

Return To Humility

In our gospel reading we heard how Peter denied even knowing Jesus. Most of us being well familiar with that account know that a large part of what led Peter to that sin was pride. The pride that caused him to trust his own strength, to stand and say “I will never betray you Lord.”

When the Lord turned to look at Peter and Peter realized what he had done, he learned humility. This seems to be a lesson which he remembered. The events of Maundy Thursday take place around 30 ad. The epistle reading which is our sermon text was written probably around 65 ad. 35 years later and yet everything that Peter writes here in our sermon text seems to be a direct response to what happened to him that night. It seems he learned his lesson. He calls us as well to learn from him to return to humility before the Lord.

1 Peter 5:6-10 ⁶ Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, ⁷ casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you. ⁸ Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. ⁹ Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world. ¹⁰ But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle *you* .

1 Peter 5:6 ⁶ **Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time,**

Pride is not always a bad thing, and humility is not always a good thing. It depends on the object. If we have pride in ourselves like Peter did when he stood up and said, “I will never fail you” that is a pride that is going to fail. If we put our pride in Christ that is a good pride one that will not fail. If we have humility in our own strength that is good thing. If we are ashamed of Jesus that is a bad thing.

Peter was proud of his own strength that night, but he was ashamed of Jesus. He had the objects turned around. He should have been humble in himself and proud in Christ’s strength.

He was ashamed of Jesus because Jesus looked weak. Peter was not ashamed of Jesus the great prophet. He was not ashamed of Jesus the miracle worker, but Jesus the prisoner, Jesus the one being

whipped, Jesus the one enduring mocker and not fighting back. Peter was ashamed to be associated with that Jesus.

Humble yourself under the mighty hand of God. Recognize your own weakness but take pride, trust in, the power of God.

“the mighty hand of God” – Peter was ashamed of Jesus when he looked weak. But here in 1 Peter, Peter confesses that God is never weak. The word mighty in Greek is “krataios.” There are lots of different Greek words that imply strong or powerful. What is different about this word is that most of those words seem to imply action, a hand which does mighty deeds, a hand which uses power, but this word implies simply a state of being. The hand of God is powerful, it is mighty, irregardless of what it is doing, even when it looks weak.

Peter was ashamed of Jesus because he looked weak. It looked like everyone was taking advantage of Jesus and Jesus was simply letting them. But Jesus was not weak he accepted the shame for our sakes.

When Peter tells us to humble ourselves under the hand of God, he reminds us that true strength is to some extent accepting the slander and ridicule and sin that others heap on us. We do not need to “stand up for ourselves” and “prove how strong we are.” We can endure ridicule as Christ did.

And wait, wait for God’s time to exalt us.

Moses was eighty having spent forty years in the wilderness before God called him to lead his people out of Egypt. Abraham was 100 before God gave him the son he had promised him. Lazarus was dead by the time Jesus arrived to heal him. All of these waited well past the time that most would have given up on God and decided I must take things into my own hands. But in his own time God fulfilled his promises and delivered Lazarus even from death.

Peter was ashamed of a Jesus who was being lead in chains. But even when Jesus was allowing everyone “to walk all over him,” the hand of God was still mighty, and he accomplished his salvation in his own way in his own time.

1 Peter 5:7 ⁷ casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.

These two verses sometimes appear to be different thoughts just thrown together. But that is not the case at all. The two go together perfectly. Casting our cares upon him is humbling ourselves and trusting in his strength.

The Greek word for cast might better be translated “pile,” as in pile your dishes on the counter. It is used for piling luggage on top of a pack animal.

How many of us would like it if someone were to pile all their luggage on us? You do all the dishes. You do all the work. You carry all the luggage. But Christ willingly accepts that burden. I will be your pack

animal he says to us. Lay your burdens and your sins on me. That is a humbling thing for him to do for us.

But it is also humbling for us to recognize that we are not strong enough that we need his help. The American ideal is of the strong silent cowboy, the one who can do everything and carry everything himself. If we think of ourselves like this we will fail.

If we think we must take care of everything ourselves that would be pride in myself. If we humbly admit we are not strong enough and put our burdens on Christ that is humbling ourselves and trusting his mighty hand.

Christ cares very much for us and is more than willing to be our mule, to bear our burdens. We need to be humble enough to admit we need him and take our cares to him in prayer.

1 Peter 5:8,9 ⁸ Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. ⁹ Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world.

The best way to resist Satan's temptation is to learn to trust this mighty hand of God. To place your burdens on Christ.

Imagine you are diving with the sharks in one of those steel cages under the water. If you trust the steel cage to protect you and take care of you, then you can sit back and relax and enjoy the experience. If you start to doubt the cage will hold up, you are still safe, but you won't enjoy the experience. You will be too worried the whole time. But if you really doubt the strength of the cage, if you are certain the cage is about to fail, then you might do something really foolish like trying to open the cage and swim away. And then you really will not have a chance. The sharks will get you.

Peter learned this lesson firsthand that night. He could not rely on his own strength. As soon as we put our pride in our own strength, we are easy prey for Satan. Satan is just waiting for exactly this, just waiting for us to leave the cage of God's mighty hand.

Who among us can wrestle a lion? Even less so can we win against Satan. Resist him steadfast in the faith, says Peter. Put all your trust in that mighty hand of God. And you will be safe.

Humble in your own strength, Pride in God's strength.

1 Peter 5:10 ⁰ But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you .

Peter failed but we know how Jesus came to Peter afterwards and encourage Peter with words of love and comfort and forgiveness. Yes, says Peter you will fail. You will at times be easy food for sharks and lions. But Christ will, again in his time, comfort, strength, establish you.

Therefore, we take pride not in what I do, or in my strength, which is nothing. We take pride in Christ and his cross. We take pride in Christ even when he looks weak, knowing that whatever he looks his hand is mighty.

1 Corinthians 1:31 "He who glories, let him glory in the LORD."

Gal 6:14 But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.

It is better to be proud of Christ's weakness, than man's strength

1 Corinthians 1:25 Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

Amen