

ANYONE WHO WANTS TO BE GREAT AMONG YOU MUST BE YOUR SERVANT
TWENTY-NINTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME – 17 OCTOBER 2021



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Anyone who wants to be great among you must be your servant

The gospels of recent weeks have puzzling scenarios. The apostles do not know what Jesus is talking about and they are astounded by what he says to them. He continues to shock in this gospel.

Last week he tells them that it is almost impossible for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. The rich man was invited by Jesus to give his riches away and to follow Jesus but he couldn't. The disciples wonder who can be saved? Jesus has an answer. It is only possible through God's power that anyone can be saved!

The relationship with Jesus is fundamental. Peter sees this clearly and asks what will happen to those who gave up everything to follow Jesus? He was speaking for himself. The reply is that God will not be outdone in generosity.

We recognise the wonderful acts of people who are so generous with their lives in their efforts to assist others in need. *'The kindness of strangers'* is a common theme to describe those anonymous strangers who stop to lend a hand, who remain with an injured person, who save their lives in many cases. The surfers who go to the assistance of a surfer attacked by a shark is an instance of bravery and concern.

Jesus tells us if we give our lives to him, totally, he will give them back to us with untold blessings.

James and John, two of the inner circle take Jesus aside, after all that has happened so far, and ask him to place them on his right and left hand when he assumes his power as the Messiah! They know what they want, we admire their incentive but we wonder what is going through their heads? They want to share the power and the glory which will be his.

Commentators point out that Matthew places the question asking for this favour in the mouth of the mother of James and John. Luke does not tell this incident at all. It is embarrassing. The ten apostles hear about the audacity of James and John; they are only upset because they had been sidelined, the issue itself was not a problem – they wanted to share in the power and glory of Israel's restoration to splendour, not seen since the days of King David and Solomon. The next section of the gospel is quite extraordinary. The powerful have authority over ordinary people, it is a familiar dynamic today, and make their power felt – what is the point of having it and not using it?

But Jesus demands that the one who wants to be great must in fact become a servant to all; the one who would be first must be a slave to all.

When one has the capacity to be a slave to all, THEN they have the capacity to be first. Losing one's life, means that a person can be truly free, truly wise, truly courageous. Truly Christlike.

Father Gary Walker SSC

[St Columbans Mission Society](#)

Readings: <https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/101721.cfm>