

TITLE: **WHO'S THE GREATEST?**

TEXT: MATTHEW 18:1-4

INTRODUCTION: (1) WHEN WE TRULY KNOW JESUS CHRIST AS OUR LORD AND SAVIOR, WE CAN REJOICE IN THE FACT THAT, THROUGH **CHRIST, WE HAVE BECOME GOD'S OWN CHILDREN**, ADOPTED THROUGH GRACE.

* **BY GOD'S SOVEREIGN GRACE, THROUGH REPENTANCE AND FAITH, WE BECOME CHILDREN OF GOD. AND THE HOLY SPIRIT BEARS WITNESS WITH OUR SPIRIT THAT WE ARE CHILDREN OF GOD, ACCORDING TO ROMANS 8:16.**

AND THEN ROMANS 8:17A **SAYS: "AND IF CHILDREN, HEIRS ALSO, HEIRS OF GOD AND FELLOW HEIRS WITH CHRIST."

*** NOW THE TRUTH OF THE MATTER IS, AS CHILDREN OF GOD, WE HAVE MANY BENEFITS NOW AND LATER AS HIS HEIRS.

**** **WE ENJOY OUR FATHER'S LOVE, HIS CARE, HIS PROTECTION, HIS POWER, HIS RESOURCES AND HAVE A WONDERFUL INHERITANCE. IN FACT, IT'S OUT OF THIS WORLD!**

(2) SO BEING A CHILD OF GOD IS A GREAT PRIVILEGE, AND I LIKE THAT IDENTIFICATION AND DESCRIPTION BEING A PART OF **GOD'S** FAMILY.

* AND SCRIPTURE DESCRIBES AND IDENTIFIES THE PEOPLE OF GOD BY MANY NAMES, BUT MORE FREQUENTLY THAN ANYTHING ELSE WE ARE CALLED CHILDREN - WE THAT ARE IN CHRIST.

** WE ARE CALLED IN SCRIPTURE, CHILDREN OF PROMISE, CHILDREN OF THE DAY, CHILDREN OF THE LIGHT, BELOVED CHILDREN, DEAR CHILDREN, LITTLE CHILDREN AND CHILDREN OF GOD. AND WHAT AN HONOR!! WHAT A PRIVILEGE!! WHAT A BLESSING TO BE A CHILD OF GOD!!

*** BUT THERE IS ANOTHER SIDE TO OUR BEING CHILDREN, FOR IN SCRIPTURE BELIEVERS ARE ALSO REFERRED TO AS CHILDREN IN THE SENSE THAT WE ARE INCOMPLETE, WEAK, DEPENDENT, UNDEVELOPED, UNSKILLED, VULNERABLE AND IMMATURE.

**** AND THOSE IDEAS AND TRUTHS LEAD US TO MATTHEW 18.

(3) FOR MATT. 18 FOCUSES ON THOSE IMMATURE, UNPERFECTED, CHILDLIKE QUALITIES THAT BELIEVERS DEMONSTRATE AS THEY MUTUALLY DEVELOP INTO CONFORMITY TO THE FULLNESS OF THE STATURE OF JESUS CHRIST.

* AND THIS CHAPTER IS A SINGLE SERMON BY OUR LORD ON THE SPECIAL THEME OF THE CHILDLIKENESS OF THE BELIEVER, SPEAKING DIRECTLY TO THE REALITY THAT WE ARE SPIRITUAL CHILDREN WITH ALL THE WEAKNESSES THAT CHILDHOOD IMPLIES.

** BECAUSE OF THAT, IT IS IMPORTANT TO SEE THAT THE CHAPTER TEACHES THE CHURCH (AS A GROUP OF SPIRITUALLY UNPERFECTED CHILDREN) HOW TO GET ALONG WITH EACH OTHER.

*** IN FACT, IF WE WOULD LIVE OUT MATT. 18, A BIG PORTION OF THE DISUNITY PROBLEMS THAT WE HAVE IN CHURCHES IN GENERAL WOULD BE ELIMINATED!!

**** AND IT STARTS WITH HUMILITY, FOR PROVERBS 13:10 SAYS: (QUOTE IT)

***** SO IT STARTS WITH HUMILITY, THINKING **OF OTHERS, NOT WHO'S THE GREATEST, AND** ACTUALLY HOW A PERSON ENTERS THE KINGDOM AND BECOMES A CHILD OF GOD IS THROUGH THE DOOR OF HUMILITY IN VERSES 1-4 OF OUR TEXT TODAY.

(4) THEN IN THE REST OF THE CHAPTER JESUS TEACHES THAT ALL OF US IN THE KINGDOM MUST BE TREATED AS CHILDREN, VERSES 5-9, CARED FOR AS CHILDREN, VERSES 10-14, DISCIPLINED AS CHILDREN, VERSES 15-20, AND FORGIVEN AS CHILDREN, VERSES 21-35.

*** AND IF WE LIVE OUT THESE TRUTHS, WE WILL GET ALONG WELL! BUT IT ALL STARTS WITH HUMILITY, AND CONSIDERING OTHERS **BETTER THAN OURSELVES, AND NOT WHO'S THE GREATEST.**

**** IN LIGHT OF THAT, **I'VE TITLED OUR MESSAGE TODAY, "WHO'S THE GREATEST?" AS** WE LOOK AT MATTHEW 18:1-4.

(5) AND WE'LL LOOK AT 3 THINGS IN OUR STUDY OF MATTHEW 18:1-4. NO. 1 THE CATALYST THAT LEADS TO THE QUESTION, **WHO'S THE GREATEST, V. 1; NO. 2 THE CHILD, AS** JESUS CALLS A CHILD TO HIMSELF TO ILLUSTRATE HIS POINT, V. 2; AND NO. 3 THE CONVERSION THAT MUST TAKE PLACE TO ENTER THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN, VV. 3&4.

* AND THOSE ARE THE 3 POINTS THAT WE WILL CENTER OUR STUDY ON TODAY. AND THE FIRST ONE IS THE CATALYST, LOOK AT V. 1 PLEASE.

I. THE CATALYST, (READ V. 1)

A. NOW THE CATALYST FOR THE DISCIPLES QUESTION IN V. 1 WAS MOST LIKELY PROMPTED BY THE CIRCUMSTANCES AT THE END OF CHAPTER 17.

* FOR CHAPTER 18 BEGINS WITH **"AT THAT TIME" OR "AT THE SAME TIME"**.

**** AND HERE'S THE CONNECTION. AT THE END**
OF CHAPTER 17 IN VERSES 24-27, JESUS RAISED
THE ISSUE OF THE SONS OF EARTHLY KINGS
BEING EXEMPT FROM TAXES; THUS, THE
DISCIPLES WERE THINKING OF KINGDOM
PRIVILEGES, FOR THE SONS OF KINGS WERE TAX
EXEMPT, KINGS DIDN'T TAX THEIR OWN SONS.

***** BUT EVEN BEYOND THAT, SOME JEALOUSY**
MIGHT HAVE BEEN BREWING, FOR IN CHAPTERS
14-19 PETER'S NAME INCLUDING SIMON, AND
SIMON PETER AND PETER OCCUR AT LEAST A
DOZEN TIMES.

****** AND IT MAY HAVE APPEARED TO THE**
DISCIPLES THAT PETER WAS THE **LORD'S MAIN**
MAN, THE GREATEST.

1. PETER WALKED ON THE WATER, PETER WAS
ADDRESSED BY JESUS IN MATTHEW 16:18
AFTER PETER'S GREAT CONFESSION OF CHRIST
IN VERSE **16 WHERE HE SAID: "YOU ARE THE**
CHRIST THE SON OF THE LIVING GOD."

* AND THEN PETER WAS ONE OF THE 3 TAKEN UP TO THE MOUNT OF TRANSFIGURATION. AND IT WAS PETER THAT THE TAX COLLECTORS APPROACHED, POSSIBLY SEEING HIM AS THE **DISCIPLE'S LEADER, AND IT WAS FOR PETER** THAT THE LORD PAID HIS ANNUAL TEMPLE TAX ACTUALLY SENDING HIM FISHING, SOMETHING HE LIKED TO DO.

** SO THE CATALYST FOR THE QUESTION ASKED **WAS PROBABLY PETER'S PREMINENCE AND** THE WHOLE IDEA OF KINGDOM PRIVILEGES FOR THE FAMILY OF A KING AT THE END OF CHAPTER 17.

*** AND THERE IS ONE THING WE CAN GIVE THE DISCIPLES CREDIT FOR HERE AND IT WAS THEY BELIEVED THAT JESUS WAS A KING WITH A COMING KINGDOM - THAT WAS GOOD.

**** **THEY JUST COULDN'T GET IT IN THEIR HEADS THAT CHRIST'S RULE ON EARTH WOULD BE LATER AND NOT AT THAT TIME.**

2. FOR BY THE VERY NATURE OF THEIR QUESTION, THEY STILL EXPECTED JESUS SOON TO SET UP AN EARTHLY KINGDOM, AND EACH OF THEM WAS HOPING TO HAVE A HIGH RANK IN THAT DOMINION - WHO THEN IS GREATEST IN THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN?

* THEY WERE ESPECIALLY COMPETITIVE ABOUT BEING NUMBER ONE. AND WHO KNOWS, MAYBE **PETER WASN'T NUMBER** ONE ANYMORE AFTER PETER REBUKED JESUS AND JESUS TOLD PETER **TO "GET BEHIND ME SATAN"** IN CHAPTER 16.

** FOR JESUS TOLD PETER IN ESSENCE THAT HE WAS SPEAKING FOR SATAN, A VOICE FOR SATAN, SAYING WHAT SATAN WOULD WANT. SO MAYBE THERE WAS A CHANCE FOR SOMEONE ELSE TO BE THE GREATEST, TO HAVE THE PREEMINENT CABINET POST IN HIS KINGDOM.

*** AND THE PROBLEM WAS THEY WERE SO CAUGHT UP IN THEIR OWN DESIRE FOR PRESTIGE, GLORY AND GREATNESS THAT THEY WERE UNAFFECTED, IMPERVIOUS, CLUELESS TO MUCH OF WHAT JESUS SAID ABOUT HIS SUFFERING, DEATH AND RESURRECTION. THEY **DIDN'T GET IT AS WE SAW LAST SUNDAY IN OUR STUDY OF LUKE.**

**** THEY DEMONSTRATED NO CONCEPT OF HUMILITY, VERY LITTLE COMPASSION AND CERTAINLY NO WILLINGNESS AT THAT TIME TO TAKE UP THEIR CROSSES AND FOLLOW CHRIST TO DEATH AS THEY HAD BEEN TAUGHT EARLIER IN MATTHEW 10:38 AND MATTHEW 16:24 (QUOTE THEM).

3. NOW IF YOU THINK THAT THE DISCIPLES JUST HAD A SHORT BOUT OR LAPSE OF EGO, AND THIS WAS A ONE TIME AMBITIOUS THOUGHT, UNDERSTAND THAT SEVERAL MONTHS AFTER THIS IN MATTHEW 20:20&21, THEIR SELFISH AMBITION WAS STILL VERY MUCH EVIDENT.

* FOR THE MOTHER OF JAMES AND JOHN ASKED (PROBABLY AT HER **SON'S INSTIGATION**) **BUT SHE ASKED OF JESUS, "COMMAND THAT IN YOUR KINGDOM THESE TWO SONS OF MINE MAY SIT ONE ON YOUR RIGHT AND ONE ON YOUR LEFT."**

** AND THE OTHER DISCIPLES WERE INDIGNANT AT THE TWO BROTHERS, BUT THEIR INDIGNATION WAS NOT RIGHTEOUS, BUT ENVIOUS. WHY? THEY WANTED TO BE FIRST AND JUST HAD NOT ASKED.

*** AND BEYOND THAT, ON THE NIGHT BEFORE JESUS DIED, WHILE HE WAS EATING THE LAST SUPPER WITH THEM, THEY WERE STILL ARGUING ABOUT THEIR OWN GREATNESS IN LUKE 22:24.

**** **AND DON'T MISUNDERSTAND** MY NEXT STATEMENT, **FOR I'M NOT TRYING TO LOWER** THE STANDARD OR CONDONE THEIR BEHAVIOR, BUT THEIR ACTIONS AND ATTITUDES REALLY ENCOURAGE ME.

4. FOR IN SPITE OF THEIR WRONG MOTIVES AND DESIRES, THE LORD WOULD STILL USE THEM. HE WOULD USE THIS MOTLEY CREW OF MEN TO BE THE FOUNDATION OF HIS PLAN IN THE WORLD, HIS CHURCH.

*** AND I'M ONLY ENCOURAGED FROM THE STANDPOINT THAT THESE MEN ARE WEAK SINNERS THAT THE LORD IN HIS GRACE STILL USES. FOR I SEE MYSELF IN THEM. I SEE MY SIN, MY FAILURES, MY WRONG MOTIVES, MY SELFISHNESS IN THEM.**

**** AND I'M ENCOURAGED THAT GOD CAN STILL USE ME. AND AGAIN I'M NOT LOWERING THE STANDARD FOR GOD'S CALL FOR A HOLY LIFE AND THE QUALIFICATIONS OF A PASTOR IN I TIMOTHY 3:1-7 AND TITUS 1:1-9 ARE VERY HIGH.**

***** BUT I SEE THEIR HUMANNESS. AND THEY LOVED CHRIST, BUT AT TIMES WERE JERKS. AND I'M GLAD THAT GOD USES JERKS.**

**** AND AT TIMES I FAIL THE LORD SO MUCH, IN SELFISHNESS, I WONDER, WHY WOULD GOD USE ME. BUT AS I CONFESS AND FORSAKE SIN, HE STILL USES ME, NOT AS MUCH AS HE COULD, BUT STILL USES ME.

5. AND I'M BEING VERY REPETITIOUS HERE BECAUSE I DON'T WANT TO BE MISUNDERSTOOD AND HAVE ANYONE THINK THAT I'M LOWERING GOD'S CALL IN OUR LIVES TO HOLINESS, AND THAT THERE ARE NOT DISQUALIFYING SINS, FOR I BELIEVE THERE ARE. QUOTE 1 CORINTHIANS 9:27.

* BUT AS YOU LOOK AT PEOPLE THAT GOD USED, YOU WILL SEE A LOT OF CRACKED POTS, CLAY VESSELS THAT ARE NOT REAL PRETTY AT TIMES.

** THEY ARE CALLED EARTHEN VESSELS IN II CORINTHIANS 4:7. AND THESE EARTHEN VESSELS WERE COMMON, CHEAP, BREAKABLE CLAY POTS THAT MANY TIMES WOULD BE USED TO STORE AND TAKE OUT HUMAN WASTE AND GARBAGE.

*** AND I BELIEVE THE LORD WILL USE ALL OF US MORE, THE HOLIER WE ARE, AS CLAY VESSELS. BUT GOD, IN HIS PROVIDENCE, WILL **EVEN USE BALAAM'S DONKEY TO GET HIS** MESSAGE OUT FOR HIS OWN GLORY.

**** AND THERE ARE A LOT OF CRACKED CLAY POTS LIKE MOSES, DAVID, SOLOMON AND PETER THAT GOD USED, AND SOMETIMES GOD USES US IN SPITE OF US, TO PROCLAIM HIS GLORY.

- AND LET US STRIVE FOR HOLINESS, BUT **REALIZE IN GOD'S REFINING PROCESS OF US AS** CLAY POTS, THAT HE IS VERY GRACIOUS AND FORGIVING. AND WHEN WE FALL WE NEED TO GET BACK UP, QUOTE PROVERBS 24:16, PSALM 86:5, I JOHN 1:9, PROVERBS 28:13.

6. AND BELOVED, MY POINT IS OUR LORD WOULD USE THIS MOTLEY CREW WHO ARE **ARGUING ABOUT WHO'S THE GREATEST IN MATTHEW 18:1 AND HE WILL USE US. HE DOESN'T NEED US, BUT WILL USE US FOR HIS GLORY. AND WITH THAT IN MIND, LET'S MOVE ON TO OUR 2'D POINT TODAY, THE CHILD. LOOK AT V. 2 PLEASE.**

II. THE CHILD, (READ V. 2)

A. NOW JESUS WILL USE A CHILD IN WHICH TO TEACH THE DISCIPLES SOME PROFOUND LESSONS ABOUT THE CHILDLIKENESS OF BELIEVERS.

* AND LIKE ALL OF US, THE DISCIPLES NEEDED REPEATED LESSONS IN HUMILITY, AND HERE JESUS USED A CHILD AS HIS ILLUSTRATION.

**** NOW ACCORDING TO MARK'S ACCOUNT OF THAT EVENT, THE DISCIPLES ARE AT CAPERNAUM IN A HOUSE, WHICH WAS PROBABLY PETER'S.**

*** AND WE KNOW THAT PETER WAS MARRIED, FOR IN MATTHEW 8:14 JESUS HEALED HIS MOTHER-IN-LAW, SO THIS COULD HAVE BEEN A **CHILD OF PETER'S OR A FAMILY MEMBER'S** CHILD.

**** **BUT WHOEVER'S CHILD IT WAS, WHEN** JESUS CALLED THE CHILD TO HIMSELF, THE CHILD CAME, AND ACCORDING TO MARK 9:36, ALLOWED JESUS TO TAKE UP HIM INTO HIS ARMS.

1. AND **DON'T** YOU LOVE THIS PICTURE. JESUS LOVED CHILDREN AND THEY LOVED HIM, AND AS HE SAT BEFORE THE DISCIPLES HOLDING THIS SMALL CHILD IN HIS ARMS, HE HAD A BEAUTIFUL SETTING IN WHICH TO TEACH THEM PROFOUND LESSONS ABOUT THE CHILDLIKENESS OF BELIEVERS.

* NOW UNDERSTAND IN THIS ILLUSTRATION, A CHILD IS A GREAT RESPONSIBILITY, ONE TO BE LOOKED AFTER, NOT ONE TO BE LOOKED UP TO. THEY HAD NO RIGHTS IN THAT DAY, BUT THE RIGHT TO BE CARED FOR AND TAUGHT PROPERLY, BUT WERE NOT SIGNIFICANT IN SOCIETY, THEY HAD A LOW POSITION IN JEWISH CULTURE. OLDER PEOPLE AND ELDERS WERE LOOKED UP TO.

** BUT JESUS WILL USE THE MOST POWERLESS MEMBER OF ANCIENT SOCIETY, A CHILD WHOM HAD NO STATUS, NO POWER, AND NO PRIVILEGE, TOTALLY DEPENDENT ON ANOTHER FOR THEIR CARE AND WELL-BEING, WORTHY OF LOVE AND CARE, BUT NOT ESTEEM IN THAT CULTURE AS A LIVING ILLUSTRATION.

*** **BUT THAT'S WHO** JESUS WILL USE TO GET HIS POINT ACROSS IN MATT. 18, WHICH LEADS US TO OUR THIRD POINT TODAY, THE CONVERSION. LOOK AT V. 3 PLEASE.

III. THE CONVERSION, (READ V. 3)

A. NOW GET THIS. ENTRANCE INTO CHRIST'S KINGDOM DEMANDS CHILDLIKENESS.

*** LET ME EXPLAIN. JESUS USES THE "TRULY I SAY TO YOU" PHRASE OR "VERILY I SAY UNTO YOU" TO EMPHASIZE THE IMPORTANCE OF THE STATEMENT HE IS ABOUT TO MAKE, A SOLEMN INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT OF TRUTH, AN AMEN AT THE BEGINNING OF HIS STATEMENT.**

**** AND WHAT FOLLOWS IS VERY IMPORTANT, "UNLESS YOU ARE CONVERTED AND BECOME LIKE CHILDREN, YOU SHALL NOT ENTER THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN."**

***** AND FIRST OF ALL FOCUS ON THE VERB PHRASE "ARE CONVERTED," WHICH ELSEWHERE IN THE NEW TESTAMENT IS ALWAYS TRANSLATED TO TURN, TURNED, TURNED BACK AGAIN, TURNING, AND TURN AGAIN IN IT'S OTHER 17 USES.**

**** THIS GREEK WORD LIT. MEANS TO MAKE AN ABOUT FACE AND GO IN THE OPPOSITE DIRECTION.

1. IN FACT, PETER USED A FORM OF THIS TERM TWICE IN HIS MESSAGE SHORTLY AFTER PENTECOST, AS HE CALLED HIS HEARERS TO **"REPENT THEREFORE AND RETURN, THAT YOUR SINS MAY BE WIPED AWAY"** AND THEN **DECLARED OF JESUS THAT "GOD RAISED UP HIS SERVANT AND SENT HIM TO BLESS YOU BY TURNING EVERYONE OF YOU FROM YOUR WICKED WAYS" IN ACTS 3:19&26.**

* BEYOND THAT, A FORM OF THIS GREEK WORD IS USED REPEATEDLY IN THE BOOK OF ACTS TO SPEAK OF CONVERSION IN ACTS 11:21, 15:19, 26:18&20.

** AND PAUL USED A FORM OF THIS WORD WHEN SPEAKING OF THE THESSALONIAN **BELIEVERS, WHO HAD "TURNED" TO GOD FROM IDOLS TO SERVE THE LIVING AND TRUE GOD IN I THESSALONIANS 1:9.**

*** NOW UNDERSTAND THIS, CONVERSION IS THE OTHER HALF OF REPENTANCE. REPENTANCE IS BEING SORRY FOR SIN AND TURNING AWAY FROM IT.

**** CONVERSION IS THE EXPRESSION OF WILL THAT FULLY TURNS FROM SIN TO THE LORD.

2. AND PSALM 51:13 ALLUDES TO THESE TWO HALVES OF THE TURNING WHEN IT DECLARES **"AND SINNERS WILL BE CONVERTED TO THEE."**

* NOW WITH THAT IN MIND, UNDERSTAND THIS, TO BE CONVERTED REQUIRES PEOPLE TO BECOME LIKE CHILDREN ACCORDING TO MATTHEW 18:3.

** MEANING: A LITTLE CHILD IS SIMPLE, DEPENDENT, HELPLESS, UNPRETENTIOUS AND HAS NO GREAT CONCERN FOR SOCIAL STATUS.

*** A LITTLE CHILD IS NOT SINLESS, OR NATURALLY UNSELFISH, THEY DISPLAY THEIR FALLEN NATURE FROM THE EARLIEST AGE.

*** BUT THEY ARE NEVERTHELESS NAÏVE, AND UNASSUMING, TRUSTING OF OTHERS AND WITHOUT AMBITION FOR GRANDEUR AND GREATNESS.

**** AND UNLESS A PERSON TURNS, IS CONVERTED, AND BECOMES LIKE A CHILD, IN HUMBLE TRUSTFULNESS, IN HUMILITY, THAT PERSON WILL NOT ENTER THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.

3. AND NOTE THAT THE PHRASE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN IS USED BY MATTHEW SOME 32 TIMES IN THE GOSPEL AND IS SYNONYMOUS WITH THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

* FOR THE JEWS OUT OF REVERENCE WOULD SUBSTITUTE THE WORD HEAVEN FOR GOD, SO HEAVEN WAS SIMPLY ANOTHER WAY OF SAYING GOD.

** AND BOTH PHRASES, KINGDOM OF HEAVEN AND KINGDOM OF GOD, REFER TO THE RULE OF GOD. ENTERING THE KINGDOM MEANS COMING UNDER THE SOVEREIGN RULE OF GOD, BECOMING ONE OF HIS SUBJECTS.

*** COMING INTO THE KINGDOM ASSUMES BY THE VERY TERM THAT ONE COMES UNDER THE RULE OF THE LORD OF THAT KINGDOM, WHAT IS SOMETIMES CALLED LORDSHIP, KINGSHIP. QUOTE MATTHEW 7:21, LUKE 6:46 – YOU MUST BE SUBJECT TO HIM IF HE IS YOUR LORD.

**** SO WHEN JESUS CALLED PEOPLE TO FOLLOW HIM, HE WAS CALLING THEM TO SALVATION. AND INSTEAD OF ASKING PEOPLE **TO MAKE A "DECISION FOR CHRIST" OR "TO ACCEPT CHRIST,"** IT IS BETTER FOR US TO CALL THEM TO TURN FROM SIN TO FOLLOW THE **LORD'S LEADERSHIP AND TURN OVER TO HIM** THE RULE OF THEIR LIVES, TO BOW TO HIS SOVEREIGN AUTHORITY, TO BE CONVERTED, TO REPENT.

4. BUT ALSO UNDERSTAND, THAT THE FACT THAT A PERSON MUST ENTER THE KINGDOM ASSUMES HE IS BORN OUTSIDE OF IT UNDER THE RULE OF SATAN AND THAT HE IS NOT NATURALLY A HEAVENLY CITIZEN UNDER THE RULE OF GOD. WE ARE NOT ALL THE CHILDREN OF THE KINGDOM.

* SO THE PURPOSE OF THE GOSPEL IS TO SHOW MEN AND WOMEN **HOW THEY MAY "ENTER THE KINGDOM" AND BECOME IT'S CITIZENS, MOVING FROM THE KINGDOM OF DARKNESS TO THE **KINGDOM OF GOD'S BELOVED SON, WHICH IS** ULTIMATELY A SOVEREIGN WORK OF GOD'S GRACE.**

** NOW THE QUESTION COMES UP AT THIS POINT, WHY WOULD JESUS TALK ABOUT ENTERING THE KINGDOM TO HIS DISCIPLES?

*** WELL, NO. 1 ONE OF THEM HAD NOT ENTERED INTO THE KINGDOM FOR SURE AT THIS TIME, JUDAS ISCARIOT.

**** NO. 2 THE DISCIPLES NEEDED THIS LESSON TO HELP THEM IN THE FUTURE IN COMMUNICATING THE GOSPEL, THEY WERE MISSING A BIG POINT IN THEIR FLESHLY PURSUIT OF GREATNESS.

5. I MEAN THE DISCIPLES WANTED TO KNOW WHO WAS GREATEST IN THE KINGDOM. BUT JESUS WARNED THAT, APART FROM HUMILITY, THEY COULD NOT EVEN ENTER THE KINGDOM.

* THEY HAD YIELDED TO THE FLESH AND FORGOT A VERY IMPORTANT LESSON WHERE SALVATION ACTUALLY BEINGS, IT STARTS WITH HUMILITY, NOT SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS.

** JESUS MADE THE POINT THAT THE PRIMARY ISSUE WAS ENTERING THE KINGDOM, NOT BEING **THE GREATEST. AND BY GOD'S GRACE 11 OF THE 12 HAD BY GRACE ENTERED THE KINGDOM.**

*** BUT NOW THEY NEEDED TO GO BACK TO THE GRACE PRINCIPLE FROM THEIR PRIDE, SELFISHNESS, AND AMBITION, FOR JAMES 4:6&10 SAYS: (QUOTE THEM).

**** AND BELOVED SALVATION BEGINS WITH SOVEREIGN GRACE, IT CONTINUES BY SOVEREIGN GRACE AND IT ENDS IN SOVEREIGN GRACE IN HEAVEN WITH JESUS. BUT THE DISCIPLES HAD FALLEN FROM GRACE, NOT SALVATION, BUT THE PRINCIPLES OF IT. AND WITH THOSE TRUTHS IN MIND, JESUS AFTER MAKING THIS TRUTH CLEAR, ANSWERS THEIR ORIGINAL QUESTION IN V. 4. LOOK AT V. 4 PLEASE.

B. READ V. 4. NOW IT IS THE PERSON WHO HUMBLER HIMSELF AS A CHILD JESUS DECLARED, WHO IS GREATEST IN THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.

* AND THE VERB BEHIND HUMBLER HAS THE LIT. MEANING OF MAKING LOW, TO LEVEL, TO REDUCE TO A PLAIN.

**** AND IN GOD'S EYES, THE ONE WHO** HUMBLES HIMSELF IS THE ONE WHO IS ELEVATED; THE ONE WHO GENUINELY CONSIDERS HIMSELF TO BE THE LEAST IS THE ONE GOD CONSIDERS TO BE GREATEST, FOR JESUS SAID IN MATTHEW 23:12: (QUOTE IT).

*** AND BELOVED JESUS MAKES IT CLEAR THAT YOU RISE HIGHER IN HIS KINGDOM AS YOU GO LOWER, THE WAY UP IS DOWN.

**** AND AS A LITTLE CHILD MAKES NO CLAIMS OF WORTHINESS OR GREATNESS, HE OR SHE SIMPLY SUBMITS TO THE CARE OF HIS PARENTS AND OTHERS WHO LOVE HIM, RELYING ON THEM FOR ALL THEIR NEEDS.

1. I MEAN A CHILD KNOWS HE CANNOT MEET HIS OWN NEEDS AND HAS NO RESOURCES TO STAY ALIVE, BUT HIS PARENTS.

* LIKEWISE, THAT IS THE KIND OF HUMBLE SUBMISSIVENESS THAT RESULTS IN GREATNESS **IN GOD'S EYES AND IN HIS KINGDOM. HUMILITY** IS THE DOOR THAT LEADS TO GREATNESS IN THE KINGDOM AND TO BE GREATLY USED IN THE KINGDOM, AND ULTIMATELY THE DOOR THAT OPENS THE GATE IN ENTERING THE KINGDOM.

AND AS I WRAP UP THINGS TODAY (1) I QUOTE R.C.H. LENSKI. HE SAID, "ONLY AN EMPTY VESSEL CAN GOD FILL WITH HIS GIFTS. AND THE EMPTIER WE ARE OF ANYTHING THAT IS DUE TO OURSELVES, THE MORE CAN GOD POUR INTO THESE VESSELS HIS ETERNAL RICHES, HONORS AND GLORIES."

* BELOVED, IF OUR CUP IS FULL OF AMBITION, PRIDE AND SELFISHNESS, THE LORD CANNOT FILL IT!

**** BUT IF WE WANT TO BE USEFUL FOR GOD'S** KINGDOM PURPOSES, WE MUST EMPTY OURSELVES OF THESE THINGS AND BECOME DEPENDENT AS A CHILD IS TO HIS PARENTS.

*** ONLY OUR DEPENDENCE IS UPON OUR HEAVENLY FATHER.

**** AND LET US BE REMINDED THAT THE WAY UP IS DOWN, AND LET US REMEMBER THE WORDS OF SOLOMON IN PROVERBS, QUOTE PROVERBS 11:2, PROVERBS 16:18, PROVERBS 29:23, PROVERBS 21:4, PROVERBS 6:16, ISAIAH 42:8 AND REVELATION 4:11.

(2) FOLKS, GOD RESISTS THE PROUD BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE. AND AGAIN HUMILITY IS THE ENTRANCE DOOR INTO HEAVEN.

* FOR IF YOU THINK YOU ARE WORTHY OF HEAVEN, IT SHOWS THAT YOU ARE ON THE ROAD TO HELL, FOR THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NO NOT ONE.

** WE MUST COME AND KNEEL AT THE FOOT OF THE CROSS AND CRY OUT FOR MERCY, HAVE MERCY ON ME O GOD A SINNER.

***** AND IF YOU ARE A SAINT BY GOD'S GRACE,
LET'S LEARN THAT THE WAY TO ASCEND IS TO
DESCEND, THE WAY TO BECOME GREAT IS TO
BECOME SMALL, LIKE A CHILD.**

****** IF YOU WISH TO RISE, THEN SINK, AND IF
YOU WISH TO RULE, THEN SERVE.**

(3) IN CLOSING, LET THIS BE OUR PRAYER
TODAY, A DUTCH POEM THAT I CAME ACROSS IN
ONE OF **WILLIAM HENRICKSEN'S COMMENTARY.**

* IT SAYS: MAKE ME, O LORD, A CHILD AGAIN,
SO TENDER, FRAIL, AND SMALL,
IN SELF POSSESSING NOTHING, AND
IN THEE POSSESSING ALL.

** O SAVIOR, MAKE ME SMALL ONCE MORE,
THAT DOWNWARD I MAY GROW,
AND IN THIS HEART OF MINE RESTORE
THE FAITH OF LONG AGO.

*** WITH THEE MAY I BE CRUCIFIED –
NO LONGER I THAT LIVES –
O SAVIOR, CRUSH MY SINFUL PRIDE
BY GRACE WHICH PARDON GIVES.

**** MAKE ME, O LORD, A CHILD AGAIN,
OBEDIENT TO THY CALL,
IN SELF POSSESSING NOTHING, AND
IN THEE POSSESSING ALL.

(LET'S PRAY)