

Home Group Leaders Discussion Guide

Luke 22:24-30

This week we look at a snippet of dialogue that occurred during the Last Supper. It's a similar conversation point to that which occurred back in Luke 9:46-48. The dispute/argument that arose was in regards to which one of the disciples would be considered the greatest? This might best be understood as them having a heated debate as to which of them was next in line, after Jesus, of course. Who would be the "second in command", if you will?

In retrospect we can see that, for all intents and purposes, Jesus appointed Peter for such a role. But that's not really the point in this passage. From Jesus' angle, this conversation was one of preparation. That being the case, then, it is really verse 29 that is the focal point, "*I confer on you a kingdom, just as my Father conferred one on Me.*" The word "confer" is formal, covenant language. Jesus draws their minds, and ours, to His ultimate intent.

From the dawn of creation, God created humans to rule with Him, to be His co-regents, to manage His good creation on His behalf. Obviously, we know the story, we failed miserably. But that never changed God's desire or design. He has been about restoring humans to His original purpose ever since. His desire has always been that His dwelling place and our dwelling place would be one...His Kingdom, His reign and rule, here on earth.

Jesus was just a few short hours away from dealing a death blow to sin, death, and the devil. Ironically, His own death would cause the defeat of these enemies, and His resurrection would usher in new creation.

So the disciples needed to be ready to take their place in their appointed role in His Kingdom. And this little dispute demonstrates that they were still not quite ready. Verses 25-27 should be seen as Jesus contrasting the way and culture of His Kingdom from that of the world. Things are upside down in His Kingdom...or perhaps better stated, things are right side up in His Kingdom, and the world has things backwards.

As was mentioned in the sermon, the desire for greatness was not the problem. The problem was their understanding of greatness. So Jesus set to redefining and redirecting their understanding. What is missing from Luke's account but is included in John's account is Jesus washing the disciple's feet, as a lesson/example for them (see John 13:4-17)...if the greatest among them, God in the flesh could do something as lowly and humbling as wash dirty, nasty feet, then they (and we) are without excuse. Additionally, Jesus did not say that power and authority are bad things, but those, too, need to be understood and orientated differently than we are used to.

The practice of serving others, humbly, even sacrificially, is what forms us and prepares us for the culture of the Kingdom of God. Using power to benefit others, as opposed to ourselves, is the Kingdom way. But the issue really isn't so much "power" per se, but the attitude of our hearts. Do we have a desire to be over others? To be noticed, recognized, and admired...maybe

even feared? Or do we desire to be a blessing and benefit to others? It is all about the attitude and orientation of our hearts...self-focused to others-focused.

Now let's put the idea of being "conferred" a kingdom, and the picture of Jesus washing the disciple's feet together. What the disciples needed to learn, what we need to learn, is that they/we are in the position of receiving. God desires to give us something (this is known as "grace")...yet we are so accustomed to "earning", "striving", "accomplishing", "making-it-happen", but we do not receive Jesus and His Kingdom like that. It must be accepted as a gift. Receiving a gift, especially one that could never be earned on our own, is very humbling. That's the posture Jesus wants for His followers...to be humble recipients of His grace, so that we can pass it on to others. People who are habitually in the lowly position are those more prepared to receive from Jesus, than those who are accustomed to high position.

The regular practice of putting others first, of humbling ourselves to serve others, joyfully offering ourselves to others, is one of the most powerful things we can do for our own spiritual formation and readiness of God's kingdom. Also humbling is allowing ourselves to be in a place/position where we allow (or even need) other people to serve us. In our individualistic culture we have a warped view of self-reliance/self-sufficiency. But that's not how God designed us. He created us to be interdependent. To live in such a way that we think we don't need others is actually dangerous. If we're not in the regular practice of receiving, then we won't have the proper posture of heart to receive what Jesus has for us. Part of the beauty and power of community is it affords us the opportunity to both serve and be served, to give and to receive. This is a gift from God. On the flip side, it is prideful and patronizing to serve others while not being willing to be served by others.

A closing caveat: in the midst of all this we also need to be careful of "selective service"—I don't mean registering for the draft, rather being selective in who we serve. Elsewhere (Matthew 5:46-47; Luke 6:32-36), Jesus warns about only serving those who we hope to gain something from, or who will return the favor. That's not truly other's focused, but is actually self-focused...such pragmatism isn't a Kingdom value.

- Q. In what ways do you desire greatness?**
- Q. What are some ways you serve others? What are some ways you allow others to serve you? Which is more difficult for you? Explain.**
- Q. When/where do you want people to notice you, to give you recognition, to think well of you?**
- Q. We all struggle with worldly greatness vs Kingdom greatness in one way or another. Describe what your experience with this struggle has been like?**
- Q. Who are those that you find easy to serve, and who are those that you find challenging to serve? What accounts for the difference?**

- Q. This passage is really about contrasting the Kingdom vs the world. What are some other differences you observe between the Kingdom and the world?**
- Q. In your experience with the church, in what ways do you see the church struggling to embrace and live out kingdom values vs. worldly values? Or to ask it another way, when non-believers look at the church, what do you think they see that is a good representation of the Kingdom, and what do you think they see that resembles the world? Now let's personalize this: when people look at you, what do you think they see that resembles the Kingdom, and what might they see that resembles the world? Explain.**
- Q. What can we do (specifically, actively) to prepare ourselves for the Kingdom? (Hint: anything that is oriented toward loving God and loving others is good preparation.)**
- Q. How might an independent, individualistic, self-sufficient/self-reliant heart hindered you from experiencing all that Jesus has for you?**