

Who is the Greatest?

“For who is the greater, one who reclines at table or one who serves?”

Is it not the one who reclines at table? But I am among you as the one who serves.”

-- LUKE 22:24-28

This past Sunday we finally arrived at the start of the final week of Lent, a week that is marked by intentional devotion and serious preparation for the great occasion that is Easter (If you have not been attending our Holy Week services I would encourage you to do so – every night @ 18:30).

Historically, this past Sunday is set aside to reflect on Jesus’ triumphal entry into Jerusalem and is popularly known as “Palm Sunday”. We were meant to imagine the day when Jesus entered the city that should have welcomed him as their King. But since we did that almost 40 days ago, our reflection had a slightly different point of focus, but only slightly, since we will still took our cue from Jesus as King, and specifically the kind of King he was... See, Jesus entered Jerusalem as her rightful King, the One promised through the prophets. But the people rejected Him because they had a different (read ‘wrong’) expectation of what sort of king they wanted and needed. Jesus was a great king, but His greatness looked so remarkably different to what people generally consider greatness to be that it disappointed, insulted and offended those over whom he should have ruled.

In the text we are introduced to two kinds of greatness; one of rule and power and authority... and one of service and humility! The former is the kind of greatness that we see so often exercised in the world, the one the lords it over others and does whatever it can for its own benefit. The latter is the kind of greatness exemplified and personified by Jesus. It is sad to note that while most of us would agree that the only true kind of greatness is that embodied by Jesus – one of service – we often find ourselves seduced by the allure of the first kind of greatness – one that lords it over others. The disciples had done this too. They should have been moved by Jesus’ example of humility and service (and they probably were) but it didn’t take much for them to fall into the trap of wanting to be great in the worldly sense of the word... they jockeyed for position, argued over who should have the seat of honour, manoeuvred to be found at Jesus’ right hand... all of this illustrates just how deeply they misunderstood the kind of King Jesus was, the kind of greatness he embodied, and the kind of greatness he expects us to emulate.

It is true... Jesus wants us to be great (for the sake of His glory) he wants the world to look at us and see His greatness revealed in us. But his greatness is one of service and humility – are we ready for that? As we move ever closer to the cross we are challenged by this great truth; even though Jesus was King, he died for His people; even though Jesus was the master, He washed the feet of his followers; even though Jesus was the host at the Table, He was the one who served.

Will we follow in his example and show His greatness to others by serving?