

27<sup>th</sup> October 2024

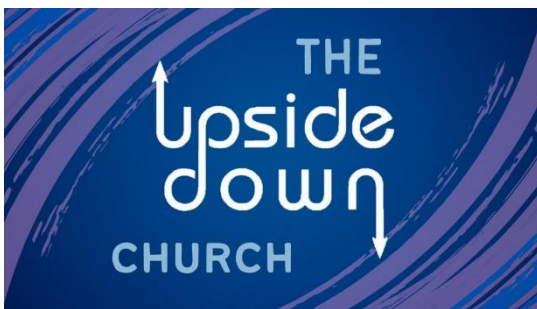
## An Upside-down Community

### Introduction

In a world dominated by power, status, and wealth, the early Christian community turned the norms of society upside down by embracing humility, equality, and service. This radical reordering of values helped Christianity spread rapidly, as it offered a new way of living that promised hope, dignity, and fullness of life to all, regardless of their place in the world.

**Question:** Do you know of any singer, athlete, actor, politician or famous person who comes from a humble background? What stands out to you about their life and journey?

### Read 1 Corinthians 1:26-31



Paul presents a vision of an upside-down community of faith, where God's wisdom turns human values on their head. He challenges the Corinthian believers to reflect on their own calling (v.26), reminding them that God intentionally chooses those the world considers weak, foolish, and insignificant (v.27-28). This passage offers a glimpse of God's kingdom, which is radically different from the world's obsession with power, influence, and status.

### Question:

- Do you see this upside-down reality reflected in our faith community at St. James?
- How do we resist—and where do we need to repent of—worldly values like power, influence, and status?

Paul continues by reordering our sense of identity and boasting. The cross, a symbol of shame and defeat in human terms, becomes the ultimate demonstration of God's wisdom and strength. For Christians true wisdom and strength are not found in self-reliance or worldly success, but in a deep dependence on God's grace (v30).

### Question:

- How have you experienced God's grace in your life?

### Read Matthew 18:1-5

Children, in Jesus' day, were often overlooked and without social standing. Yet, Jesus elevates them, teaching that His followers must embrace the very qualities they embody

### Question:

- How does Jesus challenge our perception of greatness in this reading?

Jesus presents an image of the kingdom that disrupts conventional ideas of power and status. The disciples come to Him asking, "Who, then, is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" (v. 1). Jesus flips their expectations, using the example of a child to challenge their understanding of greatness.

In this upside-down community, the greatest is not the one who asserts authority but the one who humbly trusts, like a child who depends on their parent for guidance, protection, and care. To "become like little children" is not to regress into naivety, but to adopt an attitude of humility that acknowledges our dependence on God. Jesus' message goes deeper by highlighting that in God's kingdom, the conventional markers of status are inverted. The first become last, and the last become first.

**Question:**

- In what ways are we joining with God to honour and uplift today's least, last, and lost?

**Conclusion**

In an upside-down faith community, we are called to live with radical dependence on God, measuring greatness through service to others, especially the most vulnerable. It's a counter-cultural vision of God's kingdom, where the last are made first, and human pride is replaced by humble reliance on God's grace. That is God's way to live right-side up !



**Prayer to Live Right-Side Up**

Heavenly Father,

We come before You seeking to live according to Your ways. Through your strengths, we choose to let go of our desires for status, power, and recognition, and instead walk in simple faith and trust.

We acknowledge that our strength, wisdom, and identity come from You alone. Keep us from boasting in our own accomplishments. Instead, we choose to boast only in You, our source of life, grace, and righteousness. We commit to honour the weak, the overlooked, and the marginalized, just as You have done, and to see the least in society through Your eyes.