



## THUNDERING AMBITION

Matthew 20:17-28 KJV

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17 Now as Jesus was going up to Jerusalem, he took the twelve disciples aside and said to them, **(NIV)** 17 And Jesus going up to Jerusalem took the twelve disciples apart in the way, and said unto them, **(KJV)**

18 "We are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and the teachers of the law. They will condemn him to death **(NIV)** 18 Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn him to death, **(KJV)**

19 and will turn him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified. On the third day he will be raised to life!" **(NIV)** 19 And shall deliver him to the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify *him*: and the third day he shall rise again. **(KJV)**

20 Then the mother of Zebedee's sons came to Jesus with her sons and, kneeling down, asked a favor of him. **(NIV)** 20 Then came to him the mother of Zebedee's children with her sons, worshipping *him*, and desiring a certain thing of him. **(KJV)**

21 "**What is it you want?**" he asked. She said, "Grant that one of these two sons of mine may sit at your right and the other at your left in your kingdom." **(NIV)** 21 And he said unto her, **What wilt thou?** She saith unto him, Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on the left, in thy kingdom. **(KJV)**

22 "You don't know what you are asking," Jesus said to them. "Can you drink the cup I am going to drink?" "We can," they answered. **(NIV)** 22 But Jesus answered and said, Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? They say unto him, We are able. **(KJV)**

23 Jesus said to them, "You will indeed drink from my cup, but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared by my Father." **(NIV)** 23 And he saith unto them, Ye shall drink indeed of my cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with: but to sit on my right hand, and on my left, is not mine to give, but *it shall be given to them* for whom it is prepared of my Father. **(KJV)**

24 When the ten heard about this, they were indignant with the two brothers. **(NIV)** 24 And when the ten heard *it*, they were moved with indignation against the two brethren. **(KJV)**

25 Jesus called them together and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. **(NIV)** 25 But Jesus called them *unto him*, and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. **(KJV)**

26 Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, **(NIV)** 26 But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; **(KJV)**

27 and whoever wants to be first must be your slave—(NIV) 27 And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: (KJV)

28 just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." (NIV) 28 Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many. (KJV)

**Intro.**

The **first 16 verses** of this great chapter contain the parable of the landowner. When we studied it a couple of weeks ago together, we said that that parable is basically a gigantic illustration of the very last verse of **Matthew chapter 19, verse 30**: Many who are first will be last and the last first. Jesus uses that story to explain to His disciples the principle that in His kingdom the last are first and the first are last.

And so, Jesus in this great story is really getting at an issue that He has been discussing with the disciples for many chapters, the issue of what true greatness is. And it's no mistake, is it, if you'll cast your eyes on **verse 20 of Matthew chapter 20**, that they go right back to that same issue of what greatness is in the kingdom . And so, though this passage highlights what Jesus is going to do in Jerusalem, it also tells us something very important about how we ought to respond to the example that Jesus has given us in His life and death.

Here's the story. The mother of two of Jesus' disciples — James and John, nicknamed the "**sons of thunder**," came to Jesus and asked him to grant a favor: that her two sons be allowed to sit in the two highest places of honor in his kingdom.

More than likely James' and John's mother approached Jesus at their request. It wasn't as if she was butting in; she was probably doing what they asked her to do. In fact, when **Mark** tells this story, he doesn't even mention the mother's involvement, and in **Matthew's** account, Jesus answers the mother's request by speaking to James and John directly — clearly, they were in on it.

As we look at how Jesus responded to their request, we're going to look at three guidelines we all need to follow as we strive develop a proper attitude at work — holy ambition, as opposed to selfish ambition.

**3 Guidelines for a Proper Attitude in ministry**

1. Focus on your \_\_\_\_\_ not your position.v.23
2. Be prepared to \_\_\_\_\_ . V.22,18,19,24
3. Holy ambition begins and ends with \_\_\_\_\_. V.26-28

**CONCLUSION**

When James and John came to Jesus with their misguided ambitions, Jesus re-directed them. He told them to concentrate on their **performance**, not their position. He told them to be prepared to **pay the price**. And he told them to **focus on serving others**. Today I want you to think about your ambitions in life. Are they "you-centered", or are they "others-centered"? Are they about building your kingdom, or God's kingdom? Take a moment to think about them and ask God to redirect them if necessary — to shape your goals and dreams and desires into a holy ambition, to accomplish something worthwhile for his kingdom and his glory.

**1. Performance 2. Pay the Price 3. Serving Others**