

*UNEDITED DRAFT*

Friends in Christ, today we are talking about a vitally important topic: humility. I preached about humility before. To be exact it was about a year and a half ago that I last preached about humility. But I'm excited to preach about it again, because in the year and a half since I last preached on it, I took the words to heart and I have been making huge strides in my level of humility. With each passing month, I've become more and more humble, and I feel now that I've reached a level that few people reach when it comes to humility. In fact, if I had to guess, I believe I am in the top 5% of most humble people all the world. If humility were a team, I'd be starting varsity! Come on, I've worked on it for a year and a half, I ought to be among the best humble people in the world, right?

I hope you all realize I'm joking, and I'm doing it for the sake of making a point. As I talked about my level of humility, it became perfectly clear that I was greatly proud of my level of humility. Humility is one of the most important characteristics a person can possess. Yet it is also one of the most elusive. It's so elusive because of what I was just describing. If you specifically try to work on it, you usually will end up losing it. And the moment you notice the progress you've made in it, at the same moment you've lost the progress you thought you made.

So, I thought we could start by taking a test which will determine whether you are humble or proud. I mean, maybe you don't even need this sermon. Maybe you can tune out and let the proud people listen. So are you ready? 10 questions. Keep track in your mind. If you answer yes, add one point to your score. If you say "sometimes" add half a point. If you say no, that's zero points.

- 1) Do you long for a lot of attention? You like to be the center of conversation. You like to be noticed.
- 2) Do you become jealous or critical of people who succeed? Indicates that we think we deserve better because we are proud.
- 3) Do you always have to win? (It really bugs you to lose. Maybe you even cheat at board games or cards because you hate to lose because you think you're a winner.)
- 4) Do you have a pattern of lying? ("No, I don't lie." You just did. Pride is behind this because we want to be seen in a favorable light no matter what.)
- 5) Do you have a hard time acknowledging that you were wrong? Blame shift... every problem in your life is someone else's fault. (It couldn't be yours.) You get emotional when accused of wrong, or even when it's hinted at that you are wrong. Change the subject. Get defensive. Make excuses. If you have trouble saying, "I'm wrong." You have a pride issue.
- 6) Do you have a lot of conflicts with other people? A proud person will not yield, is not understanding. You quickly get impatient with others because your view is right and theirs is wrong.
- 7) Do you cut in line at the store, airport, freeway, etc.? (It says, "I am more worthy of a better spot. My time is more valuable than yours. Store you quick jump in the line when a new lane opens. Where does this come from? A heart that thinks it is more important than everyone else. "You all can just wait." Airport: You land and "ding" everyone jumps out of their seat to stand up and go nowhere. But if you jump up first you might get in front of a couple people. Which makes a huge difference because you get off the plane 5 seconds before the two people you cut in front of.

- 8) Do you get upset when people do not honor your achievements? They didn't even say thank you. No card! Why do I bother? (Wait, I'm supposed to wait for JESUS to say it.)
- 9) Do you have an attitude of entitlement or thankfulness? Thanks Lord, I'm thankful for whatever. Pride think they deserve what they have coming. The humble
- 10) Do you think you are a good person and superior to others? This one is subtle.

If you scored 1 – 10 you are proud. If you scored 0... you don't do any of these things, then you are extremely proud and your soul is in critical condition, and you better schedule a counseling appoint with me right after the church service. This means you are so proud that you are blind to your pride, and that's an extremely dangerous condition to be in.

Humility = to know your place. (And that place is right along side all others... not above them.) And how do you know your place? *By seeing yourself as you really are in relationship to God and other people.* When we get this wrong... when we fail to see ourselves the way we really are under God and alongside other people... when we want to take for ourselves what belongs to God, or when we consider ourselves above others, we have pride. And when we have pride, we are in great danger.

To see what kind of danger, let's listen to Jesus in Luke chapter 14.

**Luke 14:1 One Sabbath, when Jesus went to eat in the house of a prominent Pharisee, he was being carefully watched.**

They're trying to trip him up. He never violates God's rules. He wasn't ever afraid to violate *their* rules, but he never violated God's rules. Jesus was invited to the house of a prominent Pharisee. It seems they try to trip him by having a sick man "show up." It was the Sabbath day, so according to *their* rules, the man should not be healed, for that would be work. So they try to trip him up by bringing in a man who sick. Of course, Jesus had compassion and healed the man. So now they really have some dirt on Jesus... he healed a man who was sick and he did it on the Sabbath day.

If you were Jesus, would you have stayed for the meal at that Pharisees house? If you had, might you have gotten a bit quiet and brooding? Not Jesus. He not only stays but he proceeds to teach the people how they are sinful and proud. He notices how some are jockeying for position. Everyone is concerned about having a good seat... a seat of honor.

**Luke 14:7-14 When he noticed how the guests picked the places of honor at the table, he told them this parable [and what I find amusing is that his parable is so similar to the situation they are in, they couldn't possibly miss what Jesus was saying.]: "When someone invites you to a wedding feast, do not take the place of honor, for a person more distinguished than you may have been invited. If so, the host who invited both of you will come and say to you, 'Give this man your seat.' Then, humiliated, you will have to take the least important place. But when you are invited, take the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he will say to you, 'Friend, move up to a better place.' Then you will be honored in the presence of all your fellow guests. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."**

This is pretty easy to understand because at our weddings today we also have seats of honor... they're the ones in the front, aren't they? Can you imagine you're invited to the wedding of a friend. You consider yourself to be a very close friend. So when you arrive, you show yourself to the front of the church and sit in a prominent position. After all, that's where your friend would want you, right? But soon an usher comes along and says, "Excuse me, but this is reserved for family. What's more, you've sat in the seat reserved for the groom's grandmother." And you have to stand up. And everyone is looking at you. And you noticed the video cameras rolling. And

because the service is about to start and the church is packed, you are ushered back, and back, and back. And up to the balcony... the back of the balcony. A very lowly position.

Jesus' point: those who aren't humble will sooner or later be humiliated. Those who are humble will be exalted. Jesus warns of the danger of pride. Whoever does not acknowledge their true position under God and alongside of others, and instead elevates themselves (pride), they are in grave danger of being humiliated. Sometimes that happens in this world. But if not now, then it will happen in eternity when the proud person will find himself out of the kingdom of God in a very lowly place we call hell. If you don't know your place, God will show your place: cast out.

This is tough for us because our culture praises those with pride. Having pride in yourself is not even considered bad, it's a sought-after quality. Self-esteem is acclaimed as something that we must have and even teach our children. But ultimately, it's a life without reference to God.

And if you really want to call a spade a spade, pride is Satanic! Satan himself was proud. This is where the original rebellion against God came from. Satan wanted to be equal with God and so he rebelled against him. When he failed, he led Adam and Eve into the same sin. He promised they would be like God if they would eat of the fruit of the tree. He tempted them to not see themselves as they really were: dependent creatures under God created to worship God, but with pride...that they could live independently from God and be alongside of God. Pride led to their fall. Pride leads us to fall as well. We exist to honor, love, serve and obey God, and to love others. The world teaches us to put self at the top of that pyramid.

One of the church fathers, St. Augustine, said this: Pride is like a mother which is pregnant with all other sins. So not only is pride a sin, but pride gives birth to countless other sins. When you think much of yourself, you look down on others, you become less patient, more irritable, less loving, harsher words, etc.

Pride is an enormous problem. Humility is what God has called us to.

But how?! Where can true humility come from? The more we work at it, notice it, the more elusive it becomes! So here's the secret. To conquer pride, you don't strive to be humble. Because when you do that, you inevitably focus on self, and self is what got you into trouble in the first place. **To be more humble, you focus all your attention on Jesus.** Jesus is the solution to your pride.

When you focus on Jesus you see this: **"Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, 7 but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. 8 And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death— even death on a cross!"** Philippians 2:6-8. Jesus in his love decided to pursue us proud rebels and he did so with great humility. He left the glories and riches and majesty and authority of heaven, and was born in barn to a young teenage mother. He lived in a tiny hick town, the son of a carpenter. Jesus didn't travel the world. He never left Palestine as he traveled everywhere on foot. He humbly washed his disciples feet... even the feet of Judas, who would soon betray him. He left heaven where angels were singing, "Holy, Holy, Holy!" To live on earth where his own creation was shouting, "Crucify him! Crucify him!"

This was not what people were expecting. The religious leaders of his day thought, This can't be the Messiah! He's too humble! God can't be humble! And so they rejected him. But that was Jesus the true Messiah. He became humble and he came to serve proud people like you and me, and he humbled himself to go even to the cross in order to remove the load of pride from our backs. He took the Father's wrath so we could be set free. He let his creation murder him, so that he might die in our place for our sins as our Savior.

So here's the key to true humility: understand your place under God. Your pride has led you to try to come along side of God. God will not let you stay in that position. Confess your sins of pride to him. Come under him, and receive the forgiveness he freely grants through his humble Son, Jesus. Worship him as the mighty God he is. Take your appropriate place under him and give him what is due: reverence and honor and obedience and trust and love. Humbly receive these words of God today and change your heart of pride. Humbly receive the Lord's supper today, knowing you are receiving the body and blood of Jesus which you desperately need for the forgiveness of all your sins... a free gift from God you could never earn or deserve. That's humbling.

Under God, see that all people are along side of you. Serve them as Jesus served you. When you have genuine humility, it also is pregnant and gives birth to all kinds of virtues. When you know your place under God and along side of others (humility) you are more compassionate, kind, gentle, gracious, helpful, etc. Humility is about giving, about being a servant, it's about being happy with other's successes, it's about recognizing our dependence on God and others.

Friends, for the pride in your heart, look to Jesus. Follow Jesus. He is the solution. Amen.