

LESSON 21: MATTHEW 18
FEBRUARY 4, 2009

OVERVIEW

- . Greatness in God's sight – Matthew 18:1-5
- . The stumbling block – Matthew 18:6-20
- . Forgiveness – Matthew 18:21-35

GREATNESS IN GOD'S SIGHT – MATTHEW 18:1-5

- . The character of greatness is humility – Matthew 18:1-4
 - . Our idea of greatness is in utter contradiction to God's
 - . The world calls someone great because they are superior to others
 - . God calls a person great who humbly serves others
 - . The key to this passage is learning to be humble
 - . Humility needs to be the most prominent trait of our transformed character
 - . A small child is humbled by their surroundings and submits more easily to their parents
 - . A small child is not ashamed of needing help
 - . A small child is unimpressed with status
 - . The opposite of humility is pride, which causes us to resist surrendering
- . Receiving the little ones – Matthew 18:5
 - . Jesus proceeds to describe the work of someone who is truly great in God's Kingdom
 - . The disciples did not desire to tend to the "little people" – Matthew 15:23, 19:13
 - . In contrast, they worried about offending the "big wigs" – Matthew 15:12
 - . We need to spend less time thinking about how to impress our worldly superiors and more time thinking about how to please God

THE STUMBLING BLOCK – MATTHEW 18:6-20

- . John's question forms the link between these two subjects – Mark 9:38
- . John's question reveals where his heart is at and puts a stumbling block between the disciples and Jesus
 - . Instead of embracing this person and helping him, the disciples had rebuked him and put a stumbling block in his way
- . Ways to cause a child to stumble

- . Mold their minds in to patterns of crime, ridiculing religion, swearing, fail to discipline, gossip, etc.
- . Jesus shows us the weight of God's condemnation for causing a child to stumble
Matthew 18:6
 - . Humans are so interrelated, that to sin against God is ultimately to cause someone else to stumble – Matthew 18:7-9
- . The shepherds concern for the sheep that have stumbled – Matthew 18:10-14
 - . Every lost soul is precious to God
- . The church's concern for the sheep that has stumbled – Matthew 18:15-20
 - . Jesus is now moving to the sheep that stumble within church fellowship
 - . First step is for us to try to win him back to fellowship with God – Matthew 18:15
 - . When someone has wronged us Jesus says we must approach them and try to reconcile ourselves to God
2 Corinthians 10:3-5
 - . We need to pray that we will go humbly in love in an attempt to win our brother over to God – Galatians 6:1
 - . Second step is to take one or two "brothers" with us – Matthew 18:16
 - . Third step is tell it to the church and if he still refuses, expel him – Matthew 18:17, 2 Corinthians 5
 - . The power of the church to administer God's will – Matthew 18:18-20
 - . When the church is in union with Christ, they will make decisions on earth that are the will of God in heaven

FORGIVENESS – MATTHEW 18:21-35

- . Peter continues to act from the standpoint of his fallen nature
 - . Peter is reacting to Jesus' comments regarding the church and removing stumbling blocks
 - . Peter wanted to set limits to his own level of forgiveness
- . Jesus answers Peter in a parable
 - . The king symbolizes God and the kingdom of heaven
 - . God, our Creator, to whom we owe everything, calls us to answer to Him
 - . The debt symbolizes the individual's sin in God's sight and failure to serve Him
 - . We have all fallen short of the glory of God – Romans 3:23
 - . The inevitable punishment of the servant symbolizes the danger of death at any moment and after the death, the judgment – Matthew 18:25
 - . The king's compassion symbolizes the offer of God's forgiveness through Christ and the offer of eternal life
 - . The servant's actions reveal his true heart and his lack of repentance

- . To refuse to forgive another's sins towards you means that you have refused to see your own sins before God
- . A willingness to forgive others is one of the true fruits of repentance
- . The king's final rebuke serves as a warning to all of us that God will ultimately judge us based on the actions that resonate from our heart

NEXT LESSON: WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 18, 2009 – MATTHEW 19