

Jesus, Peter and Me: Pride

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Ash Wednesday
INI – SDG

Matthew 26:30-35 ³⁰ And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. ³¹ Then Jesus said to them, "All of you will be made to stumble because of Me this night, for it is written: 'I will strike the Shepherd, And the sheep of the flock will be scattered.' ³² "But after I have been raised, I will go before you to Galilee." ³³ Peter answered and said to Him, "Even if all are made to stumble because of You, I will never be made to stumble." ³⁴ Jesus said to him, "Assuredly, I say to you that this night, before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times." ³⁵ Peter said to Him, "Even if I have to die with You, I will not deny You!" And so said all the disciples.

This is my daughter's book, "Guess How Much I Love You." The daddy bunny compares his love to many different things. I love you more than how high I can hop. I love you more than that tree. I love you more than the height of the moon. It's a cute reminder to kids of their parents' love. Most of us parents could probably add a few pages of things that are less cute but more to the point.

My love is greater than an hour of screaming.
My love is greater than cleaning filth off the wall and floor.
My love is greater than the stink of dirty diapers.

In our Lenten series this year we are going to be seeing similar examples of Jesus' love for us. We will be looking one by one at the depths of Peter's failings and sins, not to look down on Peter but as a reminder of our own failures. Seeing our sin we will also see how God's love is greater than them all.

Our first sin this evening is **Pride**.

In pride Peter boasts about his dedication to Christ. Dedication to Christ sounds like a good thing. But Peter boasts in himself. He boasts about what he will do by his own strength.

“I will never,” he says.

Because he was so busy relying on his own strength, he didn't bother to take refuge in Christ.

Psalm 46 reminds us that "God is our refuge and strength." Those who take refuge in Him will stand. Those who stand on their own strength will fall. When we like Peter take refuge in our strength instead of Christ's we too will fall prey to sin.

Nevertheless Jesus' response shows that His love is greater than our foolish pride.

The bible has a lot of warnings about Pride.

Proverbs 16:18 Pride goes before destruction, And a haughty spirit before a fall.

Proverbs 13:10 By pride comes nothing but strife, But with the well-advised is wisdom.

Obadiah 1:3 The pride of your heart has deceived you,

When I think of pride, I think of those kids who take selfies right on the edge of the grand canyon. They are so focused on taking pictures they sometimes forget just how close to destruction they are. That is what the bible is trying to tell us about pride. That is what Jesus is trying to tell Peter in our text. That is what the bible is constantly trying to tell us. You are standing right on the edge, back away before you fall off.

Pride is hard to see in ourselves.

It is not that we disregard the Bible's warning about pride. Many of us understand what the Bible is saying and agree, yet we still have a problem with Pride. Why?

One reason is simply because it is so hard to see it in ourselves. We are very good at seeing it in others, but we often don't notice it in ourselves. Even when Jesus is pointing right at it in Peter, still Peter doesn't see it.

Even though we know that pride is bad, like Peter we often fail to notice it for what it is. We have all kinds of excuses why in this case it's a good thing or the right thing. For this reason, we need some help, some hints that will help us to see pride in ourselves.

Some hints to help us see pride.

If it causes you to look down on, despise or criticize another person or group of people, it is sinful pride. Even when God's word speaks of the sins of others it does not do it so that we can look down our nose at them.

If it causes us to get angry, it is sinful pride.

James 1:20 for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God.

James doesn't leave any room for exceptions here. No matter how much we think our anger is justified God says it is coming from a place of sin. God can be justly angry, man cannot.

If we are talking about what I will do and what I won't do, it is pride.

If it keeps us away from God and His word, it is sinful pride.

Another way we often hide pride in ourselves is by telling ourselves that we standing up for the right thing.

Peter no doubt thinks that he is doing something noble and heroic. I'm standing up for Jesus. Don't we have a whole song about "Stand up, Stand up for Jesus?" Isn't Peter doing something he ought to here?

The problem is of course that he is relying on his own strength, that he is bragging about what he will do, and that he isn't listening to Jesus.

Like Peter We often even confuse pride with faith.

We sometimes claim to be defending God's word when what we are really doing is insisting on our own opinion. That is how much of a problem we have with pride. We are so arrogant that we often confuse our own opinions for God's eternal word.

Jesus knows just how difficult it is for us to see pride in ourselves, and just how easily we even confuse it with faith. Jesus' solution is quite simple. "Watch and pray" always. Don't wait till you see it. Don't assume you are good enough, watch and pray always. Start every morning assuming that it is there, because it is there in each and every one of us. Confess your sins and receive forgiveness.

Pride comes back stronger and multiplies quickly.

Pride can be hard to spot, but another problem is that even if Christ pulls it out of our hearts, it returns and spreads quickly.

Jesus is trying to warn Peter but Peter simply comes back with more and greater pride in himself. Then to make matters worse all the disciples join in. They don't want to be left out of Peter's grand proclamation. They don't want anyone to think less of them.

Who among us does not have a problem with pride? That is of course a trap. If anyone were to say I don't have a problem with pride, than saying those words would be proof that they do have a problem. On the other hand, if you say, I do have a problem, then you might easily be proud of yourself for giving the right answer and being so humble.

Pride is as serious a problem for us as it was for Peter, and it is one that we simply can't get rid of it. Jesus however is greater than our pride.

Jesus is greater than pride

Pride is strong and it is resilient in Peter and in our lives as well. But Jesus shows us something greater and stronger.

When the disciples try insisting that they will remain faithful, Jesus doesn't continue to argue with them. Instead, He gives them a promise.

"I will go before you to Galilee."

After they fail Jesus promises to be there waiting for them.

Yes, we see just how strong Peter's pride is but even more we see how much greater Jesus love is. "I will be waiting for you."

The punishment of our pride is death. When the pharisee prayed to God in pride, "God I'm glad I'm not like this tax collector," Jesus says he went home under God's judgement. Jesus warns us that everyone who exalts himself will be humbled. These passages remind us that we deserve death.

But we do not need to leave the service tonight "under judgement." Jesus' love is greater, He accepted that death in our place.

The result of pride is that Peter was separated from Jesus, and so are we because of our pride. But Jesus was waiting for Peter afterwards. As the Good Shepherd Jesus found Peter even after he fell.

So, too Jesus promises to be waiting for us. In our foolishness we may well be standing with one foot off a cliff, but Jesus is waiting to catch us.

Our pride is great, but Jesus' love is greater. Amen