



“Look at Me!”  
Luke 9:46-48

**Idea:** The believer’s attitude greatly impacts one’s effectiveness with the gospel.

**Intro:** It is time for March Madness. If you are a fan of college basketball, then you love this time of the year. For those of you who are not a fan, then you are simply enduring this season. You probably struggle to understand why those of us who are fans get so excited about it. Well, as fans, we love to hope that our team might make a run toward the Final Four. We love being engrossed in games for days. It begins with the conference tournaments, which lead into the NCAA tournament. We love watching players hit go-ahead shots, big dunks, and buzzer-beaters. And we love to see our favorite players strutting down the court and celebrating after making that big shot.

On some level, this is normal, expected behavior. I especially enjoy watching the team celebrate together after one of those big time, go-ahead shots. After all, basketball is a team sport, and it always takes the team for any individual player to have success. As a sports fan, if you have ever met your favorite players, then you also know that how they act off the court means just as much as how they perform on the court. There are some players who want to take all the credit for themselves. They see themselves as God’s gift to the team. Many times, these players are aloof, having little to do with their teammates and nothing to do with fans. They, however, do want everyone’s attention.

This desire for attention while being distant from others is a temptation in all facets of life. Chuck Colson served as Special Counsel to President Richard Nixon. In his book, *Kingdoms in Conflict*, he related a conversation with the president about leadership to what the Bible portrays in Jesus Christ. He said:

“I vividly recall a glimpse...from my White House days. One brisk December night as I accompanied the president from the Oval Office in the West Wing of the White House to the Residence, Mr. Nixon was musing about what people wanted in their leaders. He slowed a moment, looking into the distance across the South Lawn, and said, ‘The people really want a leader a little bigger than themselves, don’t they, Chuck?’ I agreed, ‘I mean someone like de Gaulle,’ he continued. ‘There’s a certain aloofness, a power that’s exuded by great men that people feel and want to follow.’”

Let’s remember that Colson’s agreement with the president came before he was humbled by the Watergate scandal, which God used to bring him to saving faith in Jesus Christ. He continued:

“Jesus Christ exhibited none of this self-conscious aloofness. He served others first; He spoke to those to whom no one spoke; He dined with the lowest members of society; He touched the untouchables. He had no throne, no crown, no bevy of servants or armored guards. A borrowed manger and a borrowed tomb framed His earthly life.

Kings and presidents and prime ministers surround themselves with minions who rush ahead, swing the doors wide, and stand at attention as they wait for the great to pass. Jesus said that He Himself stands at the door and knocks, patiently waiting to enter our lives.”

Chuck Colson was correct in his assessment of the Lord. He never strutted His way out of town after a miracle. He never demanded for people to look at Him. In fact, He did the opposite. Jesus would often retreat after a miracle to pray and stay out of the spotlight. His example shows us that true greatness is the antithesis of pride and elitism. Unfortunately, there are many people who claim the name of Christ who do not know this. They love to be praised and enjoy the attention of others. Some people attach themselves to leaders who can strut while setting down, believing that to be a sign of greatness. Now, we know that, as a result of the fall, all people are totally depraved. Therefore, on some level there is an innate desire to be the greatest and for everyone else to know it. We all have a little bit of Muhammad Ali in us.

The desire for greatness and recognition plagued the disciples while they walked with Jesus. As we move forward in the Gospel of Luke, we find the disciples arguing over which of them is the greatest. As we look at these verses, I want us to see that the believer’s attitude greatly impacts one’s effectiveness with the gospel.

Read Luke 9:46-48.

**Inquiry:** According to verse 46, a debate had begun among the disciples as to which of them was the greatest. As we have journeyed through Luke’s Gospel, we have witnessed God’s gracious hand reaching down to each of these men in their humble circumstances. None of them were from powerful or affluent families. Peter, Andrew, James, and John were fishermen. They were blue-collar workers. Matthew had been a tax collector. He was considered a traitor and hated by other Jews. The other disciples were all from similar backgrounds.

What brought these men to this debate? Well, as we have seen in Luke, these disciples have experienced many incredible things. After a night of prayer, Jesus had selected them as His special disciples (6:12-16). In Luke 6-8, we witness the Twelve being privy to the most intimate teaching and displays of Jesus’ power. In Luke 9:1-6, they are commissioned and sent out to minister with power and authority. They, then, participated in the miracle of feeding the five thousand (9:10-17). Following this, Peter, James, and John were invited to spend a night on the mountain with Jesus. There they saw the Lord in His glory and experienced a glimpse of the coming Kingdom with Moses and Elijah (9:28-36). As they returned with Jesus to the other nine disciples, they discovered that those men were unable to cast a demon from a small boy (9:37-43).

All these events and experiences played a role in the demonstration of pride on display in our passage today. We might understand this pride as the quality of having an excessively high opinion of oneself or one’s importance. Muhammad Ali used to say of himself, “I am the greatest! I am a bad man!” In other words, “Look at me!” On the way to Capernaum, the disciples too were saying, “Look at me; I am the greatest.” Pride was swelling up in their hearts without their knowledge, and if left unchecked, this attitude would greatly impact their effectiveness with the gospel.

It is interesting that pride is the sin we cannot see in ourselves, yet we so detest it in others. Thankfully, Jesus recognized and pointed out this pride in the disciples. From this confrontation, there are three truths I want to highlight.

### **1. Comparison is natural and worldly.**

Every one of us make multiple comparisons each and every day. It is natural, and I would argue a healthy practice. For example, it is good that car manufacturers strive to outdo their competition. Their desire to put the very best automobile on the road results in a more efficient, safe, and exciting product for the consumer. It is also good for students, athletes, and employees to know where they stand among their peers. In many ways, growth and development stem from a comparison to one’s competition. In

this natural world, when everyone achieves the same status and receives the same awards growth is stifled.

The problem with this natural comparison is that it often leads one to find his or her identity and worth in one's performance and ranking. The disciples were not satisfied with the grace given to them. They were not satisfied with being on Jesus' team. Instead, they sought value in how and what they performed for Jesus. They wanted to be known as being the best on Jesus' team. This desire led them to jockey for position. They did this by putting one another down.

As followers of Christ, these men were not called to live by natural and worldly standards in their walk with Jesus. They had experienced His good grace. Jesus had sought them out despite their humble circumstances. Therefore, their value was not derived from worldly measures. Their last name, occupation, education, financial resources, or social status added nothing to their worth. They had been created in the image and likeness of God, and they had been called out to redemption in Jesus Christ.

Luke tells us that as these disciples argued among themselves as to who was the greatest, Jesus knew "*the reasoning of their hearts*" (vs. 46-47). This reasoning is the natural and worldly demonstration of pride that is pervasive in the human heart. It is the desire to make a name for oneself. It is the yearning of the human heart that says, "Look, I am the greatest.". While competition is good for growth and development, it is destructive within human relationships. And it makes for a very poor god because value can never be found in what a person does. Value can only be found in the God for whom you were created (Col 1:16).

## **2. Greatness is found in service and humility.**

Knowing the disciples' hearts, Jesus called a child to Himself. He used the child as an object lesson to debunk their erroneous thinking.

Read Luke 9:48.

While children were loved and cherished within their families in Hebrew culture, they were not highly valued outside the home. One rabbi wrote in the *Talmud*, "Morning sleep, mid-day wine, chattering with children, and tarrying in places where men of the common people assemble destroy a man (Ab. 3, 10:R. Dosa b. Archinos). In other words, keeping company with children added nothing to a man. Later in Luke we will see that this was in fact the mindset among the Jews as the disciples will try to prevent children from coming to Jesus (Luke 18:15). The disciples, like their culture, believed that greatness was derived from the company one keeps. The great associate with the great and deal with matters of great significance, and children are neither great nor significant. Therefore, it should not be hard for us to imagine Peter, James, and John making their case for being the greatest among the twelve since they got to meet Moses and Elijah up on the mountain.

The object lesson Jesus presented to these men offered two opposing figures. The first was Jesus, Himself, who was everything to the disciples. The second was a child who was nothing to them. Jesus then issued the challenge to receive the child just as they would receive Him. His point was to show that greatness or value was not found in what one does or who one knows. Instead, greatness is found in service to the least among society. It is found as one puts others above themselves. It is a humbling thing.

If you want to be great, then you will only find it as you model your life after Jesus' life.

*For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.* – Mark 10:45

Our worth is found in Jesus as our Creator and Redeemer. It will never be found in what you do, what you have, or who you know in this world. If you want to be great, then spend yourselves in service to the Lord by humbly caring for those who cannot repay you.

### 3. The message is greater than the messenger.

The Lord uses a child as the object lesson to drive this truth home. Again, children in the Jewish culture did not hold a high status, yet Jesus said, *“He who is least among you all is the one who is great.”* God’s purpose for these disciples was not for them to make a great name for themselves. His goal was not for them to be famous and invited to preach at all the biggest conferences. No, His goal was for these men to make Jesus famous as they humbly served the people through the preaching of the gospel.

Do you see that the message is greater than the messenger? Even if the gospel message comes through the witness of a little child, the Lord offers Himself to the world in the message. What makes the child so great in this verse is that the child brings Jesus with him. Therefore, the main thing is not the giver of the message but the God of the message.

For that reason, there should be no famous preachers today. Instead, there ought to be only a famous Savior. Likewise, there should be no famous churches but only a famous Savior. Messengers come and go, playing their role in salvation history, but Jesus alone remains. He is ever-present.

**Conclusion:** What a timely passage this is for us as a church. We are experiencing some very exciting days at Red Lane. Our attendance is growing quickly. Last Sunday we had one of the largest attended non-holiday Sundays in years. We baptized nine people, and we voted in twelve new members. Incredible things are happening. The Lord is transforming lives and families through the power of the gospel. As we enjoy this wave of favor, however, we dare not lose sight of God’s blessing and our stewardship.

*I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.* – John 15:5

Church, you and I are not needed. He can use any church. It is His grace that raises us up for such a time as this. Therefore, let us never compare ourselves to other churches as if we are in some sort of competition with them. There is enough lostness in this county for all of Christ’s churches. Instead, let us spend ourselves for God’s glory in humble service to those in our neighborhoods, at our workplaces, in our schools, and at the ball fields. May we remember that the message of the gospel is much greater than we as the messengers, and let’s share it where we live, work, and play.

May our attitude be gospel-centered. If we are going to strut, let’s strut for Jesus. Let’s point our family, friends, neighbors, co-workers, and classmates to Jesus. My prayer is that the attitude of our hearts and the refrain on our lips is always, “Look at Jesus!”