

Status Conscious Matthew 18v1-4 & 1 Peter 5v1-11

We're continuing the theme of glory—Jesus' glory as King, and God calling us to see and share in that glory. There's a longing for significance and glory in our hearts, and we often see other people's attempts to build their own status and identity more clearly than we see our own. Looking first and foremost to other people for affirmation can leave us feeling insecure, jealous or bitter. We long for something more stable and more deeply satisfying. In John 5v44, Jesus implies that looking for and relying on "glory from one another" can be spiritually very harmful.

1) The Honour We Seek (Matthew 18v1-4)

Three of the disciples (Peter, James and John) have recently seen Jesus' glory revealed in his transfiguration, but the disciples still want a glory that is for and from themselves (18v1). Perhaps the other nine disciples are jealous. But Jesus says "unless you become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven" (v3). He says this isn't optional if we're to know him. He's urging us, not to be childish, but to be child-like in the way we relate to God: dependent, self-forgetful, not looking for worldly status, and looking outwards in delight to the glory of the Lord. It isn't that we need to think less of ourselves or beat ourselves up (that's not humility), it's that we need to think of ourselves less! *Considering the picture of the child in the sunshine, how does Jesus' teaching here open a way to delighting in God and his Kingdom?*

2) The Honour We're Given (1 Peter 5v1-11)

The apostle Peter was an eye-witness of the revealing of Jesus' glory on that high mountain (Matt 17v2-8, 2 Peter 1v16-18), and was also an eye-witness of the sufferings of Jesus (1 Peter 5v1). Writing here, Peter is no longer interested in pecking order—he describes himself as a "fellow elder" (5v1). There is a greater glory coming, which is "about to be revealed" (5v1), in which Peter, the Christians he was writing to and we will all share together. The word "glory" in the Old Testament carries the sense of weightiness. There is a glory coming that will not disappoint. When Jesus, the Chief Shepherd and King, appears in his glory, he will give a "crown of glory", not just to elders, but to all who are relying on his rule (5v4, Revelation 2v10).

Pause to drink in the wonderful, mind-blowing truth of v10: the God of all grace and kindness has called you to share his eternal glory in Christ (see also 2 Thessalonians 2v14)! The glory God gives, the honour only God can give, frees us all to be humble towards one another (1 Peter 5v5), whether as leaders/ elders serving sacrificially as under-shepherds (5v3) or in different roles in the fellowship (5v5). Again, the spiritual importance of child-like humility is paramount, because God opposes the proud (v5). When we accept and rely on the honour Jesus gives, we have nothing left to prove!

It's when we're really suffering (v7, v9) that we feel anything but glorious, and so can be tempted to seek relief and a "kick" from false glories. God urges us here to be sober-minded and alert to this, recognising the reality of the devil (v8), and resisting him firmly through faith in Jesus (v9), putting ourselves, child-like, under the hand of God (v6), whose power, care and grace are far stronger. God promises then to lift us up (v6, v11). He is the God who strengthens us and makes us stand firm (v10), and who will surely raise us in power, in permanence and in glory.

