

Rock Us: 5-8 The Greatest

There are many things in life that are good (a good cheeseburger, a good summer vacation). But then there are great things (a great cheeseburger, a great summer vacation). But beyond the great are those things that are head-&-shoulders above all else- we call them **The Greatest**. Many of these greatest things are debatable (many, like *Five Guys*, claim to have the greatest cheeseburger). Let's look at others. Who is basketball's greatest: Jordan, Kareem, LeBron, Magic, Wilt? At an incredible 30.1 points per game, 6 Championship titles & MVP honors, Michael Jordan simply eclipses the pack, making a solid case for being **the greatest**. How about baseball's **greatest**: A-Rod, Albert Pujols, Barry Bonds, Lou Gehrig, Ty Cobb, Babe Ruth? Again, there seems to be a clear case for The Babe: a ground-breaking home-run hitter who changed baseball forever & a very talented pitcher (12th best in all-time win-loss%). Babe Ruth is also credited with **the greatest** (longest documented) home run ever: hit 575 feet in 1921. Virtually every baseball historian credits Babe Ruth being **the greatest** baseball player of all time.

Greatness is something we all want to some extent. If I offered you a good cheeseburger from Burger King, a great one from Five Guys or the "Chubby Ninja", or the **greatest** one expertly prepared right in front of you by Chef Gordon Ramsay himself, what would you choose??? C'mon, you gotta go for the Gordoburger!!!! Summer vacation can be the same: good = car trips to Knoebel's, Hershey Park & NJ beach; great = fly to Myrtle Beach, Disney World & the Grand Canyon; greatest = 1st-class, all-inclusive round-the-world cruise to Hawaii, Tahiti, Australia/NZ, Tokyo, Kenya, Greece & Rio... with Gordon Ramsey as your personal chef the whole time.

Greatness is also something we admire, something we often seek or emulate. Think of all the kids who buy Nike Jordan's, millions of them are hoping to be great NBA players someday. And greatness is something we should all want in our lives as well.

But I think in life, we often aim low, saying "I want a good life, I'll be happy with that...". We settle for less than the greatest. But it doesn't have to be this way. We can be the greatest, we can have the greatest- but not as the world determines it. Jesus taught that the world's standards for determining a great life really don't amount to anything & leave us empty. Jesus Christ totally flipped the definition of greatness upside-down. Jesus taught that greatness isn't about titles, awards, accolades, wealth, possession, pride, political power. All of these things fade. Everyone currently knows about today's greatest stars: Beyonce & The Rock & LeBron James. But have you ever heard of Jenny Lind, Maurice Barrymore or Cap Anson (generally forgotten stars of the 1800s)? The lesson is that one day, the "greatest" of today will be forgotten too. That's why Jesus taught about storing eternal treasure in heaven. **Mt 6:19-21** "Don't store up treasures here on earth, where moths eat them and rust destroys them, and where thieves break in and steal. Store your treasures in heaven, where moths and rust cannot destroy, and thieves do not break in and steal. Wherever your treasure is, there the desires of your heart will also be." In **Mt 16:26** Jesus said, "And what do you benefit if you gain the whole world but lose your own soul? Is anything worth more than your soul?"

Jesus taught us about true greatness: being a humble servant, loving God & loving people with everything you've got. **Mt 22:37-39** Jesus replied, "You must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind." This is the first and greatest commandment. A second is equally important: "Love your neighbor as yourself." **Mk 10:31** But many who are the greatest now will be least important then, and those who seem least important now will be the greatest then.

But how do we know how to be the **greatest**? Well, we simply need to look at Jesus, the perfect example of **greatness**. He is the greatest example of how to live the greatest life. Jesus shows us how to be the greatest friend, greatest teacher, great person of compassion, greatest healer, greatest servant. Jesus shows the greatest love, is the greatest teacher, the greatest victor, and the greatest power.

Jesus offers us the greatest life here and now, and He offers us the greatest after-life. **1Cor 2:9b** "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has imagined what God has prepared for those who love Him." That's Heaven, the place of eternal joy that awaits those who trust in Jesus as Lord & Savior.

I want to encourage you tonight. True **greatness** is available through the life-changing power & love of Jesus Christ. And Jesus even said this, "I tell you the truth, anyone who believes in Me will do the same works I have done, and even greater works, because I am going to be with the Father" (**Jn 14:12**). According to Jesus Himself, we will do even greater things that He did! Yes, true, eternally greatness is available through Jesus!

So tonight I challenge us all (me included) to ask these three questions:

- 1.) How am I defining **greatness**? Is it by the world's standards or by God's Kingdom standard?
- 2.) Do I want to be **the greatest** as defined by Jesus by being a humble, God-honoring, people-loving servant? Or am I settling for less?
- 3.) If I want to follow Jesus and walk in step with His **greatness**, what needs to change?

Summer's coming up, and a lot of people are going to have a good summer. You'll go to the pool a lot, play a lot of video games, go to the beach, maybe hit an amusement park or go on a vacation. But you could have **the greatest summer ever**, something much more eternally significant than the round-the-world mega-cruise with Chef Gordon. Your **greatest summer ever** could be you could stay connected with Jesus (why don't you come to *One* here on Wed nights?). You could grow in your relationship with God by putting down the phone & game controller, picking up the Bible & praying more. You could come out to *Creation Fest*. You could do random loving things for your family & neighbors. You could join us on *Reach Out*, serving in the Name of Jesus for a week in our area. You could tell some lost friends or family about the Good News of Jesus. That sort of summer has the potential to be the **greatest** ever!

BIBLE SCRIPTURES

Mt 6:19-21 "Don't store up treasures here on earth, where moths eat them and rust destroys them, and where thieves break in and steal. Store your treasures in heaven, where moths and rust cannot destroy, and thieves do not break in and steal. Wherever your treasure is, there the desires of your heart will also be."

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1Cor 2:9b "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has imagined what God has prepared for those who love Him."

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. So have you ever heard of Jenny Lind, Maurice Barrymore or Cap Anson before tonight? What do you think will become of today's pop stars?
2. Name someone who our society considers to be the greatest today? Why are they considered to be so great?
3. Read **Mt 6:19-21**, **Mt 16:26** & **Mt 22:37-39**. How does Jesus' definition of greatness compare with the world's definition? Who's right & why?
4. Read **Mk 10:31**. Jesus takes greatness even further in this verse. How do you interpret this verse?
5. Jesus Christ is simply The Greatest. How can becoming more like Him & following Him help to make us greater?
6. Read **Jn 14:12** & **1Cor 2:9b**. Great things await us in Jesus. Let's wrap up tonight by reflecting on 3 personal questions about greatness.
 - A.) How am I defining **greatness**? Is it by the world's standards or by God's Kingdom standard?
 - B.) Do I want to be **the greatest** as defined by Jesus by being a humble, God-honoring, people-loving servant? Or am I settling for less?
 - C.) If I want to follow Jesus and walk in step with His **greatness**, what needs to change?

CLOSING PRAYER: Lord Jesus, You alone are truly great. Thank You for your great love & sacrifice. Thank You for showing us what true greatness is: being a humble & loving servant of God & people. Change us to be more like You. Empower us to do great thing for Your Kingdom. Amen.