



# CANYON HILLS

COMMUNITY CHURCH

Series: Mark

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## True Greatness

Pastor Koby Orr

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I'm going to ask you to get your Bibles open to Mark, chapter 10. As you do, the question I want to lead off with today is... *What does it mean to be truly great?* What is true greatness? Greatness is something to which, I think, deep down, we all aspire. We see what the world calls greatness all around us: celebrities with more money than they know what to do with, powerful people with nice cars and houses all over the world...

The world would tell us the truly great are the ones who have the most money, stuff, friends, and fans, and yet it's interesting to me that while these people seem to have everything, so many of them are miserable. They routinely abuse drugs and alcohol, searching for a peace and happiness they can't find.

They trade spouses like we upgrade iPhones. Suicide has become commonplace as these people pursue a happiness that always seems to elude them. I think, with an honest evaluation, we may question whether or not what the world calls great is truly great. So, I would ask you again, what is true greatness?

In our passage this morning, we get a front-row seat for a situation in which Jesus' disciples wrestle with this exact question. Jesus takes the opportunity to reshape the way they view greatness, and my hope and my prayer for all of us, as we study God's Word today, is that our view would be reshaped as well. So, with that, I'm going to ask you all to get to your feet as we read together Mark, chapter 10, beginning in verse 35.

**"And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came up to him and said to him, 'Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you.' And he said to them, 'What do you want me to do for you?' And they said to him, 'Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory.'**

**Jesus said to them, 'You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?' And they said to him, 'We are able.' And Jesus said to them, 'The cup that I drink you will drink, and**

**with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized, but to sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared.'**

**And when the ten heard it, they began to be indignant at James and John. And Jesus called them to him and said to them, 'You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.'**" Let's pray.

Lord, we are thankful for you Word, which is your truth. I pray, Lord, that you'd soften our hearts to hear what you have to teach us. God, I pray that we would be changed people as we walk away from this place in the next hour as a direct result of your Word being applied to us. God, I pray that you'd give me wisdom and clarity of thought, that your Word would be preached today and not mine. In Christ's name, amen.

I've been accused over a few things over the course of my life. One I hope will never be an accusation is overcomplicating things, so I'm trying to keep this as simple as we possibly can. We're going to break this passage down into three sections. We're going to look at the *problem* that was presented to Jesus, the *solution* that Jesus presented in response to that problem, and then ultimately the *example* Jesus sets for us.

1. *The problem: Pride.* The problem is pride. You see, James and John had bought into the lie that true greatness was achieved through self-exaltation. They believed that to be great they had to be at the top of the pecking order, and they knew since Jesus was clearly *the* guy, they would never be *the* guy. The next best place to be would be standing next to *the* guy.

Boiled down to its simplest form, what we're dealing with, what we're seeing here, is pride. So, before we go any further, we have to define what we mean by *pride*. *Pride* was defined by Dr. Stuart Scott in his booklet, titled *From Pride to Humility*, as "...a focus on self and the service of self, a pursuit of self-recognition and self-exaltation, and a desire to control and use all things for self." With that as our definition, we are going to see that pride is dripping all over this text, beginning right in verse 35.

The disciples James and John lead off with this statement. **"Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you."** Now, how many of you in the room are parents? Show of hands. Okay, so, in my experience as a parent, when my child has made a statement like this one, it's not generally because they assume my answer is going to be favorable. They usually ask this question or make this statement in hopes that my answer will be abnormal, that I might say yes.

So, putting this in perspective, James and John go to Jesus, the Son of God, and they say, "Jesus, whatever we ask, we want you to say yes." They were trying to get a blind affirmative to whatever they were going to ask of him. That's pride.

Jesus responds and he says, "Okay, well, what do you want me to do for you?" They say, "Okay, Jesus. When you come into your kingdom, we want one of us to be sitting at your right and one of us to be sitting at your left. I'm sure you'll make the right choice as to which one goes where, but we'd like to be those guys."

This reflected a common practice in the ancient times of when the people who sat on the right and the left of a king or a ruler sat in a place of power and prestige. See, the disciples believed Jesus was coming into an earthly kingdom. They did not yet understand everything that was about to happen. They thought he was coming to establish a political reign and drive out the Romans, and this kingdom would begin on earth, and they wanted the positions of power and prestige next to him. That was pride.

Then, Jesus says, "You don't know what you're asking. Are you able to drink the cup I'm about to drink? Are you able to be baptized in the way I am about to be baptized?" Essentially, he's asking them, "Are you ready to suffer in the ways I am about to suffer?" In their blind pride, they essentially said, "Yup. Jesus, if you can do it, we can do it. Sign us up." Pride.

That's a lot of pride, just for James and John, but that's not all the pride that's being dredged to the surface in this passage. Now we get introduced to the other 10. Take a look at verse 41. **"And when the ten heard it, they began to be indignant at James and John."** Now, let's just appreciate the brilliance of what's taking place here. James and John had just said everything up to this point within earshot of the other 10. This is not a wise decision if you're looking to keep friends around.

So, the other 10 disciples hear what's being asked and they were furious. It says they were indignant. They were greatly grieved, but here's the thing. They weren't grieved because their internal sense of spiritual humility had been violated. They're mad because James and John got there first. They saw James and John moving to the front of the line for a position that they ultimately felt they deserved.

Let's remember, just one chapter ago, all of the disciples were caught arguing in the presence of the sinless Son of God as to who was the greatest. These men are not bastions of humility at this stage in their lives. They were upset that someone else might receive the promotion that deep down they all believed they deserved.

This problem is not unique to just the disciples. In fact, it's the position I believe we all naturally find ourselves in. We see it right from birth, right? We see this even in our children. A child's early development is mostly spent establishing what belongs to them and what doesn't belong to you. It's just hardwired into us as people.

I remember my oldest two, Dallas and Declan. They were having dinner at a friend's house a while back. Over the course of the dinner, the lady feeding them said, "Hey, what do you want to be when you grow up?" Declan very quickly answered, "I want to be a worship leader like my dad." Awesome. Cool dad moment! Dallas' answer was a little more honest. She said, "I would like to be a queen so everyone else can be my servants and do my work for me."

We would probably not say that out loud, right? Yet I think if we were to honestly evaluate our internal monologues, it would probably reveal that that's us more than we care to admit. See, it's easy for us to sit back and pass judgment on these disciples. We see Jesus. We see the full picture and we think, "Guys, what are you doing? We would never say something like that in front of Jesus."

I would ask us to just stop and honestly ask ourselves the question, what in our history suggests we would behave any differently? I'll be honest. In the course of studying for this passage, I've had to look at my history and I see myself written all over this narrative.

Sometimes I'm James and John. Sometimes I really do just want people to think more of me. I want people to perceive me in a certain way, even if it's not true. I want people to like me. I want to be elevated among my peers. Sometimes, I'm one of the other 10 and I'm just upset that someone else is getting something I want.

If you're like me, I think you will admit and recognize that it is our natural inclination to believe, as the disciples did, that true greatness is found in our own exaltation. Jesus recognizes what's truly happening here, what the real problem is, which is pride. Then, he presents...

2. *The lesson: Humility.* The lesson Jesus teaches us here is one of humility. Verse 42: "**And Jesus called them to him and said to them, 'You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all.'**"

Jesus is saying that in order to be truly great, we must abandon the pursuit of our own glory and humbly serve God and everyone else around us. Now, there are two quick things I want us to key in on here in Jesus' response before we move on.

A. *Whoever would be great must be a servant and a slave.* Whoever would be truly great must be a servant and a slave. These two words were chosen very carefully by Jesus. To be a servant is literally to be one who waits on tables. If you've ever worked in food service, you know exactly what this is like. Your entire job is to stand by and try to anticipate the needs of your patrons. If they ask for anything, it's your job to get there and provide it as quickly as possible. That is the attitude of those who are truly great.

The second word is a little more aggressive. It's the word *slave*. To be a slave is to be the actual property of another person. A slave has no rights of their own, period. A slave's entire existence is built around providing for and serving their master. They don't get the luxury of thinking about themselves at all. These are the two words Jesus uses. He says the truly great will be servants and they will be slaves.

B. *We are to be servants and slaves to everyone.* This is kind of the kicker, at least for me. Whoever would be great must be a servant and a slave to everyone. See, we, in our pride, have a

hard time seeing ourselves as slaves to anyone, especially here in America, but when pressed, we will comply. We will serve those who we feel deserve to be served.

I, as an employee, will obey and serve my boss because ultimately, my boss pays my check, right? I will serve people whom I respect. I'll serve people I want to have like me. I'll serve people I want to be like, because there's something in that for me, but Jesus offers no such qualifier to his command. He says we are to be servants and slaves to everyone.

That means we serve all of our family, the ones who are loveable and the ones who are more difficult to love. It means we'll serve all of our friends. It means we'll serve all of our coworkers. Even if they work for us and under us, we will serve them. It means we will serve complete strangers, treating them as more important than us. This is what being truly great in the kingdom of God looks like.

Jesus taught a lesson that flies in the face of everything the world has taught us. The truly great are not the ones who, in their pride, seek their own exaltation, but the truly great are the ones who seek the exaltation of everyone else around them. After recognizing the problem, which was pride, and after teaching the lesson, which was humility, he points to himself as the ultimate example.

3. *Jesus is our example.* Verse 45: "**For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.**" Jesus, like any good leader, leads not only by instruction, but he then leads by example. In this case, he is truly the ultimate example. Have you ever stopped to consider the humility of God?

We talk a lot about God's attributes. We talk about his holiness, righteousness, wrath, wisdom, and power. We very rarely talk about his humility. One of the reasons for that is pretty much everything we see about God seems to be the opposite of humility. When you really stop to think about it, everything in the universe was created for one purpose and one purpose only, and that's to bring him glory.

He's not about you. He's not about us. He's not about our happiness, joy, or fulfillment. He is first and only about his glory and his fulfillment. Yet this is what makes the humility of Christ so remarkable, because here's the truth. All of us, our one purpose, the one thing we all share, is that our only reason for being here on earth is to simply be a mirror of God's glory back to him.

So, we find Jesus, the Son of God who created all things, the Jesus who currently sustains all things, who deserves all praise and all glory forever and ever... He came not to be served, though he deserves to be served, but to serve. This is Jesus, the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords, who came to earth and was born in a stable to peasant carpenters in the middle of nowhere. This is Jesus, who spent his entire life being accused by the men who should have known better than anybody who he actually was and what he actually deserved.

This is Jesus, who, on the night he was betrayed, got down on his knees and washed the feet of all of his disciples. That included the disciple who was about to deny him three times to save his

own skin before the rooster even crowed the next day. This included the disciple who was on his way out the door to betray him to his death. This is Jesus. This is the Jesus who willingly went to the cross to die for you and me. Hebrews 12 says he went for the joy that was set before him.

Ultimately, it was for the glory of God, but he died, and here's the thing. He did not go to the cross thinking, "Hey, once I do this, these people are going to get it. They're going to start serving each other. They're going to stop sinning." He knows us too well for that. He knew we were going to need new mercy each and every morning, and yet he still went to the cross so we would be met with new mercy every morning. This is Jesus. This is the humble King who invites us into relationship with him.

I just want to stop for a moment. If you are here today and you are not a Christian, you need to understand this is the God who is calling out to you. He's not some tyrannical egomaniac who just wants to enslave you. He's the God who served you with an ultimate humility. He loved you too much to let you be at the center of your universe, because he knows all too well that the only place we find true satisfaction is when we are serving him.

We, in our pride, cannot occupy a space that belongs to him alone. All of history attests to this truth. When man lives at the center of man's universe, we are both miserable and we do horrible things to our fellow man. Every theft, unkind word, murder, shooting, rape, and abortion... It all happened because someone worshiped themselves over worshiping God.

Jesus says, "Would you please just put me at the center? Would you let me love you? Would you let me serve you? Serve me. Serve my people. Serve my church and you will be truly great." This is who Jesus is, and this is what he has called us to.

Here's the big idea. If you walk away with one thing today, this is what I hope it is. In light of the pride that runs rampant in all of our lives and in light of the humility we've been called to and the example Jesus has set, your true greatness can objectively be measured by your service. If you want to know how truly great you are, look at how you serve. That's what Jesus is saying here. If you are truly great, the habits of your life, your service, will confirm that. However, if you desire to make much of yourself, your habits will expose you in that as well.

Let's just spend a few moments looking at what this may look like on a practical level. As always, whenever I've gotten the opportunity to preach, whatever I'm preaching on, the Lord is faithful to show me where I'm failing. He starts to refine those hard edges off of me. I just realized as I was preparing for this that the place where pride most commonly shows up in my life is between the hours of 5:30 in the evening and 8:30 in the evening, and it's no coincidence that that's the time I walk in my house from work and the time the kids are all down and asleep.

See, me and my pride... All too often, when I go home at night, I go home thinking I'm going to get a break after a long day at work. I'm going to walk in that door, all four of my children are going to greet me with joy. They are going to wait for wisdom from their benevolent father. They're going to do everything I ask the first time I ask them, not the second or the third time I ask them.

They're not going to fight. They're not going to bicker. They're not going to do anything that would annoy me. My wife is going to have the house already clean and dinner is going to be on the table. When dinner is done, she's going to invite me to sit down and watch Thursday Night Football as she puts the kids to bed so I can recover.

Those things aren't necessarily evil desires in and of themselves. The problem, and where my pride shows up, is when that doesn't happen. Hear me say that doesn't happen. The problem comes when my attitude becomes that of anger, frustration, impatience, and irritability. Those nights don't generally end with us as a family being happy. Those nights end with me praying, "God, I don't want *this* to be what my kids remember when I die." The Lord has really gotten on my case.

If I were truly humble, the humble Koby would walk in that door when he gets home from work and he would immediately start looking for opportunities to serve his wife, remembering that his wife has been with these children for the last nine hours and hasn't had a real adult conversation since yesterday. I'm going to go in there and immediately ask what diapers need to be changed and what messes need to be cleaned up.

When dinner is done, I'm going to anticipate that need and do the dishes before she asks me to do them. This is what serving my family would look like. When my kids want to wrestle at the end of the night, I would put aside the project I wanted to get done and just get on the floor and wrestle with them.

If I walk my humble road right, I should go to bed at night exhausted because my life has been poured out for those I care about most. I really do pray that by the end of my life, the new man has shown up more than the old man. I don't know what that looks like in your life. Maybe you can identify with me. Maybe it's not you, but I have a couple of other questions for you.

How much do you talk about yourself? When you're in conversation with people, do you spend more time talking or asking questions? When other people are talking, are you listening or are you just thinking about what you're going to say next? See, one of those habits would reveal you're about making much of other people. One would say you're making much of you.

Is your life marked by anger or is it marked by patience or forgiveness? See, anger is usually always rooted in pride. You and I rarely get to call the righteous anger card. Most of the time, when anger shows up in our lives, it's because we feel like we're not getting something we deserve. Right?

Here's the thing about deserving. What you and I actually deserve is eternity separated from God in hell, so anything short of that we should be calling gravy. If God can deal with my cosmic treason on a daily basis, I can be patient with my kids, can't I? The truly great person is quick to forgive and overlook offenses because they remember that of which they've been forgiven.

Are you quick to point out the sins or shortcomings of others? Sometimes we do this out loud to other people and sometimes we just entertain these thoughts in our own minds. Are you so heartbroken over your own sin that you don't have time to play judge of anybody else's?

When someone else gets blessed or promoted or gets that house, that car, or that spouse you wanted, are you excited for them or are you bitter? Do you downplay other people's success and blessing or are you leading the charge in their celebration?

See, Jesus has presented to us here two very clear paths to greatness. The choice is up to us. You can choose to pursue greatness as the world pursues it, and living in this area of America, you might find it. That's not impossible. You might be rich. You might have a lot of friends. My question for you is, at the end of the day, what difference does it make?

A hundred years from now, no one is going to remember your name. A hundred years from now, no one is going to remember what you accomplished at work. If you're lucky, your photo will still be in someone's photo album, and hopefully, that photo album won't be in the attic, or, with the way my generation and the next generation goes, your photo is going to be on some random hard drive stuffed somewhere that's no longer compatible with today's computers. You're gone.

What will you choose? You can choose greatness as the world pursues it or you can choose greatness as Jesus defines it. You can pour your life out in the service of his people and at the end of the day, you will stand in judgment before almighty God and you will hear those words that every Christian longs to hear: "Well done, good and faithful servant. Enter into the joy of your Master." The question facing you today is, what will you choose? Will you choose temporary greatness or will you choose eternal greatness?

Your homework for today... The Seahawks don't play until tomorrow night, so I know you have some time. Here's what I want you to do. I want you to write this down. You are going to make, when you get home, a practical service list. Write that down. I tried to come up with something more creative and catchy than that, but I'm not overcomplicating it.

On this practical service list, you're going to write out three categories I'm about to give you. Under each category, you're going to write out as many ways you can practically get to work serving the people in your life. You don't have to do all of them. You just have to get started. The idea is to be serving more tomorrow than you did yesterday.

First, *home*. Write that down. Guys, this is where it all begins. How can you serve the people in your home to the point that it costs you? Service is not about convenience. I would recommend sitting down with your family members and asking them, "What is the best way I can serve you?" because you want to make sure you're serving in a way that actually blesses them.

I learned this the hard way. A couple of years back, I preached a message on what it meant to be a godly husband. Over the course of preparing that message, the Lord showed me I was not serving my wife the way I should be serving her. So, I was diligent. I got to work. I wrote out my things and I started serving her.



About a week into it, I made the mistake of asking her if she noticed any difference. Her answer was something to the effect of, "Oh, I didn't know you were working on that." Here's the thing. That's not because I wasn't trying. I was trying. It's not because she's ungrateful. She is grateful. I was just serving her in a bunch of ways that were not blessing her. It's about finding out what actually blesses.

Actually, the Lord kind of humbled me in this as well, because as I'm preparing for this message and I'm thinking about that story, I'm like, "Yeah! Nailed that!" Yesterday, doing dishes, like a good servant husband, I'm talking to my wife about today and I'm like, "Hey, this is what I'm preaching on. By the way, how do you feel I'm doing at serving you?" She goes, "Oh, you're fine."

I'm like, "Fine? Let's unpack *fine*, because in my mind, I've been working my tail off. What do you mean by fine?" She goes, "Well, you know, there's good seasons and less-good seasons." I'm like, "Baby, I have to know what season we're in right now before I go on stage tomorrow. Fill me in." She goes, "Ah, you're doing all right." So, I am also doing this homework assignment when we get home, because I have not nailed this.

We're all in this together. That's where it starts. Men, where do you serve your wives? Wives, how do you serve your husbands? Children, how can you serve your parents? Parents, how can you serve your children? You have to be open about this.

I want to share with you just a couple of hero stories along the way. There's a family in our church who are almost neighbors to us. They're Meg and Jay Oestreich. I'm not going to point them out because they're in the room right now and it would freak them out. Here's the deal. We were over at their house for dinner a couple of years ago, and Meg, just in passing, made a comment. It was something like, "Man, I don't remember the last time I emptied the dishwasher."

That was awesome. That's a way her boys and her husband were blessing her. I don't know if they're doing that now. I don't know if they're still doing that, but they were at that point in time, and it wasn't because she was raging about hating doing the dishes. They just blessed her. That's what I'm talking about. This is not rocket science. You can do simple things to serve the people in your homes.

Secondly, *church*. Did you know the national statistics would say only 18 percent of people who attend church actually serve in church? That means 82 percent of people who attend church just come and attend. They don't give back anything. If we were to take that statistic and put it on Canyon Hills, that would mean that of the 2,531 adults in church last weekend, only 455 serve.

I don't think that's true of Canyon Hills. I think our ratio is better, but let's play generous and say we're a church in which 50 percent serve. That means last weekend, there were 1,265 people in church who do not serve. So, I would ask you, how do you serve this church? In what category do you fall?

Do you serve or do you just come because while this church doesn't meet all of your needs, it meets a few more of them than your last one did? Do you come with the expectation that you have been given gifts by God to serve his body or are you more looking for a place in which other people use their gifts to serve you? That'll expose a lot.

Hero story... I'm just going to take a moment to brag on our worship ministry volunteers, because we don't get to do that very often. Did you know every Wednesday night our worship volunteers are in this room from 6:45 until 9:00 p.m., preparing for Sunday? Did you know they show up on Sunday mornings at 6:30 in the morning, and most of them don't get to leave until 1:00 or 2:00 in the afternoon?

These people memorize their music so they can look you in the eyes as they sing. They do this. It's not convenient. Their Wednesday nights and their Sunday mornings are monopolized. Most of our volunteers serve at least twice a month. Many of them serve three or four times a month between here and youth worship.

That is an incredible service. That is not a convenient service. These people have families. They have full-time jobs. They have hobbies, and yet they serve, and that is why I'm so privileged to stand alongside them and brag on them, because they are truly great volunteers. So, I'd ask you, how do you serve? I don't see any precedent set in Scripture for simply attending church.

You have all been given gifts, and those gifts have been given to serve the people of God, so I would challenge you today. If you do not serve in church, go home and think about where your gifts might best be used. If you are a friendly person, man, FIT is for you. Serve coffee. If you like kids, or you don't like kids but you know you should like kids, you can get involved in the children's ministry. There's a place for every person here to serve.

If you're here today and you already serve, maybe you need to evaluate if it's time to give more. We are so thankful for all of your service. Some of you FIT volunteers are great, but you're serving one service a month. Not one weekend, but one service. That's 1 out of every 16. It might be time to ask, "Can we serve twice or for a weekend?" We're talking about launching another site, guys. We are going to need help, and the help is right here, sitting in this room, but you have to respond. How will you serve your church?

Thirdly, we serve the *community*. Again, this isn't rocket science. This is simply being ready to walk through the door of opportunity as the Lord provides. Maybe this is just saving a little bit of money out of each paycheck to just be ready to meet the needs of someone around you. Maybe it's a stranger.

Maybe it's a friend to whom you can just anonymously give. Maybe it's inviting someone over for dinner, keeping a night open on the calendar to minister to other people. Maybe it's mowing the lawn of your neighbor without asking. I don't know. This could look like 100 different things, but we have to be ready to step through those doors as they are open.

Hero story... There's a guy in our church who serves in the Seattle Police Department. He and his partner were on just a routine stop downtown and they came across a home where two grandparents were sleeping on the floor with their grandchild. There was no crime being committed here. They just didn't have enough money to make that happen.

So, the two of them went out and bought a bed and everything it needed. They brought it back and they set it up, and that kid has a bed now. That's practically meeting a need of the community. That's something we can all step into and do. Serve in your home, serve in your church, and serve in your community.

Go home, write out a few practical ways under each of those categories. Here's the thing. Don't fool yourself. If you're too busy to serve, you're too busy to be great. How will you serve? You don't have to do everything at once. You just have to start the process.

Jesus says true greatness is measured by our humility and service of others. This is an area in which we can all grow. Don't waste your time with temporary, earthly greatness. Pursue the greatness that will extend into eternity. Either Jesus is a truth-teller or Jesus is a liar, and he says if we serve those around us, we will be truly great.

When we really stop to consider how Jesus served us to the point of death, how can we possibly not serve the people he has placed around us? My prayer is that we would be a church of truly great people, marked by our humility and service, so let's go and be the people Jesus has called us to be. Let's pray.

Father God, this is a hard charge to accept, and it is one I know in my own life I am quick to agree to mentally while failing to change anything about my practical life. God, I pray that you would convict us and I pray you would create in us a humble willingness to serve your people from the greatest to the least. Lord, may that be what Bothell thinks of Canyon Hills, that we are a people made up of those who love you and love them and are willing to serve. Thank you for your Word. In Jesus' name we pray, amen.

If you're here and you need prayer, there are people down in front here who would love the opportunity to pray for you. If you don't know who Jesus is, these would be the people to talk to as well, so don't leave without doing that.

Have a great rest of your day. See you next Sunday.