

Choose Humility Luke 4:7-11

Each time as I read these blessed scriptures and I encounter an instruction by our Lord Jesus about the character attribute of “humility”, I’m immediately reminded of the precious words that He gave to us in Matthew chapter 11 regarding His own very special character attribute of “humility”. There in those words Jesus called out to us saying,

²⁸ “Come to me, all you who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. (Matthew 11:28-29)

I love these words because they reveal the very depths of the heart of God. Notice there in those words that Jesus doesn’t speak about His glory, His majesty, His honor, or any of the other Godly attributes of His character. In those words, He tells us that the first thing that He wants you and me to learn about Him is that He is “gentle and humble in heart”, that “humility” is the first and the most important attribute that you and I are to know about Him.

And yes, there is a reason why our Lord wants you and me to begin there with “gentleness and a humble heart” as we begin our pursuit of getting to know Him and of becoming like Him. It’s because of that ever-dominant sinful fleshly attribute that every person brings with them as they are born into this life, that of “pride”, “pride”.

Simply put, “pride” is the most demanding and most divisive form of sin that has ever entered into the hearts of mankind, a kind of sin that is often so subtle that a person can be filled with its nature but be completely unaware that it is present within them.

And if pride is left unattended within our souls, it will become an ever-present barrier that will stand in the way of and prevent us from ever being the person that God wants us to be.

And also if pride is left unattended, it will become an ever-present lifelong heavy burden that will weigh down and cripple a person’s soul. We know that because the Lord Jesus speaks about that heavy burden in the words that we just read, telling us to learn of Him and of His humility so that the burdens that pride puts upon us can be removed.

And folks, “pride” really must be rightly dealt with and removed. And these scriptures are clear, there is only one remedy that can rightly deal with the insidious nature of “pride”, and that remedy is “humility”, “humility”.

And no, neither you nor I will ever be able to have a humility of our own. The precious remedy of “humility” will need to come to us as will all of the other righteous attributes that we might gain. It will be through the Spirit of Christ bringing “His gentleness” and “His humility” into us as He comes to live and abide within our souls.

Turn with me to chapter 14 of the Book of Luke and let’s read one of our Lord’s instructions about this very difficult nature of “pride” and about the very special attribute of “humility” that He wants you and me to learn about. This instruction is a very simple and practical instruction, but it illustrates His teaching so very well.

Here in this passage, Jesus was visiting with a group of religious leaders. And right after He had healed a poor suffering man of the disease of “dropsy”, we find Him using the example of a failed and embarrassing episode of pride to instruct these very often “prideful” Scribes and Pharisees about the Godly attribute of “humility”. Here we read,

⁷ So He (the Lord Jesus) told a parable to those who were invited, when He noted how they chose the best places, saying to them:

⁸ “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;

⁹ and 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.

¹¹ For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.” (Luke 14:7-11)

Our Lord Jesus is the ideal model of a teacher. He is able to use very simple examples to illustrate the most profound of truths.

Here, as Jesus met with a group of these religious leaders in one of their houses, He noted how each of them carefully chose a place of seating as they gathered around in their group. And as He often did throughout His ministry, He seized this opportunity of an ordinary circumstance to teach any of those who might have “ears to hear” about one of the most basic and most fundamental elements of righteousness, that of “humility”. And not only so, but especially about the necessity for their humility to be an intentional and forthright decision and effort as they would take part in the ordinary activities of their day.

And note in particular that this lesson about humility is once again being given specifically to the Scribes and the Pharisees, the religious leaders of Jesus’ day. Men who should have been able to rightly discern the scriptures, but who had instead chosen to entrench themselves within many of the pride-filled man-made customs and practices they had developed alongside of the real scripture.

And again, as we emphasized in an earlier study, regardless of what we might think about Jesus’ encounters with these Scribes and Pharisees, He really did love those men. And His heart’s desire was for them to turn from their corrupt ways, be “born again” of the Spirit, and become the humble leaders that they were called to be.

And so here, true to His nature, and though they were most often not receptive to it, He kept on pouring forth His righteous teachings into them.

And again, here within a short parable, Jesus brought to the surface one of the most deeply ingrained, but most sinfully effectual tools of the world, the flesh and the devil, the stumbling block of “pride”. And within His parable Jesus made special emphasis of the dire necessity for men to turn from corrupt pride to the more excellent way of Godly “humility”. And again, please note that Jesus was telling these men that “humility” would have to be an intentional choice and an intentional effort on their part.

May we pause here and remind ourselves of what this sinful nature of “pride” is all about and why it absolutely must be overcome within the souls of every believing Christian.

And I'll borrow some of my words from some of my Spiritual mentors and learned Bible commentators. They can say it better than me and there's no need for me to invent new ways of saying what needs to be said.

One of my favored commentators tells us simply that there are two basic kinds of "pride" spoken about in the Bible. There is a "legitimate" form of pride and there is a "sinful" form of pride.

The "legitimate" form of pride is a pride that wells up within us as we take time to recognize and to appreciate God's faithful influence and involvement within the events that take place in our lives, recognizing that it is not we ourselves who are able to think and to say and do all the many things we do, but rather it is God and His protection, His provision, His answer to prayer, and His unfailing love, that helps and enables us to be who we are and do the things we do each day. Trusting that when all else around us falters and fades away, our Lord will always be faithful to be our help and guide.

And that is especially so as it relates to our eternal salvation, that we can never be "good enough" in our own efforts to earn our way into heaven.

In Galatians chapter 6 verse 14 we're instructed, "May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." In those words, the Apostle Paul was careful to credit his integrity to the Lord Jesus, boasting in a clear Christ-led conscience.

And the same should also be true for you and for me. Simply put, "Legitimate, Godly pride" should never boast in our own efforts, but boast in Christ alone and what He is doing through us.

On the other hand is the "Sinful form of pride". And "Sinful pride" is in most all ways exactly opposite of "legitimate Godly pride" in that "sinful pride" seems always to try to usurp the ways and the provisions of God, going about the matters of daily life as if we don't need Him.

That was part of satan's clever lie to Adam and Eve when he said in Genesis chapter 3 verse 5, "For God knows that when you eat of it (the fruit) your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

This truly is one of the devil's greatest lies to us, that we can, on our own, possess the ability to rightly know good and evil, right and wrong, for ourselves and to

rightly do good things of our own strength and abilities. And also, to be able to rightly judge good and evil within other people.

“Pride” can so very quickly seize control over our focus and can turn us from loving our neighbor, to that of comparing ourselves to them and to competing with them. When we let sinful pride take control, we begin to credit ourselves with our accomplishments, thinking less of our neighbor and their efforts, forgetting that God created us all equally, and thinking the best of ourselves and less of the other people around us. And as we do that, we become the “hypocrites” that Jesus so often warned about.

Folks, may I confess to you that as I read through this parable, and as I consider the other elements of sinful pride, I can easily see myself within it all. And I can easily identify with these men and with their desire for finer things and for better positions in life. It is part of our American success system that has been so cleverly implanted within our souls.

And while I can’t confess such things for you, may I strongly encourage you to take a humble look at your own heart and your own behaviors. And I have no doubt that if you do, you will see yourselves within the behavior of “pride” that Jesus is warning us about. Sadly, the lack of humility is thoroughly entrenched within each one of us.

And while you and I might not ever experience a circumstance of pride exactly like this one mentioned here in this parable, we need to remind ourselves that pride comes in many, many different varieties. And that in whatever way the sin of pride is demonstrated in us, our reaction is only a surface response to a much deeper cause.

My thoughts go to that of a skin cancer that I recently needed to deal with. On the surface of my skin was just a small open sore that never seemed to heal. And when I finally went to the doctor, she told me that my problem was a much deeper one, that beneath the surface of that open sore were cancerous cells that needed to be removed, that left unattended it would grow and begin to travel to other parts of my body and bring greater harm to me.

Folks, for me, this understanding of skin cancer gives me a clear understanding of the nature of the “sin of pride”. Pride is not just a surface problem that sometimes embarrasses us or our family members. Pride has deep roots that are

below the surface, roots that fester and grow and travel to infect every other part of who we are, our heart, our soul, our mind and our spirit.

Simply put, pride is sin! And sin does what sin does within us. Sin is never benign. It is ever and always infectious. Sin is ever and always a “predator” within us, crouching behind every door, ever seeking to have its way in everything that we think and say and do. And pride is able to use its instruments, the world, the flesh and the devil to serve its purposes. And each of those three is an enemy to the righteousness of Christ and they stand proudly in opposition to Him and to all His ways within you and me.

And each of those three enemies, the world, the flesh and the devil, are continually on the attack influencing each of us, using the weaknesses that are common to our particular personality. For me, with my ADD type personality, I have episodes of “pride” when I don’t stop long enough to think through a matter before I act, to consider all of the many people involved in a matter, and to consider their situations and circumstances. I, too often, simply rush headlong leaving hurting people and broken relationships in my wake, and not even realizing that I have done it.

And folks, I really, really don’t want to be that way, to do those things. And I know that “humility” is my only answer for my episodes of pride. And dear Christians, please understand that “humility” is the only answer for your episodes of pride also.

God’s true and effective remedy for this form of sinful pride within me requires that I intentionally choose the ways of humility.

And may I include you in these instructions . . . that you and I not rush headlong into our situations and our circumstances, that we, that you, that I, instead be “slow to speak, slow to anger, and quick to listen”, that you, that I, intentionally choose to have the humble and gentle “mind of Christ”. And especially in the way and the manner spoken about in the words of Philippians chapter 2. Listen carefully. Verse 1

¹ Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy,

² fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.

³ Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness

of mind let each esteem others better than himself.

⁴ Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.

⁵ Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 2:2-4)

Did you note some of the things our Lord is telling us about ourselves within these words, that at the heart of our lack of humility is selfish ambition and conceit. Sinful behaviors that we don't want to admit about ourselves.

As I read these words, I do fear that too often within the situations and circumstances of my life, I have been this way, that I have not had the mind of Christ. While yes, I am truly saved and I do deeply desire to have the mind of Christ, those enemies of my soul, the world, my own flesh and those devils around me, have probably won out much more often than I realize it.

And let me say to you and to me that none of us have any real excuse for allowing the sin of "pride" to control our lives. We really do know better.

How can I say that, and how are we any different from the unbelieving world around us, the multitudes that seem to wallow and even thrive in the murky mire of pride? It is because you and I who have Christ as our Savior, have His Holy Spirit living within us. And His Holy Spirit is constantly doing as 1 Corinthians 10:13 tells us and is warning us away from those sins, and is constantly urging us on to righteousness, on towards love and good works. So then, yes, dear Christian, you and I truly are without excuse.

And oh, how much more insidious and damaging is the sin of pride when it is able to reside within the hearts of church leaders, as we see taking place here in this passage, men who have the power and the position to do real harm as they teach and as they influence the congregations that they are entrusted to govern.

I'm reminded of a "real life" example of the damaging effects of entrenched pride within the hearts of church leaders.

I was told about a certain man who had been asked to preach for a while in a church in a town near us. After a few times of preaching, some of the leadership within that church decided to call the man to be their regular pastor.

Unfortunately, there was a firmly entrenched and ongoing quarrel between two of the most powerful Deacons within that church leadership. One of those Deacons always seeming to oppose what the other Deacon would want to do. And in the calling of this man to be the Pastor, one of those Deacons wanted to call this man but the other Deacon did not.

And with their pride at the forefront, a battle began within the leadership and within the congregation, with the family members of the two Deacons taking sides in the argument.

The man who was being called to be the Pastor bowed out of the controversy, but the problem still remained. And yes, the problem was there before that new pastor entered the picture, and sadly, it will remain as long as "pride" remains in control of the souls of those men in leadership.

What is so important that keeps otherwise solid church members constantly at odds with one another? Unfortunately, it is usually something not worth the time and the energies that are given to it, and especially not worth the damage it does to a church. But that is the way and the evil effects of "pride", of "pride".

Before we finish with this very needful teaching by the Lord Jesus about pride, may we again consider some personal illustrations, episodes of "pride" that seem to have become common, even prevalent within the souls of ordinary folks like you and me.

With Social Media, Facebook, Tik Tok, and others being so dominant within our culture today, most all of us are given a platform from which we can voice our thoughts and opinions and then offer comments about most anything that happens. And if we will only pause and take just one moment to consider what is taking place within all those comments that are being offered by people, we will hear the sinful voice of pride being shouted loudly, and often angrily so. Each person seeming to believe that they have the perfect wisdom for every matter that they are commenting about.

"Pride", "Pride", "Pride" being exuded and spilled out and shouted loudly, and the sin of it is so very, very evident.

Commentors crying out loudly for everyone, or anyone or just one someone to listen and to think that they are “right” about whatever they are commenting on.

Folks, please, please do pause before you offer your next comment on one of those matters on your favorite Social Media outlet. Yes, you probably believe that you have good motives in mind as you comment. But your supposed good motives alone do not justify some of the comments that you might make.

Again dear Christian, as the Lord tells us here in verse 11 of our passage, the only remedy for such pride-filled situations and circumstances is “humility”, an intentional choice for “humility”. Listen and we’ll close,

¹¹ For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.” (Luke 14:11)

And then also, with those verses from Philippians chapter 2,

¹ Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy,

² fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.

³ Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself.

⁴ Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.

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Let's pray.