

Exegetical Notes - Luke 9:46-50

“Who Is Greatest?”

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Luke 9:46-50

Verse 46

An argument started among the disciples as to which of them would be the greatest.

- After the disciples had been unable to cast the demon out of the little boy (see Luke 9:37-45) they began to argue with each other about which one of them would be considered the greatest of the Apostles.

Verse 47-48

Jesus, knowing their thoughts, took a little child and had him stand beside him. Then he said to them, “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 disciples thought that their argument was hidden from Jesus. But nothing is hidden from him. He was fully aware that they were arguing with each other and what the argument was about. He knew their thoughts.
- Without appearing to address the argument Jesus took a small child and had the child stand beside him. Jesus said that whoever welcomes this child welcomes me and whoever welcomes me welcomes my Father, God. And then, he off-handedly remarked that he who wanted to great before God needed to think less of himself than he did of others.
- By doing this, Jesus made it clear that God valued humility most among his children.

Verse 49

“Master,” said John, “we saw a man driving out demons in your name and we tried to stop him, because he is not one of us.”

- Given Jesus' lesson, John tried to change the subject. He told Jesus about a man they had seen who was casting out demons in Jesus' name. Remember that this was the very thing that the disciples had been unable to do just before the argument among them began. (See Luke 9:37-45)
- John was trying to gain Jesus' favor. He believed that Jesus would approve their effort to stop this man. His reasoning reveals that he missed the point Jesus had hoped to make about who would be the greatest among them. The disciples tried to stop the man from doing good in Jesus' name because he was NOT ONE OF THEM.

Verse 50

“Do not stop him,” Jesus said, “for whoever is not against you is for you.”

- Jesus attempted to show John and the other disciples that there were things that they did not know and would not understand. They need not be jealous of someone God gifted in ways God had not gifted them. They should not stop someone from serving God in ways that they could not. They should not assume that everyone included in the kingdom would be known to them.

(These exegetical notes are the foundational study for the sermon entitled *Who Is Greatest?* They have been prepared by the Reverend Doctor Charles H. Jensen, Senior Pastor at Cornerstone Fellowship, Coatesville Pennsylvania. All rights are reserved by Dr. Jensen and *Cornerstone Fellowship*.)