



## St Paul's Dorking Small Groups – 16<sup>th</sup> August 2009

### The Apprentice- The Greatest (Mark 9:33-37)

#### Read:

Mark 9 33-37, Matt 20:26-28, Matt 5: 3-10, Luke 1:46-55, Luke 9:23-25

#### Key points from Sunday's sermon

Our passage this week illustrates the **Upside Down Kingdom of God**. Through his life and death Jesus not only turned the world upside down, but he showed us how the Kingdom of God is not obvious-In fact it is the complete opposite of what we might expect..."The first shall be last and the last shall be first!"

#### Expect the unexpected:

- From the very beginning of Jesus' life the upside down, the contrary and the unexpected ways of God were declared in a new and tangible way. See Mary's song in Luke 1:52-53 "*He has brought down the rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble. He has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty*"
- Throughout his ministry Jesus consistently declared that the ways of God are not the ways of man and he endorsed the theme of many Psalms "*You save the humble but bring low the haughty*" Ps 18:27 "*For the Lord takes delight in his people he crowns the humble with salvation*" Ps 149:4
- For Jesus ... *The first shall be last, the greatest shall be the least, the meek will be the winners, the poor in spirit will be the blessed. It won't be the rich, the successful, the religious and the pious that will find their way to God ... It will be the outcasts, and those who know their sinfulness, their need of God, and who hunger for something different* ( See Matt5:3-10)
- Jesus' evaluation of our way of life was that it is upside down. According to Jesus we don't need a face lift, what we need to be is torn down and completely re-built. Born again he called it. He wanted us turned right side up. "*Jesus came to tell us things that are not obvious. He offered a worldview that is quite contrary to the worldview of our culture. He called us to a life so radical, so upside down that he likened it to being born again*" Donald Kraybill *The upside down kingdom*
- Commenting on this passage Michael Green summarises "*Jesus contrasts greatness in the eyes of the world with greatness in the kingdom of God. Greatness in the world is determined by status, greatness in the kingdom is determined by service. In the world greatness is shown by ruling... in the kingdom by serving*"

#### Living this radical new way

- **Taking Jesus at his word**  
Living the kingdom way is so contrary to our culture and our habits that we often try and disregard the challenge of the radical way of Jesus. Kraybill writes..."*Jesus is very popular. He is one of the great moral teachers of all time. No one criticises Jesus ....Or obeys him! In fact we go to great lengths claiming he didn't teach what he clearly did. We have to of course. To admit he taught what he did would require us to either change (repent) or criticise him. And neither of those is acceptable!*"
- **Quit focusing on the wrong stuff**  
Our society has got so fixated with success, celebrity, sex, status, power, fame, fortune and assertiveness that we too have often got caught up using our energy in reaching for the wrong stuff ( See Luke 9:23-25)
- **Find new freedom in servanthood**  
We have forgotten that Jesus explicitly tells us that fulfilment, and closeness to God is to be found in humility , and servanthood (Matt 20:26-28 Luke 9:23-25)
- **Re-evaluate what really makes you tick**  
My way or His way? We need to reconsider where our treasure really is and what we are really seeking after (See Matt 6:21, 33)

#### Questions to discuss:

1. **Icebreaker:** The Complete opposite! Can you think of examples of stories or quotes in the media where actually the complete opposite was true? Remember Alan Hanson speaking of Man Utd's youthful team?... "You will never win anything with kids!" or George Bush "There is no such thing as climate change!". Can you think of examples where black is actually white!
2. Jesus showed us that his ways and kingdom are quite upside down to what we would normally expect. Read together Matt 5:3-10 and Matt 20:26-28 what strikes you most about these words and their implications?
3. Jesus likens us being turned the right way up to being born again. Share together whether thinking of being born again in these terms is helpful-Have we thought of this as purely being a phrase that talks about Christian initiation rather than start of a whole new radical way of thinking and being?
4. Can you share examples or stories from your own life where you have experienced the "first shall be last and the last shall be first principle?"
5. Kraybill in his book *The Upside down kingdom* writes... "*We go to great lengths to claim Jesus didn't teach what he clearly did. We have to of course. To admit he taught what he did would require us to either change (repent) or criticise him. And neither of those is acceptable!*"What are some of most common areas where we choose to ignore, disregard, or sweep under the carpet the plain teaching of Jesus?
6. Jesus contrasts greatness in the eyes of the world with greatness in the kingdom. What do you see your friends and colleagues viewing and valuing as great?
7. Can you share examples where you have experience the joy of servanthood? Have you experienced moments or times where " In giving we receive?"