

A Slice of Humble Pie

Spilman Memorial Baptist Church, Kinston NC

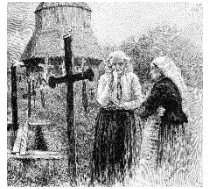
Dr. H. Powell Dew, Jr.

November 17, 2024

Text: Luke 14:1-14

Purpose: If we are to live by the principles of the Kingdom of God, we are to live a humble, peaceable life among others.

A woman's husband died. He had \$100,000 to his name.



After paying all the funeral expenses, she told her closest friend that there was no money left.

The friend asked, "How can that be? You told me he had \$100,000 a few days before he died. How could you be broke?"

The widow replied, "Well, the funeral cost me \$16,500. And of course, I had to make the obligatory donation to the church, pay the organist and all. That was \$1500, and I spent another \$1500 for the wake, the food and drinks, you know. The rest went for the memorial stone."

The friend asked, "\$80,500 for the memorial stone? My goodness, how big was it?"

The widow replied, "Three carats."¹



Maybe you have seen Jeff Foxworthy's "Redneck" list. Jeff is a comedian that loves to pick on his backward, country ways. Maybe you have seen his calendar which highlights the phrase, "You might be a redneck if"

For you to really understand the New Testament and its times, you need to realize that the people in Jerusalem were the sophisticated, knowledgeable, in crowd, while people like Jesus who came from Galilee and Nazareth, were from the back country. We may even call the people from the country, "Rednecks." That is why



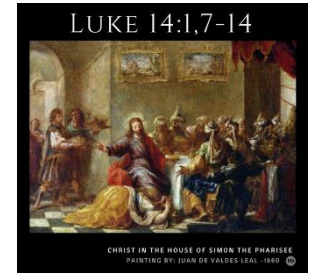
Nathaniel said of Jesus when he heard of Him, "*Can anything good come out of Nazareth?*" (John 1:46)

The followers of Jesus were viewed as "unlearned, ignorant men." The Pharisees and Sadducees of Jerusalem looked down their noses at Jesus and His band of followers. They were constantly looking for an opportunity to embarrass Him. In our passage today, Jesus is only a few weeks away from facing Calvary and the opposition is growing stronger every day.

The passage of scripture we read earlier stated Jesus was invited to the home of a prominent Pharisee – and he was being watched "very" carefully. It was as if Jesus was being set up in attempts to trap Him. Jesus never turned down an offer to go to someone's home, even if the setting was not ideal.



A man who had dropsy was suddenly before Jesus there at the home of the Pharisee. Dropsy is a form of edema or congestive heart failure. It is where fluid begins to build in your legs and body. Jesus turned to the people gathered there and asked, "*Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath or not?*" What I find so surprising is "*they were silent.*" They had set the trap, and Jesus called them on it and they did not have any answer.



The scripture says Jesus simply "*took and healed him, and let him go.*" I don't know if Jesus said anything, took an ointment and rubbed it on him, or simply touched him, and in an instant, he was healed.

Jesus reminded them if they had a donkey or an ox that has fallen in a pit, wouldn't they immediately pull him out, even if it was on a Sabbath Day? And again, not one person gathered there said a single word. His accusers and supposed teachers of the law were silent.

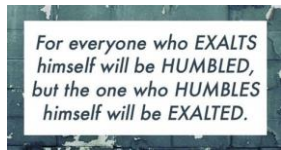


I hope by now we understand how much more important our relationships are than the letter of the law. We are to be more concerned about people than things. But most of us get that backwards. We are more concerned about our agenda and in the process, we plow down people and push them aside.

After Jesus healed the man of dropsy, He turned his attention to the way those around Him were acting. He must have seen all of the Pharisees scampering for the best seats

in the house. During Jesus' day, the room they were eating in would have been designed and laid out with various low couches for people to sit at. The person in the center of each couch would have been the most important. The person to the right would have been the guest of honor, and to the left, the next most important person.

The various tables would have been arranged so that who sat where determined their importance to the host. Even today, we may have assigned seats like at a wedding. There must have been a mad scramble among the various visitors to get the most important places in the room. I can just see it now, the young person running past the older, pushing them aside to gain the higher more important seats, jockeying for attention and status among their peers.



Jesus noticed the problem and gave them a parable to consider.

“When you are invited by anyone to a wedding feast, do not sit down in the best place, lest one more honorable than you be invited by him; and he who invited you and him come and say to you, “Give place to this man,” and then you begin with same to take the lowest place. But when you are invited, go and sit down in the lowest place, so that when he who invited you comes, he may say to you, “Friend, go up higher.” Then you will have glory in the presence of those who sit at the table with you. For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.” (14:8-11)

This small parable that Jesus gave them that day at a meal, has tremendous value because of the spiritual principle conveyed. Verse eleven summarizes it so well. *“For*

everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”

This is something that those that are caught up in the world's value system will never understand. The world says you need to push, fight, claw, and work your way to the top. The world says the way is up! You need to promote your prideful self. You can look at example after example of people on the top humbled time and time again.



Jesus calls us to live humbly in life. The way up, is downward. James 4:10 says, *“Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.”*

The cure for our pride is actually “A Slice of Humble Pie.”

I. The Problem with Pride²

The heart of our problem is pride.

Pride has the attitude that says, “I am the center of the universe.” As Jesus

watched those Pharisees and other religious leaders scrambling to get the best seat in the house, He saw they were prideful. They were trying to get a better seat than they had earned in the social order of things.



Pride can be such a problem in all of our lives. The reason it is so difficult is that it is hard to recognize it in yourself. Someone said pride is the only disease that makes everyone else sick except the one who has it. Pride is listed as one of the seven deadly sins. It is also called by another word,

vanity. The Dutch painter Bosch painted a picture of each

of the seven deadly sins and for pride, he painted a picture of a woman looking in a mirror held by the devil. We can see pride in others, but we are usually blind to our own lives.

We need to take an honest of assessment of ourselves and determine what our motives are for doing the things we do.

Do you enjoy being the center of attention?

Do you think you deserve the best?

Do most of your conversation start with “I, Me, or My”?

Do you have a hard time admitting you are wrong?

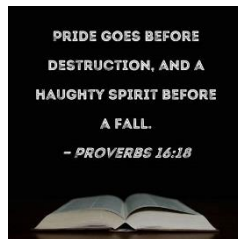
Are you impatient with other people’s mistakes?

Are you offended if you don’t get praise and thanks for what you do?

If you answered “yes” to many of these, maybe you need to reexamine your prideful spirit. When I honestly answer these questions, I too struggle with pride rearing its ugly head in my life.

Another problem with pride is that it leads to ruin.

Proverbs 16:18-19 says, *“Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall. Better to be of a humble spirit with the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud.”*



I heard a funny story about a frog that wanted to go south with the birds for the winter. It was too far to hop and he couldn’t fly, so he thought about it and came up with a brilliant solution. He got a couple of his bird friends to hold each end of a stick in

their beaks and then the little frog clamped down on the center of the stick with his mouth. The birds took off and the frog was hanging from the stick they were carrying in their mouths. They flew over a couple of farmers who observed the scene. One farmer said to the other, “What a brilliant idea! Whoever came up with that idea is a genius. I guess it was one of those birds who had the idea!” When the frog heard that he just couldn’t let the birds get the credit for his good idea, so he said, “I...did” as he fell to the ground. The moral of that story is: If someone else gets the credit for your good idea, its best just keep your mouth closed!



The greatest warning about the danger of pride can be seen in the Devil himself. Before the creation of the world, Satan was a beautiful angel named Lucifer. He let pride and ambition take over his personality until he rebelled against the Most High God. We read about it in Isaiah 14:12-15:

“How you have fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, you who weakened the nations!

*For you have said in your heart: **I will** ascend into heaven; **I will** exalt my throne above the stars of God; **I will** also sit on the mount of the congregation on the farthest sides of the north; **I will** ascend above the heights of the clouds, **I will** be like the Most High.”*
Yet you shall be brought down to Sheol, to the lowest depths of the Pit”.

Each boast of Satan brought him down further. God kicked Satan out of heaven and consigned him to hell. Pride and self-aggrandizement are the way of Satan and he still is using it very well today. Pride drives a wedge between God and man.

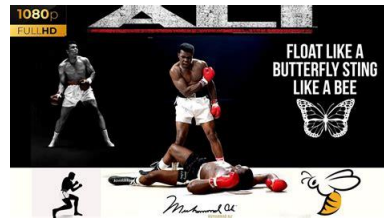


Satan used it in the Garden of Eden when he told Adam and Eve, “*If you eat of this you will be like God.*” It was a lie, but Eve bought the lie first,

followed by Adam.

People are still swallowing Satan’s lies. “You can be your own god. You don’t need Jesus to save you from your sins – because you are basically a good person who doesn’t need redemption.” The lies of Satan ensnare so many and they blindly follow to their destruction. Pride leads to ruin.

Mohammed Ali claimed to be the greatest boxer of all time. He loved to shout, “I’m the greatest!” Once he got on an airliner and the flight attendant asked him to buckle his seat belt. Ali said, “Superman don’t need no seat belt.” The flight attendant said, “Superman don’t need no jet, so buckle up.” It’s sad that this vibrant, vivacious athlete who used to love to talk and brag about being able to “float like a butterfly and sting like a bee,” towards the end of his life, was reduced to a state where he could hardly move and speak at all. He died in 2016, humbled but not through his own choice.

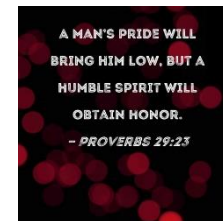


II. THE HONOR OF HUMILITY



The paradox is, we can gain honor through humility. We all need a few slices of humble pie. The history on the term “humble pie” is interesting. Back in medieval England, the nobility was able to eat the good cuts of meat from a deer, but the poorer people were left to eat a meat pie filled with the less desirable cuts of meat: the heart, liver and intestines. These parts of a deer were called “umbles.” A nobleman never stooped to eat umble pie, and if he was served umble pie, it was a humiliating experience. So to eat “umble pie” became synonymous with being humiliated. That’s why some people in England still pronounce humble as “umble.”

You don’t find a lot of people who are asking the question, “How can I be more humble?” They are asking, “How can I succeed?” Or “How can I climb to the top of the heap?” Go into a Barnes and Noble or Books a Million and ask to be directed to the section on “how to be more humble.” They will look at you like you’re from another planet.



Yet the Bible speaks over and over about the value of humility. Humility is actually a wonderful honor. Proverbs 29:23 says, “*A man’s pride will bring him low; but the humble in spirit will retain honor.*”

There are three characteristics that can help us understand what humility is.

A. True Humility is Seeing Myself as God Sees See Me

Humility is not about having a poor self-image, thinking of yourself as a worthless wimp. It's having an honest evaluation of who you are—as the Bible describes you. On one hand, we are described as a sinner before the eyes of God. We deserve death, but when we accept Christ as our Savior, we become a child of God.



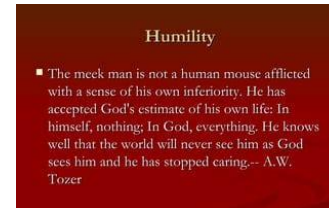
Humility is found in the tension and the balance between our sinfulness and our salvation. Paul writes in Romans 7:18 of this

inward struggle. *“For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice.”* Yet in Romans 8:1, Paul boldly proclaims, *“There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.”* Recognizing who we are as sinners and as saved children of God involves the right balance and humility in life.

On one hand, we are reminded as believers, as Jesus said, *“Without Me (Jesus) you can do nothing.”* (John 15:5) This acknowledgement keeps our pride in check.

Yet the scripture also reminds us, *“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”* This keeps our self pity in check. There is a balance in the Christian life. Humility is the path way upward. Someone once said, “God

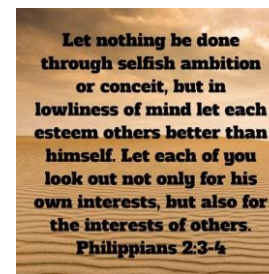
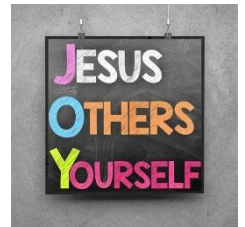
has wisely designed the human body so that you can neither pat yourself on the back, nor kick yourself in the seat.”



The great Christian writer, A.W. Tozer, wrote about humility: “A humble man is not a human mouse afflicted with a sense of his own inferiority. He has accepted God’s estimate of his own life. He knows he is weak and helpless as God declared him to be, but paradoxically, he knows at the same time he is in the sight of God of more importance than the angels. In himself, nothing; in God, everything.”

B. True humility is revealed by how I treat others

Secondly, true humility is revealed by how I treat others. It is not some kind of badge you wear. The only way to reveal your humility is if you treat others more highly than yourself. It’s the old formula for joy, **J.O.Y** – **J**esus first, **O**thers second, **Y**ourself last.



Philippians 2:3-4 says, *“Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in*

appearance a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.”

Jesus’ example was humility. He washed the feet of the disciples. He took on the humiliating cross for us. He took on the death of a criminal so we could be saved.

Philippians goes on to say, *“Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and those on earth, and those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”*



Two of the greatest preachers in England in the 18th Century were John Wesley and George Whitefield. They disagreed over a point of doctrine concerning salvation. Whitfield embraced Calvinism, which says God saves those whom He will and we have no choice in the matter. On the other hand, John Wesley leaned toward the Armenian side, which said we have to choose to accept Jesus to be saved. Their disagreement and debate were a matter of public record. There was great animosity between their followers over this debate.

Once a newspaper reporter wanted to stir up the religious debate, so he asked George Whitefield the following question. **“Do you expect to see John Wesley in heaven?”** Whitefield replied, **“I don’t expect to see Mr. Wesley in heaven.”** The reporter gleefully wrote those words down knowing it would fan the flames of controversy even

higher. Then Whitefield continued. **“No, I don’t expect to see John Wesley in heaven because He is such a faithful servant of God that he will be so close to the throne of God and I will be so far away, I don’t expect to see him.”** That was an answer that revealed Whitefield was a humble man.

Martin Luther once said, “We need goat sense.” He tells of seeing two goats meeting on a path on a mountain ledge. Instead of butting one another, one of them laid down and allowed the other one to pass over him. How are you treating others?

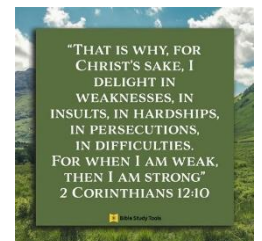


C. True Humility is Refined Through Adversity



A third point related to humility I have seen is we are refined through adversity. Every person in this room has had some tragic event that has molded our character. It could be the loss of a job, the disappointment of divorce, the loss of a loved one, betrayal of a friend, a failure in a school assignment. Even the joys of raising a child, brings about its own set of challenges and adversity. These events can mold us if we yield our lives unto God – or they can cause us to sulk in our failure or loss. Failure to bring your burdens back to God only leaves those burdens weighing on us.

I don’t believe God brings about evil to teach us a lesson. He uses our adversities for good. He wants us to be conformed into the image and likeness of Jesus



Christ. These life events can do that as we let the power of Christ dwell richly in us. In our weakness He is strong. The Apostle Paul suffered with a thorn in the flesh. We do not know exactly what that was. But he said, it was given to him, to keep him from being “*exalted above measure.*” It was God’s way of keeping Paul humble. I believe God still does that today.

CONCLUSION



Jim Henry, pastor of First Baptist Church Orlando, tells the story about the time a few years ago when he was invited to Georgetown College in Kentucky to receive the award for

outstanding alumnus. He said He was sitting on a stage outside as part of the graduation exercises. He was dressed in his finest black suit, and just before he was called up to receive his award, he began to think about how important he had become.

He said, “I was remembering that when I went to college there nobody even knew me very well. I washed dishes in the cafeteria to pay my way and couldn’t get involved in many activities, but now look at me! They know who I am today!” He said he was feeling really good about himself, and just at that moment—splat! A bird flew overhead, and covered him with droppings, all over his shoulder and nice black suit! He was horrified for a moment, then he began to laugh as he realized he was full of pride and to this day, he thinks God sent that bird to give him a little humility!



Has God been sending some birds your way? Have you been going through a time of adversity and struggle? Maybe God is trying to teach you some humility. When trouble comes some people raise their face to heaven and become bitter; others bow their knees before God and become better. Which one are you?

Sometimes, God serves us up a good slice of humble pie. It may not be your favorite, but eat it anyway: it’s good for you!



LET US PRAY

Notes:

¹ Mickey’s Funnies, An Inheritance Funny, September 30, 2024

² Sermon Outline from Sermon Central, “Have a Slice of Humble Pie” by David O, Dykes