

Who is the greatest?

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Jesus sat down and called the twelve. And he said to them, "If anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all." Mark 9:35

"O Lord, it's hard to be humble, when you're perfect in every way..." Some of you probably remember that line from a Mac Davis song a way long time ago. I know, I'm showing my age here! It was a funny song, meant, I'm sure, to poke fun at those who maybe really did think that they "...get better looking each day."

Some people do have an inflated image of themselves; if they are not great in the eyes of the world, they are still great in their own mind.

One of the questions that we were asked in a recent Bible study at church was: "what qualities make a person great in your eyes?" And most of the class agreed that "humility" is an attribute that we all admire in others. Indeed, those who are lacking in humility are not admired much at all; that's not the way that we teach our children to act, not an example that we would like them to follow.

But I suppose it is well within this world's understanding of what constitutes acceptable behavior. We look to celebrities and politicians and sports heroes as examples of greatness, and they can be pretty good at tooting their own horns. Of course all such fame and recognition is so shallow and short-lived; it's only a matter of time before worldly praise gets focused on some new and better recipient.

The disciples in our Gospel reading this past Sunday had some mistaken notions about what greatness consisted of.

We find that they had been arguing amongst themselves as to which one of them was the greatest and most important. Makes you wonder how Jesus put up with them at times, doesn't it? But Jesus went on to answer the question "who is the greatest?" by telling them that it is the one who is willing to serve others, the one who does not glorify himself, but has an attitude of humility and love and concern for those around him.

Of course, Jesus was describing himself here, because none of us fits the description—even on our best days. Jesus willingly gave of Himself for our sakes, to the point of laying down His life for us, so that all of our sins might be paid for. And it is in light of his great love for us that we desire to walk in His footsteps and be humble expressions of His self-sacrificing love to all those around us in what we say and do.

Who is the greatest? Only our Lord and Savior, who has done such great things for us!