

Who is Greatest in God's Kingdom

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Scene Summary

The play “Who is Greatest in God’s Kingdom” illustrates the teaching of our Lord concerning those who are most important. The scenes include Jesus and the disciples walking together along the road to Jerusalem...Jesus explains what will happen in the days ahead...James and John’s mother arrives and makes a request that her sons be in important positions...the other disciples become very jealous...Jesus teaches them that the greatest must be your servant; the first must be your slave.

Scripture

(Mat 20:17-28 NIV) Now as Jesus was going up to Jerusalem, he took the twelve disciples aside and said to them, {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 {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!" {20} Then the mother of Zebedee's sons came to Jesus with her sons and, kneeling down, asked a favor of him. {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." {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. {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." {24} When the ten heard about this, they were indignant with the two brothers. {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. {26} Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, {27} and whoever wants to be first must be your slave-- {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."

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Players

- **Narrator** – The narrator simply begins the action. This could be an offstage voice.
- **Jesus** – The Great Teacher showing us who is greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven.
- **Disciple 1, 2, 3** – More disciples can be used as needed.
- **James** – Fisherman called to be a disciple.
- **John** – The younger brother of James.
- **Zebedee's wife** – The mother of James and John.
- **Small Child** – This is a non-speaking part used to illustrate who is the greatest.

Special Props

- Normal items from the prop box such as scarves and headdress.

Script - Who is Greatest in God's Kingdom

[Opening scene: Jesus and the disciples are walking along the road]

Disciple 1: Jerusalem will be crowded this year!

Disciple 2: The city is always crowded during the Passover feast.

Disciple 3: People travel from far away lands to be at the great Temple for Passover.

Jesus: Let's stop and rest here.

[the disciples gather around Jesus on the ground]

Jesus: 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 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!

Narrator: The disciples listened to Jesus, but they did not understand. After resting awhile, they continued on their journey to Jerusalem.

[from offstage, comes Zebedee's wife to see Jesus; the disciples stop]

Disciple 1: [to disciple 2] Look, there is James and John's mother coming to meet us.

Disciple 2: She must have something to ask Jesus.

Zebedee's wife: [kneeling before Jesus]

Jesus: What is it you want?

Zebedee's wife: Grant that one of these two sons of mine may sit at your right and the other at your left in your kingdom.

Jesus: You don't know what you are asking. [turning to James and John] Can you drink the cup I am going to drink?"

James: Yes.

John: Yes, we can.

Jesus: 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.

Disciple 1: [to disciple 2] Well that's not right. I've been with Jesus before they were.

Disciple 2: [getting upset] Those two aren't going to tell me what to do.

Disciple 3: Right! We are just as good as they are.

Jesus: You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave-- 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.

Narrator: Then Jesus called a small child that was playing nearby. He asked the child to stand beside Him.

Jesus: Whoever welcomes this little child in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. For he who is least among you all--he is the greatest.

The End

Supplemental Information

In some societies children are of little value. They often times do not carry any respect or importance. God's Kingdom is very different. Jesus taught that children are very important in the Kingdom of Heaven. In fact, Jesus told the adults "...unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 18:3)

Remind your students of the story when the mothers brought their children to see Jesus and the disciples got in the way. When Jesus saw this told the disciples that they were wrong. Jesus said to them, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these." (Mark 10:14)