



**Jesus and True Greatness**  
“The Greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven”  
**Matthew 18:1-6**

**Introduction**

Last week we began to examine **Matthew 18:1-6**.

In this passage of Scripture Jesus taught His disciples two lessons about “Greatness.”

**Lesson One**

The Greatness of Children

Today we will discover:

**Lesson Two**

The Greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven

**Scripture**

At that time, the disciples came to Jesus and asked, “So who is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?”

2 He called a small child and had him stand among them.

3 “Truly I tell you,” he said, “unless you turn and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

4 Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child—this one is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

5 And whoever welcomes one child like this in my name welcomes me.

6 “But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to fall away—it would be better for him if a heavy millstone were hung around his neck and he were drowned in the depths of the sea. CSB

## Quote Of The Day

It is not in the nature of true greatness to be exclusive and arrogant.— Henry Ward Beecher

The Disciples of Jesus were consumed by the pursuit of greatness!

They wanted to know “Who is the Greatest?”

People throughout history and all over the world have debated about who is the GOAT— The **Greatest Of All Time**.

Name a category and there will always be a debate about who is the greatest!

In her article “**Who is the World’s Best Competitive Eater?**” Joanna Sarah-Freedman, tells us there is actually a debate over who is the world’s best competitive eater.

Based on a combined criteria of records broken, impact on the sport and general impressiveness, this is the list of the top seven Gastronomic Gladiators in the world.

## 7. Miki Sudo

Miki Sudo made a name for herself after defeating the legendary Sonya Thomas at Nathan’s Famous Hot Dog Eating Contest in 2014. Adding to her list of achievements, Sudo has also set records for eating 16.5 pints of ice cream in six minutes. She also has consumed 8.5 pounds of kimchi in the same amount of time.

## 6. Richard Le Fevre

Richard “The Locust” Le Fevre earned his nickname because of his ability to eat continuously for over 45 minutes at a time. His most recognized accomplishment—eating 247 pickled jalapenos in eight minutes.

## **5. Juliet Lee**

She has set several impressive eating records. Her most notable accomplishment was eating 13.23 pounds of jellied cranberry sauce in eight minutes.

## **4. Sonya Thomas**

Weighing in at just over 100 pounds Sonya Thomas has amassed over 20 world records during her career.

Her most notable accomplishment is her record for eating 10 pounds of deep-fried okra in 10 minutes.

## **3. Takeru Kobayashi**

Kobayashi is known as the Godfather of competitive eating. Kobayashi burst onto the scene of competitive eating in 2001, where he smashed the then Nathan’s hot dog record of 25 by eating 50 dogs in the allotted time. Kobayashi reigned supreme until the arrival of Joey Chestnut.

## **2. Matt Stonie**

Matt Stonie made his name through a series of wildly successful YouTube videos, in addition to his numerous personal world records.

A previous Nathan’s Hotdog eating contest winner, Stonie has also eaten 182 bacon strips in five minutes, as well as 255 marshmallow peeps in the same amount of time.

## **1. Joey Chestnut**

Joey Chestnut is, by any measure, the greatest competitive eater of all time.

Owner of 43 world records in 43 different disciplines, Chestnut has won the Nathan's Hotdog eating competition more than any other person and has broken his own records numerous times in the process. Not to mention his record of 182 chicken wings in 30 minutes flat. Joey Chestnut is The GOAT. Citation: ["Who is the World's Best Competitive Eater?"](#) Joanna Sarah-Freedman, January 4, 2021

## **In response to this article I'm like— "Who Cares?"**

**Comparing ourselves to others and seeking to be considered the greatest in anything is a trap fueled by pride!**

Comparing our greatness with the greatness of others is a lose lose scenario.

So what if, after comparing ourselves to others, we find ourselves to be better than someone else— we become arrogant and look down on others? — That's precious! Any accomplishment we ever achieve and \$1.29 will get you a big gulp at Circle K.

What if we find ourselves less than others— our self-esteem is damaged and we begin to believe we are not good enough.

**The world we live in is not a contest to see who is best, the smartest, the most gifted, the one with the most accomplishments, the most money, the finest house or the most recognized.**

**God is not impressed by what we call greatness.**

Jesus said in **Mark 8:36** "For what does it benefit someone to gain the whole world and yet lose his life?" CSB

We are not called to chase after what the world is chasing after.

King Solomon said, **Ecclesiastes 1:14** "I have seen all the things that are done under the sun and have found everything to be futile, a pursuit of the wind." CSB

In **Matthew 18:1-9** Jesus taught His disciples about Greatness in the Kingdom of Heaven.

The Kingdom of Heaven— the only kingdom that matters.

The Kingdom of Heaven represents the rule and sovereignty of God over all creation. The Kingdom of God is both a present reality and the future hope of every follower of Christ.

The word translated “**greatest**” in v.1 comes from the Greek word “**Meizon**” meaning greatness as it relates to being superior in: importance, prominence, the highest position, the most recognized, the most outstanding, the most extraordinary.

**The disciples wanted Jesus to answer this question:** Who is the most important, the most prominent, who has the highest position, who is the most recognized, who is the most outstanding, the most extra ordinary person the Kingdom of Heaven?

Jesus answered their question with four statements:

The greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven . . .

## **1. Turn v.3**

“Truly I tell you,” he said, “**unless you turn and become like little children, you will never enter** the kingdom of heaven. CSB

The phrase translated “**Truly I tell you**” comes from the Greek word “**Amen**” meaning truth to the fullest degree, a strong affirmation.

Jesus used the phrase “**Truly I tell you**” to intensify the seriousness and power of His Words.

“**unless you turn**” — The word translated “**turn**” comes from the Greek word “**Strepho**” meaning to be converted, to change direction, to intentionally seek to become like a little child.

This term is compared to the word **repent**— “**Metaneo**” meaning to change the mind, to change direction.

Author Frederica Mathewes-Green says this about repentance.

The first time Jesus appears, in the first Gospel, the first instruction he gives is “Repent. From then on, it's his most consistent message. In all times and every situation, his advice is to repent. Not just the scribes and Pharisees, not just the powerful—he tells even the poor and oppressed that repentance is the key to eternal life. Citation: Frederica Mathewes-Green, *The Illumined Heart: The Ancient Christian Path of Transformation*, (Paraclete Press, 2001)

The greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven . . .

## **Humble themselves v.4**

Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child—this one is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. CSB

The word translated “**humbles**” comes from the Greek word “**Tapeino o**” meaning to cause to be at a lower point. To focus on the reversal of status.

“Young Children” are humble. Young Children are born with nothing and have nothing. Young children have nothing to offer anyone. Young Children are vulnerable and dependent upon others for everything. Young children do not have hatred or bias. **Young children are not judgmental and they carry no discrimination toward others for any reason.**

An unspoiled child has the characteristics that make for humility: trust, dependence, the desire to make others happy, an absence of boasting or selfish desire to be greater than others. By nature, all of us are rebels who want to be celebrities instead of servants. It takes a great deal of teaching for us to learn the lessons of humility. Citation: Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 64–65.

Authentic humility looks like Jesus!

**Philippians 2:5-8** “Adopt the same attitude as that of Christ Jesus, 6 who, existing in the form of God, did not consider equality with God as something to be exploited. 7 Instead he emptied himself by assuming the form of a servant, taking on the likeness of humanity. And when he had come as a man, 8 he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death—even to death on a cross.” CSB

What does authentic humility look like in real life?

**Mary Ann Bevan**— Husband a farmer named Thomas and four children.

The greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven . . .

### **Welcomes others v.5**

5 And whoever welcomes one child like this in my name welcomes me.  
CSB

The word translated “**welcomes**” comes from the word “**Dechomai**” meaning to receive a gift, to show love, grace and favor.

When we show love, grace and favor to children and others we show love, grace and favor to Jesus Himself.

**Matthew 25:34-40** Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. 35 ‘For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat; I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink; I was a stranger and you took me in; 36 I was naked and you clothed me; I was sick and you took care of me; I was in prison and you visited me.’ 37 “Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? 38 When did we see you a stranger and take you in, or without clothes and clothe you? 39 When did we see you sick, or in prison, and visit you?’ 40 “And the King will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’ CSB

The greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven . . .

### **Does not cause others to fall away v.6**

**“But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to fall away**—it would be better for him if a heavy millstone were hung around his neck and he were drowned in the depths of the sea. CSB

It is in the heart of every person to believe.

**Romans 1:18-23** “ For God’s wrath is revealed from heaven against all godlessness and unrighteousness of people who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth, 19 since what can be known about God is evident among them, because God has shown it to them. 20 For his invisible attributes, that is, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen since the creation of the world, being understood through what he has made. **As a result, people are without excuse.** 21 For though they knew God, they did not glorify him as God or show gratitude. Instead, their thinking became worthless, and their senseless hearts were darkened. 22 Claiming to be wise, they became fools 23 and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man, birds, four-footed animals, and reptiles.” CSB

The word translated “**whoever**” means any person.

Any person who causes someone “to trip up,” “to entice to sin,” or “to create a snare— Any person that through their actions, attitudes, or teachings that becomes an obstacle on another person’s spiritual path— will face sever judgment.

### **What does this mean for you and me?**

Moses describes it best in **Exodus 20:7** “Do not misuse the name of the LORD your God, because the LORD will not leave anyone unpunished who misuses his name.” CSB

Many have heard it this way: “Do not take the name of the LORD your God in vain.”

Most people take this to mean do not speak the name of God in a blasphemous or flippant manner.

That is not the meaning of what it means to take God's name in vain.

Taking the name of God in vain means to cause His name to be worthless

Every Christ follower is called to live for Christ, to follow His Word and Obey His Will.

**Matthew 5:16** “. . . let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.” CSB