

Luke 9:48

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And said unto them, Whosoever shall receive this child in my name receiveth me: and whosoever shall receive me receiveth him that sent me: for he that is least among you all, the same shall be great.

Analysis

Jesus teaches: 'For he that is least among you all, the same shall be great.' This statement inverts worldly values—greatness in God's kingdom comes through humility, not self-promotion. The 'least' (Greek 'mikroteros,' μικρότερος, smallest, youngest, least important) refers to those accepting lowly positions, serving others, avoiding status-seeking. The phrase 'shall be great' (Greek 'estin megas,' ἐστὶν μέγας) is present tense—already great, not will become. In God's estimation, the humble servant is already great, though worldly observers see lowliness. This requires faith—believing God's evaluation over human opinion.

Historical Context

This followed disciples' argument about which of them was greatest (v. 46)—shocking given Jesus' recent teaching about His coming suffering (v. 44). Jesus used a child as object lesson (v. 47), emphasizing that receiving the least (children, nobodies) equals receiving Jesus and the Father (v. 48). First-century culture valued status, honor, greatness. Disciples reflected this, jockeying for position in Jesus' coming kingdom. Jesus repeatedly corrected this—last shall be first (Matthew 20:16), greatest is servant (Matthew 23:11). He modeled it—washing disciples' feet (John 13), dying as criminal. Early church emphasized humility as Christian virtue (Philippians 2:3, James 4:10, 1 Peter 5:5-6).

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. How does Jesus' inversion of greatness (the least is great) challenge worldly values and Christian ambition?
2. What does it mean practically to be 'least among you all,' and why is this the path to true greatness?

Interlinear Text

καὶ εἶπεν αὐτοῖς ὃς ἐὰν δέχεται τοῦτο τὸ
And **said** **unto them** **Whosoever** ^{G1437} **receiveth** **this** ^{G3588}
^{G2532} ^{G2036} ^{G846} ^{G3739} ^{G1209} ^{G5124}

παιδίον ἐπὶ τῷ ὀνόματί μου ἐμὲ δέχεται καὶ ὃς
child **in** ^{G3588} **name** **my** **me** **receiveth** **And** **Whosoever**
^{G3813} ^{G1909} ^{G3686} ^{G3450} ^{G1691} ^{G1209} ^{G2532} ^{G3739}

ἐὰν ἐμὲ δέχεται δέχεται τὸν ἀποστείλαντά με· ὁ γὰρ
^{G1437} **me** **receiveth** **receiveth** ^{G3588} **that sent** **me** ^{G3588} **for**
^{G1691} ^{G1209} ^{G1209} ^{G649} ^{G3165} ^{G1063}

μικρότερος ἐν πᾶσιν ὑμῖν ὑπάρχων οὗτός ἐστι
least **among** **all** **you** **he that is** **the same** **shall be**
^{G3398} ^{G1722} ^{G3956} ^{G5213} ^{G5225} ^{G3778} ^{G2071}

μέγας
great
^{G3173}

Additional Cross-References

Luke 14:11 (Parallel theme): For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

Luke 22:26 (Parallel theme): But ye shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve.

1 Peter 5:6 (Parallel theme): Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time:

John 13:20 (Parallel theme): Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth me; and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me.

Luke 10:16 (Parallel theme): He that heareth you heareth me; and he that despiseth you despiseth me; and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me.

Revelation 3:21 (Parallel theme): To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.

Mark 9:37 (Parallel theme): Whosoever shall receive one of such children in my name, receiveth me: and whosoever shall receive me, receiveth not me, but him that sent me.

John 14:21 (Parallel theme): He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.

1 Thessalonians 4:8 (Parallel theme): He therefore that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God, who hath also given unto us his holy Spirit.

Luke 22:30 (Parallel theme): That ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.