



THE GOSPEL OF  
**Luke**

**SESSION OBJECTIVE: LUKE 22:24-30**

To understand what it truly means to be the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

## Thrones Matter

Assuming you are studying this in the 21st century and in the so-called “western world,” the idea of a *throne* holds very little significance on any kind of practical level. In America, we use the word throne to more often refer to a toilet (the *porcelain throne*) than we do a seat of power and authority. In the world of music, the seat upon which a drummer sits is referred to as a throne. Given our political shaping in a country that is a democratic republic, royal language fails to convey to us the gravity that is meant to possess. This is not the case for Luke’s context. Luke lives in a time where countries are governed by kings. Israel was governed by a succession of kings and had a rich history of Davidic descendants whose reigns were established by God Himself. Even Rome had a Caesar. The concept of a sovereign ruler was the only real concept native to Luke and his original audience’s understanding.

It is no surprise then that the imagery of the throne matters a great deal to his writing. The angel Gabriel, speaking of Jesus (who had not yet been born) said, “the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David” (Lk. 1:32), a passage that recalls some of the imagery of Daniel 7:13-14 wherein one like a Son of Man receives a throne and dominion and power from the “Ancient of Days.” Later, in Mary’s Magnificat, Mary says that Jesus “has brought down the mighty from their thrones, and exalted those of humble estate” (Lk. 1:52). Here, in Luke 22, after radically redefining what greatness looks like, Jesus promises His disciples that they may “sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel” (Lk. 22:30). Thrones matter. They signify power, rule,

and reign. And Jesus intends to give that power to His disciples because they have traversed the difficult years of ministry that Jesus had experienced in the flesh (Lk. 22:28).

## A Reversal of Power

Apparently there was disagreement amongst the disciples over which of them were the “greatest” (Lk. 22:24). Jesus responded to them: “The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those in authority over them are called benefactors. But not so with you” (Lk. 22:25-26a). Below is a brief breakdown of some the key phrases in Jesus’ response.

### **DOMINION**

It was common in Jesus’ day (as it is common in our day) for those in power to lord their power over the people they rule. The idea of “exercising lordship” comes from the Greek term κυριεύω (kyrieuō), a term that implies dominion or mastery over something or someone. It’s the same term we find employed to describe the lack of dominion that death has over Christ post-resurrection: “We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him” (Rom. 6:9). Similarly, sin has no dominion over those who are no longer under the law, but grace: “For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace” (Rom. 6:14). In the same way that death and sin have dominion over non-believers, “kings of the Gentiles” have dominion over their subjects.

### **BENEFACTORS**

These kings are also called “benefactors.” Benefactors were people who cared for and provided for their subjects. They often refer to kings, gods, and heroes in the ancient world. The construction of this phrase “are called benefactors” is actually in the middle voice, meaning it could also rightly be translated as the NIV does: “they call themselves benefactors.” Both are fine translations.

### **THE REVERSAL**

After identifying the typical pattern of authority in the world, Jesus flips that pattern on its head and reveals what it means to be great in His kingdom: “Rather, let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as one who serves. For who is the greater, one who reclines at table or one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at table? But I am among you as the one who serves” (Lk. 22:26b-27). The greatest, Jesus says, shall become “the youngest.” In the Greek language, this is the term νέος (neos), and it can mean either “young or youthful” or “new, recent, or fresh.” In the ancient world, the youngest in a family would serve the old or great ones of the family. However, the disciples have been served by Jesus, who sets the new prototype for what greatness means.

There are actually four different contrasts in this portion of the text. Jesus contrasts the “greatest” with the “youngest” in verse 26b, the “leader” with the “servant” in verse 26c, the “diner” with the “table servant” in verse 27a, and again the “diner” with Jesus as the table servant in verse 27b. In all these comparisons, the one we think should be in authority and have power are actually seen as weak, and the ones we would typically view as weak or inferior are actually the greatest in the kingdom of God, as evidenced through the example of Jesus Himself.

## Through the Fire

Verses 28 through 30 seem to apply directly to Jesus’ disciples who had followed Him throughout His earthly ministry: “You are those who have stayed with me in my trials, and I assign to you, as my Father assigned to me, a kingdom, that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones judging the twelve

tribes of Israel.” Though there seemed to be a gap between the temptation Jesus experienced from Satan in Luke 4 to the Satanic influence of Judas in Luke 22:3, it appears that there was still a great amount of trial throughout the three years of itinerant preaching and ministering, and the disciples were there with Jesus to experience all of it. As a result they are given authority. At this point, they have been referred to as disciples, but they will soon be *apostles*. Jesus envisions them ruling over a fully unified people, almost as judges. History tells us that they will also pay the ultimate price for their commitment to Jesus by being brutally martyred.

## What About Now?

There are many ways in which this passage might apply today. As a general rule for all Christians, the posture of a follower of Jesus ought to be marked by humility (Phil. 2:3; Col. 3:12; 1 Pet. 5:5). That means that in whatever scenario a believer is in, they ought to see themselves as “the least” of everyone around them and serve them in order to be great. This plays itself out not only through day-to-day interactions, but more likely in closer and more personal relationships such as family, marriage, and close friendships.

Beyond that, there is much to say with regard to leadership in the church. The church is the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:27). The body should operate according to the principles that govern the kingdom of God, and thus church leadership should embody the heart of a servant, the posture of humility, and look the opposite of worldly power. There is a leadership structure in the church. “The one who rules” likely could refer to the office of elder, an office that requires high qualifications that are in tandem with what Jesus describes in Luke 22 (Acts 15:22; 1 Tim. 3; Titus 1). Beyond that, the book of Hebrews demands Christians to joyfully submit to their leadership: “Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.” Accordingly, leaders ought to lead those with whom God has entrusted them through sacrificial service. The pastor or elder should be willing to lay down their own comforts and cares in order to build up the body for the work of the ministry (Eph. 4:12).

## Study Questions

### Day One

1. Read Luke 22:24. What dispute arose among the disciples?

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2. Read Luke 22:25. Who lords their authority over their people, according to Jesus? What are they called?

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### Day Two

1. Read Luke 22:26. Are Jesus’ disciples to lead in the same way the kings of Gentiles lead?

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2. Read Luke 22:26. How are the disciples of Jesus to lead (in contrast to the world)?

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### Day Three

1. Read Luke 22:27. Who does Jesus compare in this passage with regard to greatness? Who has provided the example of a servant?

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2. Read Luke 22:28. Who is Jesus speaking about here? To what does “trials” likely refer?

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### Day Four

1. Read Luke 22:29. What does Jesus assign to them? Based on what?

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2. Read Luke 22:30. What will their reward be? What authority will they have?

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## Week 80 Discussion: The Least

In Luke 22:24-30, Jesus turns over the power structure of the world and re-defines the ones who are “greatest” as the ones who are the youngest or least or most insignificant. Talk as a group about how this mindset would affect your relationships, work, and life in general if you embodied what Jesus describes here.

1. Icebreaker: Are you in any positions of authority? Share with your group.
2. How do you respond when people challenge your authority?
3. When was the last time you served those over which you have been given authority?
4. How does it feel when someone who has authority over you serves you?
5. Are humble leaders more effective leaders than demanding ones?
6. How can the church better embody this leadership model?

## Takeaways:

1. Jesus redefines the greatest in the kingdom as the least or the servant.
2. Jesus promises authority to His disciples who have been through the trials He experienced.