

# NEW BEGINNINGS LUTHERAN CHURCH

Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost – September 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2022 (11:11 am)

## G.O.A.T

Psalm 54  
Jeremiah 11:18-20  
James 3:13-4:10  
**Mark 9:30-37**

### ***Our Father Cares for His Children with the Gospel of His Son***

The sinful heart is filled with *"bitter jealousy and selfish ambition"* (James 3:14), which causes hostility, quarrels and conflicts, even among those who are fellow members of the Body of Christ. This should not be so! Rather, God *"opposes the proud"* with His Law, in order to humble them unto repentance; He *"gives grace to the humble,"* in order to exalt them by His Gospel of forgiveness (James 4:6-10). This true *"wisdom from above"* is found in the gentleness, mercy and peace of our Lord, Jesus Christ, who humbled Himself and sacrificed Himself for the salvation of sinners (James 3:17). He was *"like a gentle lamb led to the slaughter,"* committing Himself to God, His Father, *"who judges righteously, who tests the heart and the mind"* (Jer. 11:19-20). Therefore, *"after three days,"* His Father exalted Him by raising Him from the dead (Mark 9:31). In Holy Baptism, He takes disciples of all ages into His arms like little children. In receiving Him through repentance and faith in His forgiveness of sins, they receive from His Father a share in the glory of His cross and resurrection (Mark 9:36-37).

Do you know what G.O.A.T. means? Well, it is a well known acronym in the sports circles. Sports fans like to discuss who is the Greatest Of All Time. In soccer, football, hockey, etc...

What are the criteria one can employ to decide that? Would it be the number of trophies? Or career stats? Or world fame? Or...?

Jesus disciples engaged in a similar discussion, as the Gospel for today reports. They were discussing about the G.O.A.D. – Greatest of all the Disciples.

A good occasion for Jesus to teach them something essential in the Kingdom of God.

### **1- G.O.A.D**

One may be wondering: which could have been the criteria they were taking into consideration for that purpose? Closeness to Jesus? Have being chosen to special occasions (Transfiguration, for example)? The first ones to be called?

What I am 99,9% sure about their criteria is that they were all *human*. Just like we do. In our day, we would maybe talk about number of Services attended, number of committees in which we serve, amount of our monthly offerings...

The smartest, the tallest, the richest,...that's how we give credit and honor humanly speaking. Sometimes it is ok (honor to whom honor is deserved). But many times it is not. Many times this is the entry door to heavier personality drugs: pride, insensitivity, arrogance and despair.

## **2 – G.O.D**

Jesus asks about the topic. They were ashamed. Silence in the room. Finally, one of them answers.

Jesus sits down to teach – here comes a core, fundamental teaching for the life inside the Kingdom of God.

***If you want to be the first, be the last. Go and serve your neighbour.***

Now, the surprise here lies in the fact that Jesus does not condemn their ambition of pursuing to be the first. He actually *encourages* it. The difference is that the means are completely different from our human criteria.

For example, having a humble and servant heart doesn't mean *playing the victim*. At all.

The criteria to be the G.O.A.D doesn't come from the world, but from GOD.

Serve, Sacrifice, Service, self-denial sometimes.

What is being fought against here? *Pride*. A man is quite incapable of learning humility in a position of superiority, if he did not refrain from acting proudly when he was in a position of subjection. It is very easy to get used to applause and compliments, therefore, Jesus' warning is especially needed.

Also, we must notice that Jesus is not making this an individualistic contest. Go and serve so one of you can be singled out as the G.O.A.D. The very definition of serving implies other people around us. The First of us is the one who serves the congregation, the community, people created by God and for which Jesus shed his blood. Individual action and community interaction are not opposed but completely.

Jesus is not talking about abstractions, but from experience. This is the way Jesus became the G.O.A.T., and forever will be. The Servant. His Suffering. His Service. LOVE.

**He is the G.O.A.T and the LAMB.**

### 3 – GOAL

Our goal as we put faith into action is to be the G.O.A.D. by serving. Jesus encourages you: **be the first**. Go into the world and strive to be the first by serving our neighbour and pointing to Him,

One of the ways we can serve in Jesus name: To receive a child in His name.

Yes, an actual child. This is not only an illustration about the “Children in faith”, people who are newcomers to the Church. Jesus took an actual Child in his lap. It was not a picture, or a video. It was a Child. We are committed to treat children well, to provide for their needs. Inside the womb, outside the womb. Inside the family, outside the family. And so forth.

The Greatest of all time (G.O.A.T.) is **Jesus**.

He is GOD and our connection to GOD.

He encourages you to be the G.O.A.D. (The Greatest of all Disciples)

But he provides you with the GOAL: **Serve God and people in His name.**