

August 28, 2016

Greatness in this world can be attributed to anyone who has an abundance of talent, money, power, or a combination of these. Naomi Judd wrote a biography called “Love can build a bridge” and in it she spoke about her childhood poverty and the struggles of being a single mom with two young daughters to support. She was given the name “Diana” at her birth, but later changed her name to “Naomi” after a child that had various disabilities who inspired her. She and her daughters had many difficulties but Naomi was determined to make it in the music industry and the one thing that impressed me was her faith in Jesus Christ and she gives him the credit for all she has accomplished. She has shared her wealth with those who are struggling in life and she has never forgotten where she started from. She talked about the problems that she had to work through when she became rich and famous. There are burdens to bear whether you are rich and famous or poor and struggling. Temptations come to everyone and pride is one tool Satan uses to gain victory over a person’s life.

Jesus’ disciples, James and John, approached him one day and asked that he grant a request that they had. In Mark 10:35, these two brothers had decided that they would get ahead of all the rest of the disciples and get their position settled ahead of time. Jesus asked them what they desired for him to do for them. They answered, “Grant to us that we may sit, one on the left side and one on the right side of you in your glory.”

Jesus told them that they didn’t understand what they were asking for. He asked them if they could drink of the cup that he was going to drink from and if they could be baptized with the baptism that was set before him. They answered that they could as they didn’t know exactly what this entailed. Jesus told them that they would indeed partake of the cup that he was given and the baptism that would be required of him, but to give them the positions that they were asking for was not something he could promise them for those positions would be given to those for whom his Father had prepared them.

I have often wondered if their mother put that idea into their heads as I read in Matthew 20:20 where the wife of Zebedee, James and John’s mother approached Jesus, bowed before him and asked him to grant her a request. When Jesus asked her what she wanted, she also asked that he would grant each of her sons to sit on both sides of him in his coming kingdom. Jesus told her that the positions were determined by his Father and it wasn’t for him to give. The other ten disciples were angry with the two brothers.

The following verses are very interesting for Jesus spoke about those who loved to lord over others and to be in charge. He told them that Gentile rulers love to show their power over the people. Their important leaders love to use all their authority to control those under them. But it was not to be among believers. Whoever wants to be great among the family of God must serve their fellowman as a servant. Those who desire to be first must serve others like a slave. He told them that the Son of Man didn’t come to be served but he

came to serve others and to give his life as a ransom for many people. Jesus used this opportunity to teach the disciples what it really means to be a follower of Jesus Christ. In Mark 9:33, Jesus had just explained to his disciples that there were difficult days ahead of them. He would be killed and they would be filled with sorrow. Yet they didn't understand what he was saying and they were afraid to ask. They entered a house in Capernaum and Jesus asked them, "What was the dispute about among you as we travelled?" They were silent because they were arguing over who was going to be the greatest in the kingdom of God. At this point the disciples seemed to be more concerned about the importance of their position than they were about the work that was ahead of them. They wanted to be recognized for their value to the Lord and they all wanted to be the favorite.

In Matthew 18:1, they asked Jesus who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? It seems that they were all desirous to achieve the status of being number one. Yet they got a very big surprise when Jesus called a child over to him and set him in the midst of them. He answered, "Except you be converted and become as this little child, you cannot enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever humbles himself as this little child the same is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me. Whoso shall offend one of the children which believes in me it would be better for him that a millstone were hanged around his neck and that he would be drowned in the depth of the sea."

In Matthew 11:2, John the Baptist heard about the works of Jesus as he was a prisoner of Herod. He sent two of his disciples to ask Jesus if he was the one that they had been expecting or should they look for someone else. Jesus told them to go and show John again these things that they heard and saw. The blind received their sight, the lame walked, lepers were cleansed, and the deaf could hear, the dead were raised and the poor had the gospel preached unto them. He ended his words to them with this: "Blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me."

As soon as the men were out of sight, Jesus spoke to the multitudes concerning John. He asked them what they were expecting to find when they went looking for the prophet and the Messiah. What would it take for them to believe?

In verse 10, Jesus spoke plainly that John was the prophet that had been prophesied in the Old Testament that would be a forerunner of the Messiah to prepare the way for him to be received by the Jews. Isaiah 40:3.

Jesus stated that no greater prophet had ever been born of a woman than John the Baptist, but he that is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.

The Sermon on the Mount speaks volumes concerning the Kingdom of God. It runs contrary to the values of this world and the ambitions of mankind without God.

No one would ever use this sermon at conferences or training sessions on how to get rich, influence people or to be successful in the stock market. Listen to what Jesus taught.

These are those who are blessed:

Those who are poor in spirit- theirs is the kingdom of heaven

Those who mourn- they shall be comforted

The meek- they shall inherit the earth

Those who hunger and thirst after righteousness- they shall be filled

The merciful- they shall be shown mercy

The pure in heart- they shall see God

Peacemakers- they shall be called the Children of God

Those who are persecuted because of righteousness- theirs is the kingdom of heaven

Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely accuse you and say all manner of evil against you because of Christ. Rejoice and be glad because great is your reward in heaven. The prophets of old who came before you were treated the same way.

~~Jesus continued by stating that we are the salt of the earth and we are the light of the world. Christianity needs to be elevated and promoted even as darkness falls around us.~~

In Luke 12:15, Jesus warned against selfishness and covetousness. Someone in the crowd asked Jesus to tell his brother to divide the family inheritance with him.

Jesus asked who said he should be the one to judge or decide what should be done between them. He then warned of the temptation of covetousness and greed. He said, "Be careful and guard against all kinds of greed. Life is not measured by how much one owns. He then told a story of a man who hoarded up all of his wealth for himself. That night God called him a fool and took his life from him. The goods that he had stored up were distributed to others and he didn't benefit from it. Jesus said those who store up things for themselves and are not rich towards God are like this man who died without enjoying his possessions.

Matthew 6:26 Jesus spoke about the sparrows being cared for by our heavenly Father. Not one falls but He is aware of it. The lilies of the field are more beautiful than Solomon and all his costly robes and God dressed them.

You cannot serve both God and money. You must choose who will be your master. If you seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, all these things will be added unto you.

I read an article about a man and his daughter that were in business together. They ran a garage and sold used cars, but also bought cars from other states and hid drugs in various compartments in the automobiles when they were transported back to Maine. They have done this for many years and finally they have been charged with drug trafficking and are facing many years in prison for illegal activity. As I looked at their pictures, I thought of the people who have been affected by this one person's actions. He involved his young daughter and hired teenagers to sell drugs for him. After many years his daughter is facing the same sentence as he is because he taught her the business. Many people have become addicted because of his actions, no doubt, and I think of the negative effects that

his actions have had on young people who got lured into selling the substance for money. No prison term will compensate for all the damage that has been done to people's lives through the years. Some of the witnesses are serving jail and prison time because of their sinful lifestyles. How much responsibility will be placed on that man's shoulders when he stands before the Creator of the universe and gives an account for his life. I pray that God sends someone with the message of redemption that he might find hope in Jesus Christ before it is too late for him.

The Word of God leads to eternal life and warns us of the dangers of sin. "The wages of sin is death" is written in Romans 6:23. Choose carefully how you spend the life that God has given you for a gift. Someday you will stand before God and give an account of how you used the life he gave to you. You will also be responsible for accepting Christ's sacrifice on Calvary or rejecting it. Choose today who you will serve.