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Reaching Capitol Communities for Christ

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Luke 22:24-30; John 13:1-17

The GOAT Below the Rest

Men are notorious for engaging in pointless debates often taking them very seriously. Often sparked when bored, they'll debate who the athletic G. O. A. T is or who would win in some fictional fight (the answer is always Batman!), or something as random as which is harder, hitting a 400-foot home run, kicking a 40-yard field goal, or running a 4-minute mile? The debate between the Disciples almost reads like one of these common disputes, but Luke won't allow us to write it off so easily.

The story begins with the **Conflict** (Luke 22:24). Luke alone records this narrative. That is not to suggest this was a new debate; it was, in fact, an old one (see Matthew 18:1; Mark 9:33-34; Luke 9:46). Despite being repeatedly corrected by Jesus, they continued to engage in an ongoing debate as to who was the greatest among them. On the surface, we might assume this boys being boys (the Disciples are probably teenagers). But when put in its proper context, we discover this argument is really a protective measure against failure.

At the Last Supper Jesus unveiled, once again, that he was going to die. Jesus repeatedly predicted his death (Luke 9:21-22, 43:45a, 18:31-34a) which were written off because they believed they could protect their Rabbi (see Matthew 16:21-23). Now, however, Jesus explains how it'll happen – he will be betrayed by one of them. This is shocking news. They first respond with incredulity and then try to identify the traitor. Notice they are looking at each other, not themselves. That's the genesis of this discussion. They weren't bored, but scared. They were angry. "It can't be me," they reasoned, "I would never do anything like that. It must be you."

The Disciples seem to believe their arrogance is a defense against failure. Jesus, however, shows it will be the cause of their failure. This text isn't about the danger of pride (though it's there), but about the beauty and power of meekness.

This leads to Jesus's **Correction** (Luke 22:25-30). Jesus responded by correcting them in two ways. The first was a verbal correction. While the world chases after power, prestige, and titles, his disciples must pursue service. The Kingdom of Men is dominated by self-serving ego. The Kingdom of God, on the other hand, must be dominated by selfless love. History is littered with countless examples of violence, murder, torture, and tyranny all stemming from self-serving ego. Humans love to expand their brand, dominate others, and conquer kingdoms. And so, we invade, colonize, threaten, abuse, enslave, fight, dox, and ask to talk to the manager.

This approach, however, is doomed to fail. Getting to the top by pushing everyone away can be lonesome. Besides, ruling with fear may subdue a kingdom, but it hardly makes you great in the eyes of those you rule. Jesus offers something better. Something more glorious. Effective leadership

begins with humble service and sacrificial love. To lead effectively, you must always have those in whom you're leading in mind. Their needs must trump yours. Government leaders must prioritize the needs of the community above the self. Business owners, directors, and managers must prioritize the needs of the business, the customer, and the employees. Pastors must prioritize the church while domestic leadership must prioritize the family. By submitting ourselves for the sake of others, we achieve real greatness.

Jesus doesn't just verbally correct them; he shows what Kingdom meekness looks like. Turning to John 13:1-17, we discover the famous story of Jesus washing the Disciple's feet. Although some of the streets throughout Palestine were paved, most were dirt. Usually, it would be the responsibility of the host to make sure their guest's feet were washed. He usually enlisted the help of the lowest slave because it was the lowest job. Washing someone's feet was so menial that Jewish slaves were exempt from the task. Only Gentiles performed the service. When Mary anointed Jesus with costly perfume, she first washed Jesus's feet. She was assuming the posture of the lowest slave (John 12:3). This helps explain why Peter refuses to let Jesus wash his feet (John 13:6, 8). This was a clear act of genuine humility. By this act of service, Jesus quiets the rhetoric. It's amazing that Peter goes from "I'm the greatest," to "I'm not worthy."

But return back to Luke 22. In verse 27, Jesus directs us to the greatest act of humility in history. Luke does not direct our attention to the washing of the Disciple's feet, but to the cross. In the mystery of Calvary, we see the faux power of man whimpering before the mighty power of God. In that moment, the power of men proved ineffective against the power of God. Jesus's humility is the source of his exaltation. His suffering lies at the root of his glory. That's the mystery, and the beauty, of the gospel.