

## Commentary on the Gospel for Thu, Jul 25th 2013

“Whoever wishes to be great among you shall be your servant; whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave.” Matthew

Several months ago, my brother and I were discussing the rewards of teaching versus more lucrative careers. We knew what teaching paid when we chose it and neither of us expected to get rich like a few people we know.

Then Mark grinned, recalling the many hugs he had received from his students, mostly the children of recent immigrants in a rural California town. “There are satisfactions that you can’t get from making a lot of money.” Amen, brother.

I think about Mark in reading today’s gospel because to me, he’s a great man in the sense that Jesus defines “great.” He may not have as many plaques on his wall as some corporate types but he’s made a big difference in the lives of children who really need great teachers. While Mark is by no means a “slave,” he’s led a life of service and reaped the unsung rewards of it.

I think this is what Jesus is asking us to do in today’s gospel when he reverses the conventional definitions of “great” and “slave.” Jesus reminds us that genuine greatness stems from serving others not power and social status. Ironically, many people that the world considers “great” are actually “slaves” to their own insatiable drives for money, power, glory etc. that will never be satisfied because they are misdirected.

Today’s gospel invites us to accept a gift of “greatness” that we can all achieve by serving others wherever we are. Best of all in accepting this gift, we will lead rewarding lives. As Dr. Albert Schweitzer said: ‘I don’t know what your destiny will be, but one thing I know: the only ones among you who will be really happy are those who have sought and found how to serve.’”

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