

1. The Greatest of All Time!—Mark 9:33-50; 10:13-16 (Ali. Jordan and Brady—The GOATs. We love to measure greatness—so did Christ’s disciples. In our text he found them arguing over it—who among them was the greatest. Like us they measured greatness by accomplishment, value, position and realized this kind of greatness brought recognition, rewards and even riches. As they envisioned it at this stage of their spiritual development, when Christ ascended the throne of David to establish his kingdom in Jerusalem the closer they could position themselves to that seat of power the better off they would be—so the request of James and John’s mother in Matthew’s account of this—chapter 20—to be seated at the right and left of the throne—greatness! And with it—likely recognition, rewards and riches. But Jesus would have absolutely none of this kind of reasoning. He quickly defined greatness for them in an entirely different way. In his kingdom it would not be the first who would be great, but the last; not the king, but the servant. He illustrated it by having a little child stand up among them—certainly considered of limited value in that culture—while proclaiming that basically he and the little child are the same—welcome one and welcome the other. Stop processing things the old way and see what God has put right in front of you and learn it. But they didn’t or couldn’t at this stage—which sets up the next story. John tells about seeing a man casting out demons in the name of Christ, but since he was not of their group—the disciples told him to stop. Their reasoning was—he is not one of us or maybe one of the great ones like us—so he must be a threat. Not so said Jesus—if he is not against us he is for us. Again, disciples, learn to welcome people into the kingdom even if they are different than you—not prevent them from finding it. So Jesus launches into a warning—not a good place to be by being an obstacle to the “little ones”—the least, the last, the children, the non-GOATS, etc—who believe in him. Actually there are some fairly severe consequences here—instead he tells his disciples—being refined by fire, learn some things, become someone who saves, not sours and stop all the arguing. But they still remained somewhat stupefied---just a little while later there they were again as children were being brought to Jesus, to see and touch him, trying to block their access to him. Little wonder why Jesus got indignant towards them and rebuked them—were they not listening? With all the little children around him, again he emphasized to them that they have been missing the point. The kingdom of God values these children over their GOATS. Unless they got the point and began to realize that—and start developing within themselves the simple faith of these little ones—they could miss out on the kingdom. Then he blesses the children. Now the timing of our Celebration of Life—as we bless our children in the name of Jesus—could not have been better for this week’s reading. What can we learn from it?)
2. Three Textual Points
 - a. Everything we typically believe about greatness is wrong
 - b. Be careful not to get in the way of simple faith
 - c. Learn to humble ourselves before God—James 4:10
3. “Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with each other”—Mark 9:50