

Victory of the Lamb – February 25, 2018 – Crazy Love

Mark 8:31-38 and Mark 9:34,35 Living Up to Greatness – Pastor Bill Limmer

When I was a little kid I dreamed of being a professional athlete. Not just any professional athlete, the greatest! I played running back in football and so I wanted to be like OJ Simpson – maybe you have heard of him. That didn't work out ok though, right. When I played basketball, I was a point guard and so I wanted to be like Dennis Johnson, a.k.a. DJ. You probably don't know him so you will have to take my word for it, he was good. A defensive specialist and great in the clutch. He won three NBA championships one with the Seattle, I told you this was a long time ago and the other two with Boston Celtics. He died at the age of 53. Kinda glad that didn't work out either. People get into arguments over who is the G.O.A.T. With Superbowl only a couple of weeks ago, the NBA All-Star game last weekend, the Olympics just wrapping up people are arguing about who is the G.O.A.T. Is the G.O.A.T. Tom Brady or someone else? Is the G.O.A.T. Michael Jordan or LeBron James. Who is the greatest Winter Olympian ever? Have you ever been in an argument over who is the greatest?

We are the Lenten season that time when we are preparing ourselves for the horror of Good Friday and the Victory of Easter Sunday. It was after the second time that Jesus told his disciples that he was going to be handed over, suffer, be killed and then three days later rise, that the disciples got into an argument. Any idea what the argument was about? It was about who was the greatest. And it wasn't about who was the greatest rabbi. It was who was the greatest disciple. Jesus knew what they were arguing about among themselves and so he asked them about it. Mark 9:34 says, **But they kept quiet because on the way they had argued about who was the greatest.**

As Jesus was beginning his earthly ministry, John the Baptist, the forerunner of Jesus, said, "He must become greater, I must become less." John knew he existed to serve God and not the other way around. Now inside of us is this amazing idol factory called our heart. It likes to manufacture one idol after another. Usually these idols are all about making ourselves significant, great. We want to use God as a tool to make us all we can be. We try to get God to do what we want for our lives instead of seeking out what God wants for their lives. Sound familiar? We get confused and think God exists for us, when in reality God created us and we exist for him. And so we pray things like God bless me. God make me richer. We are on a quest for greatness. Into our idol making hearts Jesus said: Mark 8:34 **"Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.**

Who is this Jesus who said this? That's the very question Jesus asked his disciples. Do people know me? Do you know me? Mark 8:27-30 **On the way he (Jesus) asked them, "Who do people say I am?"²⁸ They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets."²⁹ "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?" Peter answered, "You are the Messiah."**

This same Jesus who said this is the G.O.A.T. He is the Greatest of All Time because He is God Over All Things. And even though he was God he came as the servant of all. Did you catch that – The Great One, the God One, came as a servant. Philippians 2:5-8- **(Jesus), did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;⁷ rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!** Friends this is God. This is crazy love. This is God giving up everything to become a servant. Jesus as king over all fought our battle

against all of our enemies and won it by losing his life only to take it up again. Jesus as our prophet patiently shared the grace and truth of God and fulfilled what he said would happen to him when he said Matthew 12:40 **For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.** That is the power of crazy love. Jesus as our priest **took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted.** ⁵ **But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed.** ⁶ **We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.** That is crazy. That is crazy love. This crazy love of God is self-sacrificing.

One day the disciples of old asked Jesus the question, "Who, then, is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" Mark 9:35 **Jesus said, "Anyone who wants to be first must be the very last, and the servant of all."** Do you see what Jesus is getting at here? Jesus is telling us that living up to greatness isn't necessarily the one who scores the most touchdowns, the most points, has the title of CFO, COO, CEO, has the most money, the most followers on social media, the kids who always behave (don't you just hate them), the largest home, the high scorer on Super Mario, not even the high scorer on Candy Crush – for you boomers. The one who lives up to greatness isn't necessarily the most decorated Olympian, or the one who has won the most MVP's but the one who is a servant.

Jesus said, Mark 8:34-38 **"Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.** ³⁵ **For whoever wants to save their life^[a] will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it.** ³⁶ **What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul?** ³⁷ **Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul?** ³⁸ **If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of them when he comes in his Father's glory with the holy angels."**

In Acts 9:36 we read about a woman named Tabitha, In Joppa there was a disciple named **Tabitha** she was always doing good and helping the poor. What a great thing to say about a person. She was always doing good and helping the poor. What would people say that you are always doing? I'm thinking what an honor it would be, if when I died people would find it true to say of me and inscribe on my tombstone, he was always doing good and helping the poor.

I never met Aaron Feis but he sounds like a great guy. Feis, was an assistant football coach, [was killed when he threw himself in front](#) of students to protect them from oncoming bullets in Parkland, FL 11 days ago. According to football program spokeswoman Denis Lehtio, "He died the same way he lived -- he put himself second," she said. "He was a very kind soul, a very nice man. He died a hero." Colton Haab, a 17-year-old junior who had a close relationship with Feis, told CNN he saw the coach running toward the sounds of gunshots. "That's Coach Feis. He wants to make sure everybody is safe before himself," "(He) made sure everyone else's needs were met before his own. He was a hard worker. He worked after school, on the weekends, mowing lawns, just helping as many people as possible.". Chad Lyons, a student and football player, said Feis was there for him when Lyons was going through leukemia treatments. "He guided me through them. He would send me prayers. He would send me Bible scriptures and just stuff to cheer up my day. Funny memes," Lyons said. One of the students said he was a hero long before he was shot killed.

How can you live up to greatness this week, This Lenten Season, This year? How can you serve someone this week, this Lenten Season, this year? Sometimes serving in the smallest capacities give you the

greatest opportunities. I will suggest just two. Bring a lunch. David was told by his father to go check in on his brothers and take them something to eat. His brothers were at war, actually not a lot of fighting was going on because they were afraid of their enemy, the Philistines. Some of you know where I am going don't you? That giant Goliath was a Philistine. Goliath was taunting the Israelites more importantly God. David shows us with the lunch and God uses little David to slay big Goliath. There once was a little boy who showed up with his lunch. Five loaves of bread and two fish. Jesus used that lunch to feed thousands? Bring a lunch. Maybe making a breakfast treat for Victory Café or taking a lunch to homeless shelter a meal to a family who is in need, or just fun make a meal for your neighbor unannounced. We can do all these things in joy because Jesus gets great joy in providing for us!

Carry a towel – even though Jesus is God Over All Things, on the night before he was to be crucified he did a servants job, a job the disciples thought they were too good to do. Jesus expressed his love for them by carrying a towel and washing their feet. Carry a towel, maybe it is the towel of volunteerism in Victory Kids or volunteering to take a coffee mug to someone's house to thank them for coming to worship, or volunteering to open a door, hand out a bulletin, livestream. You know those tech teamers are in the back in the dark but they share the light of the world with dozens of families every week. Carry a towel into the community, volunteer at the Red Cross, at a school or wherever your gifts and passions life. Know this, God uses towel carriers to make a huge difference. What is one big or small thing you can do to live up to greatness and serve this week? This month? This year?

And friends, whatever you do remember Jesus served you and me to the full extent. Jesus served us when we didn't deserve to be served. Jesus served us when we were tired and worn out and could a lift a finger to help. Jesus served us when we were too busy to even recognize him. Jesus served us when we were so full of ourselves that we didn't think we needed him. And when it is all said I done, I will not have served others as I should, I will not have loved others as I should, and yet God will say to me and to you, "Well done, good and faithful servant inherit the kingdom of God prepared for you." He will say this because Jesus served me and you with his life, with his death, and with his resurrection and we get all the credit for it. That is crazy love!

Prayer: Oh Jesus. Thank you for putting us first. What crazy love! Give us the grace to not only want to be like you but to serve just like you, putting others ahead of ourselves. Give us your eyes, your hands, your feet, your heart, Jesus, so we can serve in joy and crazy love like you! Amen.