



A just weight  
and balance



are the  
LORD'S:

Thus saith the Lord...

- Who Is the Greatest?

- Matthew 18:1

At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying,

Who is the greatest  
in the kingdom of heaven?

- 18:2 And Jesus called a little child unto him,  
and set him  
in the midst of them,

- **Matthew 18:3**

**And said, Verily I say unto you,  
Except ye be converted, and  
become as little children,  
ye shall not enter into  
the kingdom of heaven.**

- **18:4 Whosoever therefore  
shall humble himself  
as this little child, the same  
is greatest in the  
kingdom of heaven.**

- **Matthew 18:5**

**And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me.**

- **18:6 But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.**

- The section begins with **“At that time.”**  
(Matthew 18:1)
- Jesus had been talking **about his suffering and death;**
  - But it was as if the disciples were **on another planet.**
- They are concerned with **who would be the greatest.**

- It may be that Jesus' attention to the three disciples and to Peter as the rock, might have set off the rivalry.

- It would continue in Matthew 20:20-23 with the request of the mother of James and John.

- The point is that the kingdom cannot be gained by merit or force.

- The disciples have to change, they have to become like children in their heart attitudes.

- The person who truly humbles himself will be the greatest in the kingdom.

- A good illustration of this is **King Solomon.**
- He humbled himself and prayed for wisdom to govern the people of Israel, saying, **“I am only a little child”** (1 Kings 3:7).
- And God made him **great in every way.**



- The disciples ask a very revealing question,
- Jesus gives a very revealing answer.

- The disciples asked who was the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven.
  - Jesus took a child and said that unless they turned and became as this little child,
  - They would not get into the Kingdom at all.

- The very fact that they asked that question showed that they had not yet grasped what the kingdom was about.

- Could this inquiry have proceeded from any but the nine disciples
- Who had not been privileged to witnessed our Lord's transfiguration?
- Peter, James, and John, were surely more spiritual in their views!

- **But, how quickly  
we forget!**

- **Mark 10:35**

**And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, come unto him, saying, Master, we would that thou shouldest do for us whatsoever we shall desire.**

- **10:36 And he said unto them, What would ye that I should do for you?**
- **10:37 They said unto him, Grant unto us that we may sit, one on thy right hand, and the other on thy left hand, in thy glory.**

- Jesus said,  
**"Unless you turn."**
- He was **warning** them that they were going in completely **the wrong direction,**
  - **Away** from the Kingdom of Heaven and not towards it.

- In life it is all a question of what are we aiming at?
  - Is it the fulfillment of personal ambition,
  - The acquisition of personal power,
  - The enjoyment of personal prestige.
  - If so we are aiming at precisely the opposite of the Kingdom of Heaven.

- To be a citizen of the Kingdom means the complete forgetting of self,
- The obliteration of self.
  - Jesus says that to reach the kingdom, we must turn around.



- So Jesus said  
**that in a child**

we see the characteristics  
which should mark  
the true Christian.

- There are many lovely characteristics in a child
- The power to wonder.
  - The power to forgive and to forget.
- The innocence to learn, not to unlearn;
- The innocence to do, not to undo.

- **“Whoever humbles themselves like this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven”**  
**(Matthew 18:4).**
  - It is giving up claims to power and status.
  - It is knowing our total dependence on God.
  - That is greatness in the kingdom of heaven.

- The child has other great qualities which make him/her the symbol of those who are citizens of the Kingdom.

- First and foremost, there is the quality which is the keynote of the whole passage, the child's humility.

- A child does not wish to push himself forward; rather, he wishes to fade into the background.
- He does not wish for prominence; he would rather be left in obscurity.
- Sadly, it is only as he grows up that his instinctive humility is left behind.

- There is the **child's dependence.**
- To the child a state of dependence **is perfectly natural.**
- He **never thinks** that he can face life by himself.

- He is perfectly content to be utterly dependent on those who love him and care for him.
  - If men would accept the fact of their dependence on God, a new strength and a new peace would enter their lives.



- There is the child's trust.
- The child instinctively trusts his parents that his needs will be met.

- When we were children:
- We set out on a journey with no means of paying the fare,
- With no idea of how to get to our journey's end,
- And yet it never enters our heads to doubt that our parents will bring us safely there.

- The child's humility is the pattern of the Christian's behavior to his fellow-men,
  - And the child's dependence and trust are the pattern of the Christian's attitude towards God, the Father of all.

- Jesus says that whoever receives one such little child in his name receives himself.

- To bring up a child in the way he ought to go, is something which is done not only for the sake of the child, but for the sake of Jesus himself.

- Every parent has a life to save.
- And a soul to save.

- He who brings Jesus and the blessing of Jesus into a child's life is bringing the blessings of eternity into a child's life.

- **Matthew 18:5**

**And whoso shall receive  
one such little child  
in my name receiveth me.**

- Jesus may well be saying  
**that the most important people**  
are not those  
who have climbed  
to the top of the tree  
by pushing everyone else  
out of the way,  
**but the quiet, humble,**  
**simple people,**  
**who have the heart of a child.**



- To satisfy the physical needs of a child, to wash his clothes and bind his cuts and soothe his bruises and cook his meals may often seem a very unromantic task;
  - The stove, the sink and the day-to-day drudgery have not much glamour.

- But there is no one  
in all this world  
who helps Jesus Christ more  
than the teacher of the little child.

- All such will find  
a glory in the gray,  
if in the child  
they sometimes glimpse  
none other than Jesus himself.

- But the great keynote of this passage is the terrible weight of responsibility it leaves upon every one of us.

- It stresses the **terror of teaching another to sin.**
- Sadly, it is often **others** who lead us into sin.
- The Jews took the view **that the most unforgivable of all sins** is to teach another to sin.

- It stresses the terror of the punishment of those who teach another to sin.
- It would be better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck and he were drowned in the depths of the sea.

- The millstone in this case is a **mulos** (moo' los) (<**G3458**>), **onikos** (on-kos') (<**G3684**>).
  - You will notice **two Greek words** listed above.
  - This is the reference Jesus made regarding **this terrible sin.**

- What we have here is two Greek words **melted into one English word.**

- **mulos onikos** was a grinding-stone of such a size **that it needed an ass pulling it.**

- The very size of the millstone **shows the awfulness of the condemnation.**

- Further, in the Greek it is said,  
not so much that  
the man would be better  
to be drowned  
in the depths of the sea,
- But that it would be better  
if he were drowned  
far out in the open sea.
  - pel'-ag-os  
(pel' a goss)  
(**G\_3989**)



- Drowning was sometimes a Roman punishment, but never Jewish.
  - To the Jew it was the symbol of utter destruction.

- **Josephus**  
(Antiquities of the Jews  
14. 15. 10)  
has a terrible account  
**of a Galilaean revolt**  
in which the Galilaeans  
**took the supporters of Herod**  
**and drowned them**  
**in the depths of the Sea of Galilee.**

- It has a warning **to silence all evasion.**
- This is a sin-stained world and no one can go out into it without meeting seductions to sin.
  - Jesus says,  
"That is perfectly true,  
**but that does not lessen  
the responsibility**  
of the man who is  
the cause of a stumbling-block  
being placed in the way  
of a beginner in the faith."

- It is therefore the Christian's duty to remove stumbling-blocks, never to be the cause of putting them in another's way.

- **How hard it is for us**  
to become as little children!
- Our **heads** rule our **hearts**  
in so many ways.
  - **We have lost**  
the innocence of childhood,
  - **We have lost**  
the art of entrusting things  
into the hands of our Father.

- We want to do everything for ourselves,
- Because we feel we know best  
what is good for us.

- Jesus is telling us very clearly that every life is precious in his eyes.
- Every person I meet is invaluable and irreplaceable.

- Jesus turns conventional attitudes **upside down:**
- The '**little ones**', the people whom the world does not rate as important, **are the most precious of all.**
- Will my attitudes today **reflect this?**



- Because we are competitive  
we are anxious to know  
who is the best,  
the cleverest,  
the greatest.

- **Status** means a great deal to us.
- Jesus **shocks** the disciples by saying that without the humility and simplicity of little children, **we are not even in the race.**

- ‘Despise’ not one of these little ones.  
(Matthew 18:10)

- “Despise”  
is a strong word.

- It implies  
hatred and contempt.

- Our Lord shows His care for the lost,
- The Good Shepherd searches for  
the wandering sheep.

- In our lesson for today  
Jesus is expressing  
His concern  
for the church.
- His concern is  
for the one  
whom nobody wants.
- That's why he looks  
for you and me!

**The doors of the church  
are open.**

**The Spirit and the Bride  
Say  
“Come”.**

**Revelation 22:17**



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