

5. What are some of the ways we often downplay obedience to God?

6. How can we help each other keep from downplaying obedience, the kind of obedience and service exemplified by Mary?

7. Looking back over this week's sermon and study, what one thing is most important for you to remember and apply?

Missional Application

We are called to make disciples...teaching them to do everything Jesus commanded.

Christ Connection

Only God is great without qualification, and God the Son helps us see what greatness looks like in our daily lives.

Angels We Have Heard - Part 2 (Advent 2018)

"What Does It Take to be Great?"

Luke 1:26-39

I have to admit, I'm more focused day-to-day on becoming great at something (or, at least, being perceived as great at something) than I am on being great, period.

God actually wants us to pursue greatness.

"What Does It Take to be Great?"

1. **Only God is great, period.**

In the OT, when great is used without qualification, it almost always refers to God himself.

God is the standard and measure of greatness.

2. **We are not great.**

"Favored" (Luke 1:28-29)

The word for "favor" comes from the word for grace.

God alone is the dispenser of grace.

This passage goes out of its way to emphasize that Mary has not earned favor; she has experienced it.

This doesn't mean that Mary isn't an amazing young woman. She is amazing!

Mary is exemplary in her response—amazingly exemplary—but she is responding to the work of a sovereign, grace-filled God.

3. We can achieve greatness.

- Obedience to God leads to greatness. (Matthew 5:19)

What obedience always comes down to is, 'Will I trust my way or God's way,' whether it's what he says about how I treat people, how I spend my money, or how I use my body.

- Greatness is also achieved through serving God and others. (Mark 10:41-45)

Philippians 2: ⁶ Who, being in very nature God, 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!

4. Our greatness is a qualified greatness.

5. Achieving greatness is never easy.

Living in a “disenchanted world” makes it harder to pursue God, sacrificial service to God and others, and a way of life that is counter-cultural in its obedience to God.

In a disenchanted world where this life is all there is or this life is all that really matters, the goal is to get the most you can out of it for yourself and for your family or tribe.

If the world is “enchanted,” the trajectory of our lives should be defined by following Jesus, his kingdom agenda, serving others, our citizenship in heaven, and obedience to Christ, even when it doesn't feel good or results in suffering for the sake of others and for the sake of Christ.

Family Discussion Questions

1. Who is someone you know who is great? What makes them great?
2. In what ways is Mary a great example to us?
3. Why is it often so hard to do what is right and to serve others?

Personal Reflection & Small Group Questions

Please complete this study on your own, then bring it to your small group for discussion.

1. Looking back over your notes from this week's sermon, what particularly caught your attention, challenged, or confused you?
2. Thinking back to when you were young, what did you hope to be great at when you grew up?
3. Read Luke 1:26-39. Reflect on the story through Mary's experience. How do you feel? What are you thinking?
4. Although it's important to remember that we are not great by God's standard of greatness, the Bible does emphasize our worth. From where do we get our worth?