

Chasing Greatness (Matthew 18:1-20)

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Preacher: William HC

[0 : 00] At that time the disciples came to Jesus saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? And calling to him a child, he put him in the midst of them and said, Truly I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me, but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea.

Woe to the world for temptations to sin, for it's necessary that temptations come, but woe to the one by whom the temptation comes. And if your hand or your foot causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away.

It's better for you to enter life crippled or lame than with two hands or two feet to be thrown into eternal fire. And if your eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away.

It's better for you to enter life with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into the hell of fire. See that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I tell you that in heaven their angels always see the face of my Father who is in heaven.

[1 : 23] What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go in search of the one that went astray?

And if he finds it, truly I say to you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine that never went astray. So is it not the will of my Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish?

If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses.

If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.

Truly I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven.

[2 : 39] For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them. Thank you, Eden.

It's lovely to have a child reading that passage, isn't it? Alright, and good afternoon again. Please keep that passage in your Bibles open, so you've heard it read, and we're going to dive deeper into this wonderful part of God's Word, of Matthew's Gospel.

So if you need a Bible, you don't have one, we've got some out the back as well, we can grab those, otherwise on your phones is fine. Let's go into in-flight mode, let's hear from God's Word, let's pray that he would speak to us now.

Father, we thank you so much, that as we hear your Word, there are things in it that we've never discovered before until today, even if we've heard these passages or these stories a hundred times.

And so help us even today, give us fresh eyes and ears to behold wondrous things from your law. We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

[3 : 56] So it was Air New Zealand who started off this competition. In 2007, they released a Bare Essentials safety video.

Now, it's hard to tell, but this guy was giving crew safety instructions, and with his colleagues, they were wearing just body paint.

Bare Essentials of Safety. It was a hit. When they released this video, it gained over a million views on YouTube, back then very new, and lots of people started to fly in New Zealand and got really popular.

And then other airlines started to follow suit. And so this really boring part of flying on a plane, watching a safety video, suddenly became this competition. Who could come up with the greatest safety video ever?

All right? And so every airline had a go. Some obviously more successful than others and more memorable than others. But the race was on, and it's still on today.

[5 : 01] Who can come up with the cheeky, quirky safety video? It's when they start releasing them, not on the planes though, right? But on YouTube and everywhere, then you start to realize it's no longer about safety.

It's just a way to make your airline great. It's a way to make a name for yourself. The goal now is greatness, isn't it?

And whether it's airline safety videos or podcasts or whatever you're scrolling and seeing on your phones, they're trying to grab your attention. We try to grab each other's attention to get viral.

This is greatness culturally defined, isn't it? When we think about how our world works, we're trying to chase greatness in some way, shape, or form.

It could be a great ad on TV. It could be a great game that we remember, a great burger that we savor. But what does true greatness look like from a heavenly perspective?

[6 : 08] How does Jesus redefine what's great when it comes to his kingdom? I think that's the question that our passage that we just heard read answers and addresses. As we move towards Easter this year, Jesus has been on the move, right?

Over the summer, we saw the Son of God building a new community of followers from every kind of culture, not just Jewish, Gentile as well. And he was showing through his miracles what the new kingdom will look like.

The hungry are fed, the drowning are rescued, the sick are healed. These are all glimpses of a wonderful Savior, glimpses in the Gospel of Matthew of a great salvation to come in Jesus Christ.

And as we heard last week from Pastor Dave, wasn't that wonderful? Glimpses of Jesus' glory and purpose laid out for us from Matthew chapter 17.

This was no ordinary mountaintop moment. This is where we saw glimpses of how the servant king brings rest, how the servant king is mounting a rescue to deal with our rebellion, our sin.

[7 : 16] And he's gonna fix our relationship so that we have a heavenly father that we can relate to, we are restored with, that we can truly know God.

All of that bound up in chapter 17. And yet as we enter this new chapter, this next chapter, chapter 18, we realize that the disciples haven't quite understood Jesus' glory and purpose yet, have they?

Have a listen to verse one again. At that time, the disciples came to Jesus and they asked, who then is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?

Remember from last week's passage, where are they now? They're now back in a town, verse 24 of chapter 17 tells us, called Capernaum. Capernaum is this little village.

This is actually Jesus' ministry home base. Didn't really respond to Jesus very well, but actually that's where he did most of his miracles and wonders. And here, fresh off Jesus, you know, doing his diligence, his due diligence as a citizen, paying his taxes, the story moves on and then the disciples ask, who then is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?

[8 : 32] I want to be noticed, I added a word there. What word did I add into the NIV translation? I'm not adding to God's word, I'm just trying to put back what was there in the original. Who then? The word then in the original text is actually quite important for us.

It connects what we're hearing here, this question, with what's happened before. This is not a question that the disciples are asking from nowhere. Who's the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?

Who then? After all the things they've seen, who then is the greatest? Mark's gospel actually reveals that the disciples argue about this question all the time.

Even as they walked, they would argue about it. Who's the greatest? Imagine that, right? A whole bunch of people following Jesus, but as they follow, they're busy making comparisons with each other.

I'm closer to him. No, I'm closer to him. In fact, just two chapters later in this gospel account, Matthew 20, we hear actually John and James' mother is going to go to Jesus and try to ask for special privileges for her sons when the kingdom comes.

[9 : 39] Clearly, this question comes because Jesus' followers imagine him to be the next earthly ruler. And as his first followers, they're hoping perhaps for some starring roles in the new phase of the kingdom.

All of this is sitting behind their question, who then is the greatest in heaven's kingdom? And so this is the context, right? This question then sparks a very lengthy response from Jesus, right?

You notice actually in our passage, most of it is Jesus teaching, responding to that question. And so what we want to see is that each section I'm about to explain from verses one to 20 is teaching us something about greatness, not chasing greatness in some way, but Jesus' way.

So have a think about that. What do we learn about greatness and chasing it? What the disciples have glimpsed but not understood in Matthew 17, Jesus unpacks.

He begins, firstly, with the model of true greatness. And the model of true greatness, according to Jesus, is childlike humility.

[10 : 49] Look at verse two. He calls a little child, right, and uses this child to teach a very surprising and very personal lesson. Little child, stand here in front of all these grown men and women.

Now all of you, you think you're mature, you think you are great, look at this little one here. I'm sure most of us are here. We've got children. If we don't have children, we have nephews or nieces.

If you don't have nephews or nieces, you have brothers or sisters, right, look, and so you've been around children to know that they're not perfect, right, but when you're a child, you intuitively understand that you are so dependent, right?

When you're a child, you can't drive unless your parent takes you somewhere. When you're a child, you need help to know where to go sometimes. There's this innate sense of when I'm a child, I really need to depend on my father or mother or my auntie or uncle, my brother or sister.

There's this dependence, this childlike humility that Jesus is wanting us to pay attention to. And with a child in their midst, he teaches them, verse three, unless you turn or change and become like little children, you'll never enter heaven's kingdom.

[12:12] In other words, the disciples, they're asking the wrong question. They're assuming they're going to be in heaven's kingdom. Let these words sink deep. Look at verse three. Unless you turn or change.

In the original language, this is more literally be changed. It's something done to you. You cannot change yourself. You see, we're told to repent, to turn.

And yet, this verse is clear. God must change our hearts. We must be born again. Without him changing us, we have nothing in ourselves to save us. Just as when you were a child, who remembers the day they were born?

No one. And do you, I mean, even if you did, can you, could you say you had anything to do with it? No. Just like that, just like a child who cannot bring themselves into the world to become spiritual children, we must be born again.

We must be turned or changed. It's something God can do and only God does for us. That's the gospel. That's the good news of the Christian faith, isn't it? Right?

[13:16] To see a sinless Savior die for our rebellious hearts, it should humble us, should it not? The cross cries out, come to Jesus like a child because you cannot save yourself.

And actually, it's both humbling to know that, but it's so freeing. It's freeing because, because, look, without a true change from God, we would never be able to earn our way into heaven.

His standards are up here and we're down here. We are children of rock. We need to realize we cannot achieve true greatness ourselves. Don't listen to what the world tells you.

We must find our worth, our joy, our salvation in Christ alone and only in what He's done for us at the cross. Change like this is hard without God's help.

It's impossible without God's help. Look, it's easy to change opinions, right? Okay, get into an argument, you lose, okay, fine, I'll change my opinion. It's easy to change your favorite colors, okay?

[14:19] It's easy to convert, as it were, from one phone brand to another, but none of these changes can save your soul. Only a conversion of the soul will save you.

And if this verse, verse 3, summarizes the good news of Jesus, verse 4 lays out the clearest way you'll know that you are in heaven's kingdom, that you know this gospel.

Verse 4 lays out the one key evidence and it's humility. Exactly what angels shared with us. Not thinking less of yourself, okay? There you're still being very selfish, just thinking very badly about yourself.

but thinking of yourself less. Freeing, free to think about others, free to disregard what people think about myself and what I do.

That's humility. A humble heart, a humble attitude is one of the clearest signs that you know heaven's kingdom.

[15:18] You've tasted the sweetness of being freed by Jesus. Now it's Jesus saying all of us, we need to go back in time and be three years old again.

No, he's not. Because verse 3 and 4, notice the word like or as, right? Unless you change and become as little children. Humble yourself like this child.

This is not a call to be childish, Pastor Albert told us last week, but to be childlike in humility. Forget about how great we think we are.

We want to be humbling ourselves. That is a model of true greatness. Humbling ourselves like this little child here standing in front of the adults, in front of Jesus. That's the only way we qualify in sense to be in part of heaven's kingdom.

And actually, this whole passage mentions children, mentions little ones seven times. I think Jesus is calling our attention to children and little ones because he's asking us to search our hearts at each of these situations.

[16 : 29] Search our hearts. What does true greatness look like here? Humility in this area, humility in that area, and so on. Just like humility is the great virtue of a child, a child who knows they need help, childlike humility is what marks you if you have entered heaven's kingdom.

If you're not a Christian or you're not sure, maybe that would be one thing to ask. How's my heart? Is it humble? Is it trusting? Is it not thinking too much or too little of myself?

Is it fixed on the things of God, of Jesus? Think of Jesus' own childlike humility. He cried to his father the night he died, before he died on the cross, didn't he?

He said, Daddy, if it's your will, let this cup of suffering pass from me, and yet not my will, but yours be done. Such humility. Such humility, and that is true greatness here in heaven's kingdom.

If this is true, can I ask, how well you and I actively turn to this kind of humility in our lives? How often do we intentionally bury our pride rather than humble brag or do something that makes others look at us and think, ooh, that's nice?

[17 : 51] What gospel truths are you as a Christian turning to, repeatedly, to grow humility and not self-centeredness and pride in your life? James 4, verse 6, right?

God opposes the proud, and yet he gives grace to the humble. A mark of a true Christian is their humility, how they're far more interested in you than themselves, how they will reach out to you and say hi.

They'll ask you for prayer, how they serve others selflessly without seeking attention or glory from themselves. None of this, I'll help carry your bags and then post it online.

Look, unlike the power-hungry disciples here, this is childlike humility. This is true greatness modeled. This is who Jesus will welcome and welcomes in his kingdom.

And if true greatness is modeled by this kind of childlike humility and faith, in the next verses, Jesus warns of something really serious, right?

[18 : 55] An obstacle to true greatness. And that is causing this kind of faith to stumble and fall. I mean, listen to verse 5 and 6 again.

Whoever welcomes a little child like this in my name welcomes me. Verse 6, but if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe me to sin, it'd be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea.

Most of us don't carry around millstones as fashion accessories. Millstones actually we use to grind down flour, right? Very heavy, made of rock or stone or something really, you know, concrete these days probably.

And you wouldn't hang it around your neck. You would just collapse. Are we collapsing people? That's what Jesus is warning us about. Look, one of the things I'm really thankful for, we've been here, this is our fourth year at PCBC English, I love the fact that we can worship together in the same space.

there's none of this, you run into church and then you turn left or right depending on your age. It's good, isn't it? When 4.30 starts or 4.35, we have 40 year olds singing God's praises with four year olds.

[20 : 08] We have toddlers and teenagers. We have children and people who think like children. Me, right? And that's great. That's so good. Because church is for everyone.

Jesus is for everyone. And so kids, I want to emphasize as your pastor, one of your pastors, you can be a child. You can be a child at heart and you are most welcome here.

As one of you perhaps stands before big older disciples, you have something to offer and share. Jesus makes it clear in verse 6, right? There are little ones who believe in him.

That's why I think to treat a child like that well is to treat Jesus well. But the opposite is true as well. To lead children into sin, right?

Children, whether they're young in age or young in faith, to lead them into sin and temptation, it's to invite God's wrath. And what Jesus calls in verses 8 to 10, the fire of hell.

[21 : 11] Let's be clear here. Children are precious to Jesus. And so they should be precious to us. Brothers and sisters, they should never be taken advantage of. Any behavior that trips them up, that might cause them to sin or stumble, that might lead them away from trusting Jesus, it cannot be tolerated in the church.

How sad it is when churches are in the headlines for abusive behavior to children. Jesus says, if you ever lead a child astray in this way, it's better for you to be synched to the bottom of the ocean.

That's a better outcome than the judgment that awaits. Even here at PCBC, we have to take steps, don't we? Protecting our children is important. I'm so thankful for the work of Cynthia, Angel, others who have been quietly behind the scenes actually making sure all of our leaders, our volunteer leaders, are police-vetted at least, right?

We're taking baby steps and training our leaders, encouraging them, not just in their beliefs, but in their character and skills, things that will help them to not cause little ones to stumble.

Because there's also not just the physical safety of our children, but the spiritual safety of our children, right? What profit is it if we invite people here and they make friends, they have a great time, but they are spiritually in danger because they're not hearing the good news of Jesus?

[22 : 37] And so this may be the only safe place our children have from all the constant messages that the world teaches that are opposite to God's gracious word.

You know, there's so many lies in the word out there. There's so many lies that are taught by people who do not trust Jesus. Lies like choosing your destiny, who you are will fulfill you.

Lies like you need to be perfect or this good to be accepted. Sadly, such messages, Jesus says, they will and they must come. But woe to those teachers.

They are the ones who will be judged. To invite their teachings then into our lives instead of Jesus's, it's like digging a hole in our car park and letting people fall in. How foolish.

Church, how are we doing at not causing our little ones to stumble? How are we effectively and patiently teaching each other about Jesus? This should be the safest place and the best place for little ones to know and love Christ.

[23 : 47] Not to be told, obey and then you're accepted. Not to be told, serve or you don't belong. Not to be told, you're worthless without this, this or this. That would cause them to stumble.

We must get rid of those teachings. Right? How graphic, how radical is Jesus when he says, tear out that body part. That would be better.

We actually need a more radical view of what causes people to sin. A radical righteousness. We tolerate a lot of things but we should not tolerate stumbling people into sin.

Because there is a hell and eternal judgment for those of us who look down on the little ones who believe in him. This is serious stuff but there are obstacles to true greatness and Jesus warns us of it here.

And look, if childlike humility shows true greatness, then being apathetic about sin, about temptation, does not show true greatness.

[24 : 52] And so can I ask then, are you humble enough, again humility, right? Are you humble enough to acknowledge that there is sin in our midst, in our hearts? There are things that we could do better than we don't.

Do you and I have a childlike trust that our Heavenly Father wants you to hate sin and turn away from it? Or can I ask a question, does the way you live bring blessing to others who are watching?

Or is it going to cause harm? Does your life, the way you live it, even though you claim to be a Christian, does it encourage other brothers and sisters watching you to keep trusting Jesus and putting Him first?

Or are you making choices and decisions that are just giving permission to others who watch you to slide away from the Lord? When the Old Testament prophet, Nathan, he rebuked King David, right?

There's a story where King David, he had an affair with Bathsheba, a woman who was not his wife, slept with her. And when Nathan called him out, he rebuked him and he lamented, they, the whole world, will blaspheme God because of you.

[26 : 03] You see that? Our sin, our stumbling has consequences. It can cause others to stumble. So will the next generation look at our choices, our actions, and then conclude, there's no way God is real?

How sad that would be. It takes humility to ask questions like this, PCBC, doesn't it? But we ask it knowing our God gives grace to the humble. And so we ask these questions knowing if we are humble enough to admit, Lord, search us.

He will lavish us with grace. He has already lavished us with grace through the cross. Jesus has died for us. We don't have to live for our own greatness. We don't have to hide our own stumblings.

We can live for His greatness and be devoted to lives that not only love the gospel but live it out too. So let's not look down on these children of faith.

Let's take a hard look at our lives. Where are we causing people to stumble? Do we need a course correction? Our true greatness will oppose anything that would trip up the next generation from our lives within our church.

[27 : 15] And then from this topic, Jesus moves on, right? And then He gives us a picture of true greatness. After just laying out that warning, that obstacle of true greatness, He then gives us a wonderful picture.

Verse 12 to 14. You skip the 12 and you see this wonderful parable of the shepherds. What do the shepherds do? What does this one do? This man who owns a hundred sheep, he does something that would be financially suicidal, right?

It seems weird. Why would you leave 99 of your best sheep to look for the one that's lost? Surely you just leave that off and claim the tax deduction later on.

But that's not a shepherd's heart. Amidst the disciples' misguided thinking of how to be great, who's great, here's the picture of true greatness.

A lowly shepherd who loves his flock so much that he is just thinking about how to rescue the one that's gone lost, trapped somewhere. And he'll risk the rest of his livelihood to chase after the one.

[28 : 23] And so here's a very basic question. Who is this shepherd and who's the sheep? Right? This is a parable. It's a story that tells, it makes a point.

Who is the man who's the sheep? Well, verse 14, Jesus tells us the answer, doesn't he? Our heavenly father is the pursuing shepherd.

Our father in heaven that Jesus talks about, he is the one who runs after you, who wants you to not be lost, to be saved. The shepherd who seeks us out with this bold and as we sang, reckless even love.

He is happier, more joyful about rescuing the one than the 99 he left behind. They're safe. He's not. She's not. This is what excites our dad.

This is what excites our dad, going after the lost. It's what puts a smile on his face as this parable is trying to tell us. His wandering children rescued.

[29 : 29] So have a think, what puts a smile on your face compared to our heavenly father? I mean, if this is a picture of true greatness, our father's selfless pursuit, if this is what brings our father joy, should that not motivate us to be joyful about the same thing that he's joyful about, finding lost sheep?

To go after those who are lost among our friends, our co-workers, our classmates, with that shepherd's compassion. Let's not settle for just making friends with people at our workplace and then they leave when they need a rescue as well.

Let's invite them to consider Christ, to come along to church, to meet a Christian friend. That's a very good way to respect little ones as well, isn't it?

Think about the little ones in your lives. One way to respect them, not cause them to stumble and fall, is to take the opportunities you have to reach out to them like a shepherd who loves his sheep.

I find this story so challenging as a parent and I'm sure parents who are listening in or who are here, you'll know this. We are more than just providers of food or a physical future.

[30 : 46] Each of our children need to know that they are sinners in need of a savior and that's not us. And so the greatest thing we can pass on to our next generation is not a bigger inheritance, is not the house that I've saved up for.

The best thing we can pass on is the gospel of Jesus Christ. That's the only hope they have for an eternal rescue, for an inheritance that will never fade or spoil. There are so many things that we call great in this world but they just pass away, don't they?

Who remembers airline safety videos after, you know, two months, two seconds? Who remembers an Insta-worthy meal after you've flushed it? Who remembers career achievements after the next person announces their promotion?

None of these things receive the father's rejoicing, the Bible says. The Bible says the father delights in rescuing lost children. In a world that knows Jesus as king, only that pictures true greatness.

A couple of our kids and I, we try to regularly go on morning runs, right? So, it's a good way to get out of bed at 6.30 in the morning and the sky's getting darker and so I've been seeing a lot of yellow high-vis vests, right?

[32 : 09] Worn by cyclists. We live very near a cycle path. Very practical, very visible to wear yellow. But if you wore yellow during the Ming dynasty of China, right?

Ancient China, you would have actually been executed. I don't know if you know this story. Yellow was a forbidden color for commoners, right? It was something that only, the certain yellow belonged to the emperor and only the emperor and, you know, whoever the emperor chose could wear this particular color.

Why? Why? For some reason, he believed that to wear it would threaten his greatness. Now, you and I might think it harsh to execute someone based on their choice of clothing, you know.

I don't like that football jersey. I'm going for you. It's a bit harsh. But look, kings, ancient and modern, could do this kind of thing, right? If you were the king, if you were the top boss, you could do whatever you want.

If you were offended, you cut them off. If you were hurt, you hurt them back. That's how kings work and rule. And if we're honest, this is the kind of response we make or we would like to make if left unchecked.

[33 : 19] But thank God, the servant king does it differently. He has a different way. For him, true greatness is not a color of clothing or status or position.

Rather, it's childlike humility before the father. It's a radical righteousness that guards little ones. It's sharing the father's delight and seeking out the lost.

And finally, in the last few verses of our passage, we'll look more into this next week when we talk about forgiveness, but in the last few verses of our passage, we finally see too that there's a step of true greatness and it is to restore lost family members.

Listen to verse 15 again. If your brother or sister sins against you, go and show him his fault just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. But if he will not listen, take one or two others along so that every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.

What's going on here? Here, Jesus is laying out some instructions for when you've been wronged by someone in God's community. If you've ever been wronged by someone, I'm sure it's happened once or twice in your life, maybe think about it.

[34 : 38] If you've been wronged by your brother or sister in church or your spouse or your children or your siblings, here are some of the most admirable principles you can go to to resolve a conflict.

You see, the world teaches, right, if you've been wronged, wrong them back. Get a journalist's attention or something if you've been cheated. Drop a rant on social media if you've been, you know, mispaid some money.

Look, when we operate like this, we are just like the yellow-cloaked emperor in our hearts, responding to injustice by heading back. That's not the step of true greatness that Jesus teaches.

Rather, when someone sins against you, we start first, small, with a private conversation, perhaps. Share what you think happened that hurt you without the pressure of others listening in first and gossiping and commenting.

You want to give the person the benefit of the doubt. Maybe they wronged you, but maybe you've misinterpreted the situation. But go and show them their faults, right, verse 15. Notice it's not don't go and ignore it.

[35 : 51] And notice it's not show their fault along with five other people and really shame them. It's this balance that Jesus has, isn't it? And notice as well, verse 15, what's the aim? It's not to win the argument.

It's to win your brother or sister over. Far more important than who's right or who's wrong is the relationship. Have you got it back? I think so much scandal and sorrow in our churches could be avoided if we took this step first in so many areas.

If we saw these teachings as truly great and not just optional extras. You see, our human nature, we want to defend our reputation. We want to broadcast our hurts as fast as possible and yet Jesus says that's not true greatness.

Go and show him his fault first. I'm so grateful even for some of you who have done this to me. And yet if a brother or sister won't listen, Jesus lays out what to do next.

He doesn't say, yes, go nuclear now. He says, take one or two others along. There's a Jewish principle behind this next step right here in verse 16 where something seen by two people is admissible in a court of law.

[37 : 04] The key point here is that you're not trying all you can to whack them, shame them. You're trying all you can to bring them back to this childlike humility about their sin.

You see, to lay out Christ's righteousness that God's people should embody but to do it gently and graciously, to warn them in love. What you are doing is dangerous, brother.

Sister, what you are going for here could destroy you. And again, if they listen, praise God and then we leave it alone. It's only when there remains no repentance, no childlike humility from this person that we tell it to the church.

Verse 17. Again, not tell it to the watching world. Just the church. Because when it comes to spiritual matters, it's actually just the gathered church, the congregation of saints gathered in His name, right, two or three gathered even, that has God's authority to bind and loose what's happening in heaven.

Just as the council of Jerusalem in Acts 15 had the Holy Spirit's power upon them, right, among them, PCBC, as a membership, we do have the Holy Spirit's authority when we gather to bind and loose, to make decisions, not just to pick deacons, but sometimes to welcome people into membership or to release them or to commend people or maybe to rebuke them.

[38 : 38] This is actually a clear case here in Matthew 18 for childlike humility as we do church, for local churches like ours to take ownership of how our family behave.

And if they are lost, we must restore them. If they are wandering, we must rescue them. Sometimes that means necessary decisions about people rejoicing over their salvation or grieving and removing them from our midst.

Jesus lays out some amazing things, but here we start to get glimpses of true greatness. A kingdom where members characterize childlike humility, radical righteousness, a passion for lost children, and a desire to make things right in the family of God.

Could that be us, PCBC? Could we be truly chasing greatness as a church? By God's grace, I hope so. And it starts with a humility that we need God's help.

So I'm going to pray and then we're going to sing a song in response. Let's do that. Father, these are tough words for a people who don't always know that they're humble.

[40 : 00] and I count myself among them. Lord, would you help me, would you help this family humble ourselves before God?

Because we need you. We need to see you as our Father who delights in giving us good gifts like this passage, like these principles. Help us, Lord, even as we continue to worship and respond to trust you, to obey what you have for us here.

We pray all these things in Jesus' name. Amen.