



MINISTRIES

A Ministry of the Athens Universal Life Church
Dr. Rob White – Senior Minister
<https://aulc.us>

Welcome to Part 4 of our series called "City On A Hill". Our sermon this week, as we close out this series, is called "The Path to True Greatness".

Our scripture lesson today is from the Gospel of Mark chapter 10 verses 35 to 45.

Starting at verse 35:

Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, approached Him and said, “Teacher, we want You to do something for us if we ask You.”

“What do you want Me to do for you?” He asked them.

They answered Him, “Allow us to sit at Your right and at Your left in Your glory.”

But Jesus said to them, “You don’t know what you’re asking. Are you able to drink the cup I drink or to be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with?”

“We are able,” they told Him.

Jesus said to them, “You will drink the cup I drink, and you will be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with.

But to sit at My right or left is not Mine to give; instead, it is for those it has been prepared for.”
When the other 10 disciples heard this, they began to be indignant with James and John.

Jesus called them over and said to them, “You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles dominate them, and their men of high positions exercise power over them.
But it must not be like that among you. On the contrary, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant,
and whoever wants to be first among you must be a slave to all.

For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life—a ransom for many.”

May the Lord add His blessing to the reading of His Word!

Good morning, church family.

Let me ask you a question that might make you a little uncomfortable. How many of you want to be great?

Now, before you get all "spiritual" and say, *"No, no, Pastor, I just want to be humble,"* let's be honest for a moment. Every single one of us, in the deepest place of our hearts, wants to be significant. We want our lives to matter. We want to be remembered. We want to leave a mark. That desire isn't inherently bad—God actually put that longing for significance within us. But the world has handed us a broken blueprint for how to achieve it.

The world tells us, *"Greatness is about climbing the ladder, controlling the room, raising your voice, and stamping your name on everything."* We see it in Hollywood, in business, and in politics. We see it on social media—people just craving attention and status.

And you know what? We even see it in the church. Today, in these verses, we are going to see the disciples make a blatant power grab. And in that moment, Jesus takes our selfish ambition and flips it completely upside down. He redefines what greatness actually means.

Church, we talk a lot about wanting to help our city know Jesus. But here is the truth: The best way to help our city know Jesus isn't to wave signs, or to buy a bigger building, or to get more social media followers. The best way to help our city know Jesus is when we serve and sacrifice for others—just like He did.

So, open your Bibles with me to Mark, chapter 10, verses 35 through 45. Let's take a look at the path to true greatness.

Point 1: The World's Misguided Pursuit (Verses 35-41)

Let's read the beginning of this passage.

"And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came up to him and said to him, 'Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you.' And he said to them, 'What do you want me to do for you?' And they said to him, 'Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory.'" (Mark 10:35-37)

Here come the "Sons of Thunder"—James and John. They walk up to the Son of God with a blank check and say, "Jesus, just sign on the dotted line. We want the corner office. We want the thrones on either side of You."

They didn't ask, *"Lord, how can we serve more?"* They asked, *"Lord, how can we be more important?"* They wanted power, prestige, and position.

Now, look at verse 41. When the other ten disciples heard about this, they were indignant. They were angry. But let me tell you something about human nature: They weren't angry because James and John were being selfish. They were angry because James and John got caught first! They were offended because **they** wanted those seats for themselves.

This is the world's way. It's the "dog-eat-dog" mentality. It's the "look out for number one" philosophy. We want to be on top, and we get jealous when someone else gets there first.

The world's pursuit of greatness is a pursuit of control. But Jesus is about to take this teachable moment to show them an entirely different kingdom.

Point 2: The Kingdom's Pattern of Servant Leadership (Verses 42-44)

Look at how Jesus responds in verses 42 to 44. He calls them all together—He wants to make sure everyone hears this.

"You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all."

Jesus is laying down the law of the Kingdom. He is flipping the world's pyramid completely upside down.

In the world, the great ones **lord it over** people. They demand service. They expect everyone to bow to them. But Jesus says, **"It shall not be so among you."** That is not the Kingdom culture.

Here, greatness is measured by how much you give, not how much you get. The ladder to the top in God's Kingdom looks more like a descending staircase. You want to be great? Then be the server. You want to be first? Then be the slave of all.

I love how Eugene Peterson paraphrases this in **The Message**: **"Whatever you're looking for in terms of status, look for it in terms of service."**

The American Dream says, "I want to be on top." The Jesus Dream says, "I want to be underneath everyone, bearing their burdens." We are called to be different. We are called to look out for the interests of others, not just ourselves and our own comfort.

Point 3: The Ultimate Example of Sacrifice (Verse 45)

Now we come to the heart of the gospel. Verse 45. This is the ground beneath our feet.

"For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

Jesus didn't just give us a lecture on humility. He didn't just say, "Be nicer." He pointed to His own life as the ultimate model. Think about who Jesus is. He is the second person of the Trinity. He is the King of Kings. He holds the universe together by the word of His power. Yet, He didn't cling to His glory. He wrapped Himself in human flesh. He picked up a towel and washed dirty, grimy feet. He touched

lepers. He spent time with tax collectors and sinners. He let people mock Him, spit on Him, and nail Him to a cross.

Why? "To give His life as a ransom for many." He paid the price we could not pay to set us free. He didn't just serve us with a meal; He served us with His blood.

Church, this changes everything. We can serve others sacrificially **because** we have been served by Jesus. He gave **everything** for us. How can we not give a little bit of ourselves for our city, for our neighbors, and for those who are far from Him?

This is how we make Jesus known in our community. We don't serve so that people will say, "Wow, look at those great Christians." We serve so that people will say, "Wow, look at that Jesus. I want to know Him." Your sacrifice and your service are the visual aids of the gospel.

So, church, let's get practical. How do we live this out this week? How do we help our city know Jesus better through service?

First, ****step into someone else's mess.**** Find out who is hurting in your neighborhood, in your office, or in your school. Look for the person who is overlooked or in need. Maybe it's cooking them a meal, helping them fix their car, or just sitting quietly with them in their grief. You don't have to go to a foreign country to be a missionary. Go to your neighbor's house.

Second, ****move from spectator to participant.**** Find a place to serve within this church family. Get your hands dirty. Serve in the children's ministry. Greet people at the door. Join the tech team. Lock arms with others to help clean up the city, host a food drive, or pack backpacks for kids in need. Every single person in this room has a gift to give. We don't want spectators, we want servants.

Third, ****let your service point to the Savior.**** Don't serve to get a spotlight. Don't serve because you want a pat on the back. Serve because Jesus served you. Sacrifice because He sacrificed for you. When the people of our city see a church that serves and sacrifices joyfully—not out of obligation, but out of love—they will want to know the Jesus we love.

As we close this message, I want to give you a moment to respond to the Lord.

Maybe today you recognize that you have never truly received the gift of Jesus—the One who gave His life as a ransom for you. Maybe you have been trying to earn your way to God by being a "good person," or you have been too ashamed to admit you need a Savior. The Bible says that He died for you, He rose again, and He is offering you forgiveness and eternal life right now. If that is you, I want you to know that you can receive Him today.

Maybe there are others of you—believers—who have drifted from a heart of service. You have gotten caught up in building your own kingdom instead of His. You have wanted the title, the recognition, the seat of honor, but you have forgotten the towel. If that is you, I want to invite you to recommit your life to serving our city for the glory of God.

Christian, do you want to be great in God's Kingdom? Then take up the towel. Go lower. Serve.

I want to invite you to come forward. Come and pray. Come and kneel. Come and let the Lord redefine greatness in your life.

Please bow your heads with me while we pray:

Father, we thank You for Your Son, Jesus. Thank You that He did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many.

Lord, forgive us. Forgive us for the times we have chased the world's version of greatness. Forgive us for our selfish ambition. Forgive us for wanting the spotlight instead of carrying the cross.

Give us a servant's heart. Teach us to kneel. Teach us to wash feet. Teach us to love those who cannot repay us. Holy Spirit, empower us to serve and sacrifice for our city, so that many will come to know Jesus because of what they see in us. Help us to take our place on the path of true greatness—a path that leads downward, to the feet of the hurting, just like our Savior.

In His mighty name we pray. Amen.

Thank you for watching and listening and we will see you all next week!

This has been an AULC Studios Video Production.

Copyright 2012 to 2026, All Rights Reserved!

Copyright © 2026 – Athens Universal Life Church – All Rights Reserved!