

“Dare to Serve!”
by Rom A. Pegram (6/18/17)

I want to teach you a basic biblical principle today that we'll talk about throughout this message. It's called ... THE GREATNESS PRINCIPLE. If you think about all the great people you've known in your life, most of them had a guiding principle that led their lives. Even Jesus did. Let me give you some other examples, so you'll have a feel for this...

- *Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.* – The Principle of Non-Violence...
- *Mother Teresa* – The Principle of Compassion (Today, we'll look at The Great Compassion.)...
- *Winston Churchill* – The Principle of Persistence (Never, never, never ... give up!)...
- *Vince Lombardi* – The Principle of Winning (Winning isn't everything; It's the only thing!)...
- *Spider Man* – The Principle of Responsibility (With great power comes great responsibility.)...

So, what's going to be the guiding principle for *your* life? And for those who are Christ-followers, what was the guiding principle of *his* life ... and how do we make that a guiding principle in *our* lives?

We're in the midst of a worship series called “Dare to Be Great!”—a study of 3 passages Jesus said were GREAT! And, if we want to be great in God's eyes, we need to learn to live by *this* principle that cuts across all passages—THE GREATNESS PRINCIPLE...

This principle is taught over and over in scripture and we're going to look at some of those verses today. At least a dozen times, Jesus talks about this principle—the one he lived by. *Matthew 23:11* hints at it when Jesus says this: “The greatest among you must be a servant.” THE GREATNESS PRINCIPLE is a summary of all these scriptures that boils down to this: “**When I bless others, God blesses me.**”

This principle is taught time and time again in scripture and I want to challenge you today *to make it a guiding principle in your life*. The truth is, if we miss out on the GREATNESS PRINCIPLE, we're going to miss out on a great deal of what God wants for us! It's the reason many people feel stuck today, in their walk with God—because they're missing The Greatness Principle in their lives! It's really a guiding principle of greatness for how God sees us ... and the guiding principle in Jesus' life...

- ‘When I bless others’... What does that mean?
- And how does ‘God bless me’ in return?

That's where we're going today, as we share *4 ways to live out The Greatness Principle*. Here's number one...

LOOK FOR OPPORTUNITIES TO BLESS OTHERS EACH DAY. If you're going to live out The Greatness Principle, experience this abundant life, and go to that next level in

your faith ... *you've got to be looking for opportunities to bless others!* And those opportunities are all around us, folks...

Have you ever been to Disney World in Florida? If you ever have, one of the things you'll discover is that there're 'hidden Mickeys' all over the place. And you can hear people talking about this when you're waiting in line there. There're hidden in fences, sometimes in signage, sometimes on a billboard, and sometimes in the landscaping. There are literally 1,000 'hidden Mickeys' all throughout Disney World. And, if you have your eyes open, it's quite a game to play with the family—finding all those 'hidden Mickeys' ... and you can!

In a similar way, there are hidden opportunities all around you that God gives you to bless others, but some of us have put blinders on, and we're missing out on kingdom opportunities because we're not looking for them. And this takes us to our key passage today—THE GREAT COMPASSION. Just listen (Matthew 25:31-40, NLT)...

“But when the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit upon his glorious throne. ³² All the nations will be gathered in his presence, and he will separate the people as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. ³³ He will place the sheep at his right hand and the goats at his left. ³⁴ “Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the creation of the world. ³⁵ For I was hungry, and you fed me. I was thirsty, and you gave me a drink. I was a stranger, and you invited me into your home. ³⁶ I was naked, and you gave me clothing. I was sick, and you cared for me. I was in prison, and you visited me.’ ³⁷ “Then these righteous ones will reply, ‘Lord, when did we ever see you hungry and feed you? Or thirsty and give you something to drink? ³⁸ Or a stranger and show you hospitality? Or naked and give you clothing? ³⁹ When did we ever see you sick or in prison and visit you?’ ⁴⁰ “And the King will say, ‘I tell you the truth, when you did it to one of the least of these my brothers and sisters, you were doing it to me!’”

So, we need to be looking for those opportunities to bless others each day. And in this scripture—THE GREAT COMPASSION, Jesus gives us 6 for every day: For I was hungry and you fed me (Food Pantry), I was thirsty and you gave me a drink (Well Ministry), I was a stranger and you invited me into your home (Connections), I was naked and you gave me clothing (Salvation Army or St. Vincent's), I was sick and you cared for me (Caring Ministry) and I was in prison and you visited me (Prison Ministry). When you start opening your eyes, you start seeing things, don't you? The main reason we live with blinders on—at times—can be summed up in one word: SELFISHNESS. We get so caught up in our own worlds (me, too), taking care of our own stuff, that we forget about the rest of the world—some who are in *incredible* need. Philippians 2:3a says, “Don't be selfish....” Instead, LOOK FOR OPPORTUNITIES TO BLESS OTHERS! And, as you look for those opportunities, God's going to lead you to meet *some* of those needs. So, next...

INITIATE ACTION AS GOD GUIDES YOU. I need to teach you something here that's hard to learn, but very important ... and it's this: *Not all opportunities are yours!* Are you with me? When you start looking for opportunities, it's going to be overwhelming. Your heart is going to break... But, the truth is, *you can't do it all!* NOT EVERY OPPORTUNITY YOU SEE IS A COMMAND FROM GOD TO PARTICIPATE! You're one person. I'm one person. We're one church. We can't meet every opportunity. BUT ... don't let the overwhelming feeling of not being able to meet all opportunities keep you from taking advantage of *some* opportunities...

So, let me ask you: *How's your prayer life?* If you're going to live by The Greatness Principle, you've got to learn to pray about opportunities that come your way! We may be just a small church right now; we may not be able to do 50 things a year, but we can do 5! What I'm saying is ... YOU CAN'T DO EVERYTHING, BUT YOU CAN DO SOME THINGS! In Psalm 32:8 we hear, "The LORD says, 'I will guide you along the best pathway for your life. I will advise you and watch over you.'" God, do you want me to do that? There's the question. The answer will either be ... yes, no, or slow! INITIATE ACTION AS GOD GUIDES YOU! Then...

FOCUS THE ATTENTION TOWARD GOD. This is a quick teaching, but an important one. As you start serving others—blessing others in that way, people will look to you with gratitude because you're doing a good thing. But, here's what you want to do: YOU WANT TO TRANSFER THE CREDIT AND GLORY TO GOD!

It's not that you can't take the compliment; it's not false humility. You did something; you served. But, we also need to praise God, thank God, letting others know *it is really God who is doing this good thing through us...*

Matthew 23:11-12 says: "The greatest among you must be a servant. ¹² But those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted." What you don't want to say is, "Look at how great a servant I am!" The minute you do, I'll guarantee you ... *you're in for some humbling...*

When we come together to worship each week, every single person who's helping lead in worship better know they are SERVING! That's what we do here. Jesus said in John 12:26: "Anyone who wants to be my disciple must follow me, because my servants must be where I am. And the Father will honor anyone who serves me." It's all about service, folks ... with our attention firmly on God! But, when we do these things, we need to (finally)...

EXPECT GOD TO BLESS YOU. The Greatness Principle says, "**When I bless others, God blesses me.**" You open your eyes and look for opportunities to bless others every day—in your neighborhood, in your home, at work; then you say, "God, which ones do you want me to get involved in?"—you pray about it, knowing you can't meet 'em all, but some; then, as we're doing that and get involved, *we give God the glory*; we give God the credit ... AND THEN LOOK WHAT HAPPENS. When you live out THE GREATNESS PRINCIPLE, *God will bless you!* If you bless others, then God's going to

bless you—a biblical principle we need to learn, as followers of Jesus. And it works with our finances, too, by the way; Luke 6:38 (NLT) says, “Give, and you will receive. Your gift will return to you in full—pressed down, shaken together to make room for more, running over, and poured into your lap. The amount you give will determine the amount you get back”—always more than what you give with God...

Folks, there're FOUR WAYS GOD will BLESS YOU: First, there are *tangible blessings*. In story after story, someone gave their last \$10 to God ... and then through a series of circumstances, they received that \$10 back ... and more! Now, I CAN'T PROMISE TANGIBLE BLESSINGS every time, but what I can promise is this: *intangible blessings*. I want you to get this: *Your blessing is not always tangible*—not always something you can hold in your hand, but I can promise you that *if you bless others, God will bless you*; it may be *intangible*—like the satisfaction of knowing you did the right thing (God wired us to feel really good about that). Then, there's also the blessing of *greater influence*. You start serving in one way or another, then you have greater influence in your church/community. And, finally, another way God may bless us is through *visible miracles*. Have you ever spoken to someone who's having a bad day, and then you can see—*on their face*—their whole day changed? That's a visible miracle, folks—when you see someone's entire attitude turn around...

There're many ways we can bless others ... and many ways God'll bless us in return. And no verse captures THE GREATNESS PRINCIPLE quite like Proverbs 11:25 (MSG), so let me close with that today: “The one who blesses others is abundantly blessed; those who help others are helped.” So, here's some homework: When you get home, think about today's message and ask yourself: How can I apply The Greatness Principle to my church? How could you be a blessing to others through your church? How can I apply The Greatness Principle to my family? Don't forget to bless those closest to you—your spouse, your children, your parents, etc. How can I apply The Greatness Principle to my community, and the world? And don't forget your possessions, too; The Greatness Principle also works there ... and we'll talking more about that aspect of our discipleship soon...

You may be thinking about now, “Rom, that's great for others, but not for me. I'm no Martin Luther King, Jr. ... or Mother Teresa ... or Spider Man!” But, folks, just remember Jesus' words recorded in Matthew 5:16 (NLT): “In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father.” Every day, folks, let's look for ways to ‘let our light shine’—that God might be glorified, others might be blessed ... and that God may bless us in return. DARE TO SERVE! *I dare you!*