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Sunday, August 28th, 2022

Only Jesus Has True Humility

By nature we are only able to produce a false humility before God. Only Jesus displays true humility. By His great love and mercy that humility is given to us and because of His humility we will be exalted by God in the resurrection of the just.

Grace, Mercy, and Peace to you from our gracious God and Father, and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

In the name of Christ, who is the sole source of true humility, dear fellow redeemed.

According to Webster's Dictionary, humility is defined as "freedom from pride or arrogance." Humility is viewed as an admirable quality someone can possess. It's not a secret, people would rather be around someone who is humble about their status rather than someone who is arrogant and prideful.

False humility is when someone acts humble when they really aren't. They want to come off as a likeable person to public opinion and so they put on a façade, a mask, to come across as something they are not.

One of the best examples we have of false humility is found in the Pharisees of Jesus' day. On the outside, they carried themselves in a way that appeared to display humility, following God's Law to the smallest detail much better than anyone else.

To people who cannot look into the heart, it seemed as if the Pharisees were the most humble and holy people in Israel. They were the example to follow, and it was an honorable thing to become a Pharisee. However, Jesus can look into the heart. He saw through the façade of outward righteousness and called them out for their false humility and idolatry of self.

On a regular basis the Pharisees were blinded by their own self-importance instead of seeing and trusting the one who had perfect humility. Only Jesus has true humility.

During Jesus' time, it was customary for guests to recline on low-lying couches for supper rather than sit in chairs like we do. It was also customary for the more distinguished guests to sit in the place of honor at the left end of the couch because that had the best view of the host. This is the situation going on when Jesus notices the Pharisees scrambling to take those seats of higher honor.

He says to them, (Luke 14:7-10) "*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; ⁹and he who*

invited you and him come and say to you, 'Give place to this man,' and then you begin with shame to take the lowest place. ¹⁰"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."

This seems like a pretty obvious lesson, doesn't it? Suppose you were invited to a wedding and you sat down at the table where the parents of the wedding couple are to sit. It would be embarrassing and shameful if the bride and groom came up to you and told you to move to the back of the venue. That is the instance Jesus is describing here. It is a presumptuous and arrogant person who would take a seat of high honor for themselves when someone more worthy could come in later.

Instead, Jesus says that it is better to sit in the lowly places and receive the honor of the host saying to you, in the presence of all, "you are more worthy, come up here." Jesus is not simply giving instructions on how to avoid humiliation at a wedding feast or how to gain honor in the sight of all. He, of course, is talking about displaying true humility. This is brought out in verse 11.

¹¹"For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

Who, ultimately, is the One who exalts and the One who humbles? It is God. Consider King Nebuchadnezzar. Here was someone who put so much pride in the glory of his nation Babylon. He gave himself all the credit for his successes, and wondrous buildings, and he exalted himself to the likeness of a god. But do you know what happened to him? Nebuchadnezzar had a dream. Daniel interpreted the dream and told him that it was the Most High God who decreed that Nebuchadnezzar would eat grass like an ox for 7 years because of his great pride. God is the one who humbles.

On the other side consider Micah 5:2, "*But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, Though you are little among the thousands of Judah, Yet out of you shall come forth to Me The One to be Ruler in Israel, Whose goings forth are from of old, From everlasting.*" Bethlehem was considered small and insignificant. However, Bethlehem is exalted because it is from this town that the Savior would be born. It is God who exalts.

Sadly, the Pharisees were much like Nebuchadnezzar. They were obsessed with their works and their keeping of God's Law that they failed to see how far short they really fell in keeping God's Law. Their pride and arrogance blinded them to true humility, that would in turn give them true exaltation. Jesus doubles down on this when He addresses the host of the dinner.

Luke 14:12-13, "When you give a dinner or a supper, do not ask your friends, your brothers, your relatives, nor rich neighbors, lest they also invite you back, and you be repaid. But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind."

He is not saying that you should never invite friends or family to dinner. He is talking about the attitude in the heart. Instead of inviting those who would feel a debt to be repaid to you, invite

those who can give you back nothing. True humility does not ask for anything in return. It is completely selfless. Another word for this humility is love. Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 13:4-5, *“Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; 5 does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil;”* Again this was an area where this Pharisee, who was the host, failed. Jesus saw in his heart the intent behind why he invited who he did. It was to make himself seem more honorable.

Jesus also puts into perspective what kind of honor is important. It is not that which is obtained on this earth, but the reward that is received *“at the resurrection of the just.”* He wasn’t doing this just to shame the Pharisees there present, but to warn them about the spiritual condition of their heart.

The Holy Spirit recorded this account for the same purpose. It serves as a warning to us to pay attention to the spiritual condition of our hearts. Truth be told, we are often like the Pharisees. There is not a human being alive that is perfectly humble. Paul writes in 2 Timothy 3, *“For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, 3 unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, 4 traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God.”*

Who among us hasn’t fallen into each of these sins? These sins may not always manifest themselves in actions we commit, but often are sins of the heart. Sins of the heart are just as damning as the sins of action. Remember Webster’s definition of humility? Freedom from pride and arrogance. This is the most basic form of humility, but even that we cannot do on a regular basis.

Jesus says to us, *“Beware of the condition of your own heart. Do not seek to gain humility on your own ability, for you can only muster a false humility.”* Instead, we are to put our trust in Him and ask for God’s help to receive true humility: Jesus’ humility.

What is this true humility? Paul describes it in Philippians 2:5-8, *“Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, 6 who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, 7 but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.”*

Jesus had everything. He was the Most High God, the Creator of the universe. There was nothing He was lacking. But He set all that aside to become human, to take on our form. It was more than becoming of no reputation, but he took the form of a bondservant, a slave! If that wasn’t enough, He even took on His innocent shoulders the sins of all people. All sins of Adam and Eve and every other person that has lived and ever would live. The number of sins is innumerable, and He suffered the punishment for all of them.

For many years, especially during the middle ages, public punishment for criminals mean to be placed in stocks with their crime on public display so people could shame them. That was what

happened to Jesus, except it wasn't the sins He committed, but our sins and our shame that He took upon Himself.

At any point Jesus could have said, "No more," and return to heaven. . . .but He didn't. He willingly became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross, the punishment reserved for the worst of criminals.

Jesus also displayed the perfect love that Paul described in 1 Corinthians 13. It is because of that longsuffering and selfless love that Jesus continually appealed to the Pharisees to repent of their sins and believe in Him. It is because of that longsuffering and selfless love that Jesus calls you and I to repent of our sins and believe in Him.

To receive Jesus' humility, we must empty ourselves. We must empty ourselves of all self-proclaimed worthiness and righteousness because there is no room for our own righteousness in Jesus' humility. The Holy Spirit works in us do this, to confess our sins, and our unworthiness before the throne of God. He teaches us to pin our sins to the cross of Christ and to be washed by the blood of the Lamb. This is what we do every Sunday in the confession and absolution. We are bringing our multitude of sins before the throne of God. We are emptying ourselves of any self-merit and asking God for His grace and mercy.

When the pastor proclaims the absolution to you, you are receiving that grace and mercy of God that Jesus won for you. You receive your Savior's humility. It is like you are at a wedding feast, sitting in the lowliest of places, and God says to you, "Come, move to a better place." He sees you as an honored guest because you are covered by the righteousness of Christ. Your exaltation is rooted in Christ Jesus.

So how do we follow Jesus' humility? Ephesians 2:10, "*For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.*" God has laid out before you countless opportunities to share the love that Jesus had for you to other people. These opportunities come about without us even realizing we are doing a good work for God. The love Jesus had for you naturally produces a love that does not remain contained within our hearts, but it is shared. It is a joy, an honor, and a life-long vocation to spread the good news of Jesus' humility that gives life to all who call upon His name.

True humility vs. False humility. While the secular world may debate what the difference is between the two, we know the difference spiritually is great. False humility is what every single human creates by nature. True humility is shown to us in Jesus' perfect life and death that He did as our substitute. There is no other source of true humility. By faith we put our hope and trust in Jesus and we receive God's grace and mercy because of Him. By faith, we receive our Savior's humility, and because of Him we will be raised by God on the last day, receiving the ultimate exaltation: eternal life with Him. Amen.