicity around the Gubernatorial recall. It was predicted to be close. It wasn't. Governor Newsome won by a 2:1 margin. That was national news because of how a recall could have affected the whole country. So, the competition was fierce.

Our competitive side comes out in other ways too. Many of us are football fans. Do you know anyone who is normally mild-mannered but become passionate (rabid) when their team plays? We all know what it is like to be competitive.

Our gospel for today addresses this. We hear about how the disciples were embarrassed when Jesus asked them what they had been talking about as they walked along. You see, the disciples were discussing which of them was the greatest. They knew what it felt like to want to be #1.

Notice that Jesus did not condemn them for wanting to be #1. Jesus knew that people need to be motivated. That is why God placed those kinds of passions within us. It's perfectly natural to want to be #1.

Jesus reminds his followers, 1st of all, that greatness is not to be gained by self-elevation or by putting other people down. Jesus said, “Whoever wants to be 1st must be last of all.” Jesus' own life is the best example of greatness. And we can learn a few things about greatness from Jesus.

How do you become great? **The first step is commitment.** We know we could be doing more ... achieving more ... giving more ... but for whatever reason we are not always willing to pay the price. This can happen in our spiritual life if we are not careful.

Experts in burnout tell us that burnout occurs not just from over-activity, but it also comes from boredom. And that can happen. Service to others is a big part of our spirituality as Christians. We go through life not really knowing what

we want to do to serve. We're not really sure what we should be doing. We mosey along ... get bored ... and get burned out.

That's why each year we are asked to make a financial commitment to support our Lord's work through GSLC. That is so important. So is volunteering your time and talents. Having the ability and desire to care for others is important to Jesus ... and it is important for our spiritual development.

The second step is perseverance. Quitters never achieve greatness. In our gospel Jesus tells the disciples for the 2nd time that he is headed for the cross. Jesus had a choice to make. He didn't have to go through with it. But he did.

We have a choice to make too. No matter how committed you and I are when we begin a task ... the test always comes. Too many of us are too easily discouraged when we hit a stumbling block. I hope every one of you is an encourager ... building up hope in others ... telling them not to give up ... no matter what ... but to keep on ... to persevere.

Greatness is born in commitment. It blossoms in perseverance. But there is one more step. **Greatness, to Jesus, means serving God and serving others.** Jesus said, "Whoever wants to be 1st must be last of all and servant of all."

It's not easy being a servant. It means putting other people's needs before our wants. It means keeping your heart open ... even in a world where you must watch your back. It means caring enough to see that worthwhile, just activities happen because you are a part of them. It's not just showing up.

I'm so glad we have people in our congregations that make things happen. I think of Yvonne and our Council who have led us through this unique time. I think of Paul who leads a Bible study each Sunday for us. I think of Francis who helps wherever he sees a need. There is Carolyn, who has been leading worship for decades. There is Carol who does so much. I think of Brenda and Lori who help with the altar care.

But let me add ... even with all these people, and many more I didn't mention, we need more people to get involved. Please consider how you might be able to help. If you want help finding your place let me or any Council member

know. Some people have their own ideas of how to serve. If you are looking, we need Council members, ushers, counters, altar guild help, just to name a few.

To those of you who are involved ... THANK YOU! Thank you for the difference you are making!

I encourage each of us to examine how we spent this past week. What did you do to serve others in Jesus' name? What can you point to and say, "This is how I served!" If you are so busy with your job ... your hobbies ... your friends ... that you have no time left to serve, then the simple truth is something is wrong. And what's wrong is that you are missing out of a life of greatness.

What is Jesus' formula for greatness? #1: Be committed to what you are doing. #2: Persevere, don't give up. #3: Learn to serve others.

Jesus wants you to be great! Make your commitment. Persevere despite every hardship ... and become a servant in the name of Jesus!

AMEN.