

Summary

This sermon explores the concept of becoming less self-centered and more Christ-centered, using the story of James and John's mother requesting positions of honor for her sons in Jesus' kingdom. The pastor draws parallels between the disciples' self-centered attitudes and our modern tendency to make ourselves the center of our universe. Just as Galileo discovered that Earth wasn't the center of the universe, we must recognize that we are not the center of God's universe either. The message emphasizes that true greatness in God's kingdom comes through humility and servanthood, not self-promotion or seeking positions of power.

The sermon challenges believers to examine their motivations behind good deeds, asking whether they serve for recognition or out of genuine love for God. Jesus condemned the Pharisees not for their actions, but for their self-centered motivations. The path to becoming Christlike disciples requires surrendering our self-centeredness and allowing Christ to become the center of our lives. This humility is not only the key to entering God's kingdom but also the chief characteristic of those who follow Jesus.

Intro Prayer

Heavenly Father, as we gather together today, we ask that You would open our hearts and minds to what You want to teach us. Help us to set aside our own agendas and self-centered thoughts so that we can truly hear from You. Lord, we know that we often struggle with making ourselves the center of our own universe, and we need Your help to become more like Jesus. Guide our discussion today and help us to be honest with ourselves and with each other about areas where we need to grow. We pray that You would speak to each of us in the way we need to hear from You today. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Ice Breaker

If you could have any job title in the world (real or made up), what would it be and why?

Key Verses

1. Matthew 20:20-21
2. Matthew 20:22-23
3. Matthew 20:24
4. Matthew 20:25-27
5. Matthew 18:1-4
6. Matthew 6:1-6
7. Proverbs 16:5
8. James 4:6

Questions

1. The pastor mentioned that self-centeredness is a 'default setting of the human heart.' Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not?
2. When you look at a group photo you're in, who do you look at first? What does this reveal about our natural tendencies?
3. James and John's mother made a bold request for her sons to have positions of honor. How do you see parents today pushing their children for success, and when might this cross the line into self-centeredness?
4. Jesus told the brothers 'you don't know what you're asking.' Can you think of a time when you asked God for something and later were glad He didn't give it to you?
5. How did the self-centered request of James and John create division among the disciples? How does self-centeredness create problems in our relationships today?
6. Jesus said that greatness in His kingdom comes through servanthood. How is this different from how the world defines greatness?
7. The sermon mentioned examining our motivations behind good deeds. How can we tell if we're serving for recognition or out of genuine love for God?
8. What does it practically look like to make Christ the center of our universe instead of ourselves?

Life Application

This week, practice doing one act of service or kindness each day without telling anyone about it. Choose something that no one will notice or give you credit for. At the end of the week, reflect on how it felt to serve without recognition and what this taught you about your motivations for serving others.

Key Takeaways

1. Self-centeredness is a natural human tendency that makes us believe we are the center of the universe, just as people once believed Earth was the center of the solar system.
2. True greatness in God's kingdom comes through humility and servanthood, not through seeking positions of power or recognition.
3. Our self-centered attitudes and actions create division and problems in our relationships with others.
4. God is more concerned with our motivations behind our actions than just the actions themselves.
5. Becoming a Christlike disciple requires surrendering our self-centeredness and making Christ the center of our lives.

Ending Prayer

Lord Jesus, thank You for this time of discussion and reflection. We confess that we often struggle with self-centeredness and making ourselves the center of our own universe. Help us to follow Your example of humility and servanthood. Give us the strength to surrender our desire for recognition and position, and instead seek to serve others with pure motives. Transform our hearts so that we become less and You become more in our lives. Help us to apply what we've learned this week as we seek to become more like You. We ask for Your grace to change us from the inside out. In Your precious name we pray, Amen.