

Humility & Power

FBC Muleshoe
February 16, 2020
Proverbs 16:19
2020 Proverbs series

Scripture Reading

Luke 14:8-11

This week has filled with examples of
Life experiences that can lead to Humility.

The superstar singer Carrie Underwood
Discovered that her four-year-old son
Filled out a questionnaire at preschool.

He noted that his mother is 70 years old
And her job is doing laundry.

And when asked what your Mom is really good at he wrote
Folding laundry.

Humbling for a superstar singer.

Voyager 1 was launched from Cape Canaveral
In 1977.

It was a spacecraft intended to take photos
Of planets, meteors, and other items
As it moved across the solar system.

As Voyager moved passed Neptune
The engineers instructed the camera to take
One more photo of the solar system
As it passed.

On February 14, 1990
Voyager 1 took this photo.

I am not sure if you can see it from
On the screen, but the planet earth
Is in this photo from 3.7 billion miles away.

Do you see it?

The good folks at NASA say this photo
Is a reminder that this planet is all we have,
And we are but a small dot in all of creation.

It is a humbling thought.

This morning we are thinking about Humility.

St. Augustine wrote to a student
Named Dioscorus that the sum
Of all Christian teaching is Humility.

Augustine believed, Humility is the highest demonstration of faith.

Throughout the New Testament
You will find several lists of Christian virtues.

No two are alike.

Paul list the Christian virtues
Several times,
And his list varies slightly from letter to letter.

For instance in Galatians 5
Paul list the fruits of the Holy Spirit

As:

Love

Joy

Peace

Patience

Kindness

Generosity

Faithfulness

Gentleness

And Self Control.

Humility does not make Paul's list
In Galatians.

However in his letter to the church
At Colossae,
Humility is third on the list.

Compassion

Kindness

Humility

Meekness

Patience.

It is interesting that in Colossians
Love does not make the list.

When Paul wrote to the Corinthians
He said that among faith, hope and love,
Love was the greatest.

But, over the centuries,
Humility has risen to the top,
As the virtue that best characterizes
The disciples of Jesus Christ.

In the Gospels, Jesus does not give a list
Of virtues, but on two occasions he gives
A list of vices that reveal the character of our
Sinful lives.

Jesus said these vices defile our lives
More than any foods we would eat
With dirty hands.

Paul always gives the two lists in contrast.

Vices originate in sin.

Followed by a list of virtues come from the Holy Spirit.

The virtues are signals of a changed life.

In some corners of the Christian world
Humility is seen as the most necessary of the
Christian virtues.

C.S. Lewis says that Pride is the worst
Of the sins. Lewis agrees
That Pride is the deadliest of the seven deadly sins.

Pride puts us in opposition to God.

Pride leads to every other vice because
We take on an anti-God state of mind.

Humility is the opposite of Pride.

Instead of pushing yourself forward
As Pride does,

Humility prompts a person not to
Even think of herself.

Here is C.S. Lewis definition of
Humility from Mere Christianity,

“Do not imagine that if you meet a really humble man he will be what most people call “humble” nowadays: he will not be s a sort of greasy, swarmy person, who is always telling you that, of course, he is nobody. Probably all you will think about him is that he seemed a cheerful, intelligent chap who took a real interest in what you said to him. If you do dislike him it will be because you feel a little envious of anyone who seems to enjoy life so easily. He will not be thinking about Humility: He will not be thinking about himself at all.”

The problem with that definition
Is it probably how Lewis saw himself.

If Humility is the highest of the Christian virtues
Then is always under pressure from Pride.

Our sense of Pride is so
Powerful it is possible,
To take Jesus teachings on Humility
And turn them into a strategy for Christian success.

We could twist Jesus words around
And create our own plan for
Getting ahead of other Christians.

We could out Christian the Christians.

A few minutes ago, Emily read from Luke 14.
Jesus goes to a dinner

And he notices that everyone has scrambled
For the best seats.

He takes the moment
To tell a parable about Humility.

When you are invited to a wedding banquet
To not sit in the place of honor
Just in case someone more distinguished
Then you arrives for dinner
And you are asked to take another seat.

Can you imagine the embarrassment?

So Jesus advises, that we are to take

A seat in a less prominent place in the room.

And it is better to have the host call you up
For a better seat, than to take one for yourself.

So, here is how we turn that around
To get ahead, by getting behind.

We sit in the back.

Everyone sees us sit in the back.
Everyone recognizes that we are not
Assuming on our own importance.

If someone wants to call us forward
To a place of prominence,
That is their decision,
But we will not take that for our own.

So we demonstrate Humility
By sitting in the back.

So, in our Pride,
We take a lesser seat,
Hoping to be elevated
In such a way that everyone can see.

Pride is sneaky.
Genuine Humility is difficult.

In the tenth chapter of Mark,
Jesus is speaking of the difficulties
Of wealth and faith.

It is easier for a camel to go through
The eye of a needle
Than it is a rich person to enter
The Kingdom of Heaven.

Jesus finished that story with a declaration
That it may be difficult for the wealthy to find faith
But with God, anything was possible.

It was a word not to let the idea of wealth
Turn someone away from faith,
Because with God, anything is possible.

But, Peter takes the opportunity to point

Out that the disciples have left everything
To follow Jesus, so does that give us a
Better standing.

And Jesus answers,
“Many who are first will be last,
And the last will be first.”

Which when put in the mind of sneaky Pride
Means, if I am consciously and visibly
Coming in last, that must mean I am first.

In the Christian community that prizes Humility
The last places in line become the spots
Where the scum takes place.

If I am last, that means Humility.
The last will be first.

Good Christians stand around at the back
Of the line fussing about who must go-ahead
Of who.

“You go ahead.”

“No, I insist, you go.”

“No, I insist.”

We have humility battles
Driven by our Pride to be
The most humble of the believers.

One afternoon in the sanctuary
A preacher was overcome
With conviction and fell upon the altar
Crying out, “Lord, I am Nothing.”

A deacon came into the sanctuary
Heard the preacher and also fell
On the altar and cried out,
“Lord, I am nothing.”

The custodian came into the sanctuary.
He heard the deacon and the preacher
And he too fell on the altar
And cried, “Lord, I too am nothing.”

The preacher lifted his head
Saw the custodian,
Nudged the deacon and said,
“Look who thinks he is nothing.”

Pride and Humility make for a problematic mixture.

When it comes to Humility
If we are not careful,
We are we allow our Pride
To create a false humility.

Among the virtues,
Humility is the one it is possible
To falsely replicate.

Let's face it,

Patience is hard to fake.

Compassion is difficult to muster.

Peace is hard to convey.

Love is hard to sustain.

But, Humility,
Humility you can manufacture
An episode or two here and there.

You can generate a story
of Humility that people will tell
when you are not present.

You can create a moment maybe two
When you placed someone's needs
Before your own.

And the observers will believe
You are humble, but you will know
That all the while it was your Pride
Wanting to create the image of Humility.

Here is the catch for reversing the impulse
Of Pride to create a false narrative

Of Humility among a people who
Prize humility.

When we speak of genuine Humility
I think it helps to acknowledge
The irony.

Our drive to demonstrate our faithfulness
Can be pushed by our Pride.

Let's turn to the Proverbs
With a genuine desire to serve God
With no deceptive motivations.

Proverbs 27:2

**²Let another praise you, and not your own mouth—
a stranger, and not your own lips.**

Humility is not counter to good self-esteem
In many ways, Humility is a byproduct
Of a good self-image.

If you feel good about yourself
You do not feel a need to push yourself
Into the position notoriety.

If you are genuinely confident in your abilities
You do not have to boast of your accomplishments.

Smart people do not need to insist
That their intellectual abilities,
Are superior.

People will figure out you are smart.

Great athletes do not need to announce
They are great.

It was Walter Payton who said,
If you are good at something you will
Tell others. If you are great at something
They will tell you.”

People will know and recognize it.

Great writers do not need to tell
Of their talent.

Their books tell the story.

The word from the Proverbs is to resist
That prideful impulse to speak of your own
Accomplishments.

This week we received notice from
The Muleshoe Awards Program
That First Baptist Church has been chosen
As the Religious Organization of the year
For 2020.

If we will agree to accept our award
At the cost of \$255.00 the Muleshoe Awards Program
Will provide us with
This acrylic award
And a press release announcing to the community
That we are the best.

The email also tells you how to
Use the award to gather new customers
Who are drawn to associate with winners.

\$255.00 for an award from an organization
None of us know
For the purpose of bragging about ourselves.

It does not seem to fit with a Christian business model.

Genuine Humility does not speak
Of its accomplishments,
It lets others do it for them.

The Wiseman says do not
Tell of your accomplishments,
Let others speak of your good works.

Proverbs 16:18

¹⁸**Pride goes before destruction,
and a haughty spirit before a fall.**

Proverbs 16:19

¹⁹It is better to be of a lowly spirit among the poor than to divide the spoil with the proud.

Leeann Marquis has been a go-getter
Get things, accomplished person
Since High School.

While in college she began working
In the corporate world helping executives
Get things done.

She oversaw projects,
She ran conferences for hundreds of people,
She was hiring and firing people before she
Was allowed to rent a car.

Leann had her life together
And she had no patience for anyone who
Did not have their life together.

If you had problems and could not
Get your job done, or if you were just too lazy
To get your life together,
She could quickly terminate you.

“Pride goes before the fall,” she says.

Today, she is ashamed of that person who “had it all together.”

Her fall came when the Pediatric Cardiologist
Said, “This heart defect is fatal.”

Her son was going to die.

The stability evaporated from her life.

She claims that the tragic event broke her mind.
Her short term memory evaporated.

Short term memory loss is a side effect of stress.

When LeaAnn looks back at her younger
“Had it all together” self,
With no patience for anyone who was not
As together as she was,
She is ashamed.

Pride goes before the fall.

There is a significant flaw in my supposition
That a prideful person can create a
Bit of Humility here and there
That can lead to a reputation for Humility.

Oh, I think it is possible to create an impression
Of Humility,
Among the people who know you casually.

But the people around you will know
Who you are.

You may be able to be humble in front
Of some of the people some of the time
But if your faith and motives are not genuine
you cannot be humble in front
Of all of the people all of the time.

Pride always leads to destruction.
Pride pushes us to take silly risks.
Pride prompts us to miss details.

Pride never leads to long term success.

Proverbs 18:12

¹²**Before destruction one's heart is haughty,
but Humility goes before honor.**

Debbie and I spent some time this week
Discussing examples of Humility.

I shared the idea that our Pride is able
To twist Jesus teachings into a
Pathway for success
And she sneered and said something
Not as complimentary of me as she should.

Debbie said, "Genuine Humility
Was Winifred Lee."

In her younger life,
Winifred was a force in

The Women's Ministry Union
Among Texas Baptist.

In a happenstance introduction
In Beaumont, Texas she met
And fell in love with a rancher
from Motley County Texas.

When we moved to Matador,
Winifred was a widow
Who had never had children of her own.

We had two.

Charissa who was three years old
And Timothy was just old enough
To roll around the floor,
But not crawl or walk.

Winifred was on the pastor search committee
And from the first moment offered
To keep our kids.

We wondered, "Why would she want to keep them?"

We knew those kids.
Why would you volunteer for hazardous duty?

When we moved to Matador,
She was insistent.

Debbie could not bring herself to
Impose on Winifred.

After a few weeks of asking
Winifred barged in.

She knocked on the door,
Put five dollars in Debbie's hands
Saying as she walked past,
"Go get a coke.
I am going to play
With these kids."

Debbie came walking into the church
With \$5.00 in her hand.

I said, "Well, let's go to the to the drugstore

For a while and we'll come back to see
If they have her tied up or something.

That night Winifred stayed for dinner.

And our lives wove in with her life.

She became our go-to baby sitter.

She kept the kids while we went to
Away games.

She kept them when we went to cold home games.

She kept them when Debbie had appointments.

On the day, when Debbie began
Miscarrying our third child,
We could not find Winifred.

We needed to get to Lubbock and
no one in town had seen her.

We left Charissa and Timothy
With friends.

By early afternoon, they had located Winifred.
She had taken a friend to the Doctor in Plainview.

Winifred took the kids home,
Fed them,
Bathed them,
Put them to bed,
And she was asleep on our couch
When I came in at 2:00 in the morning.

She hugged me and cried.

After that experience Winifred
Told us she had lost three children.

Winifred was very generous with Debbie
And me.

The Oak Table in our living room
Was purchased by Winifred because
She could not stand the thought
Of us moving to this church

With early married furniture.

A few weeks after the loss of that child
We received a letter from the Methodist Foundation
Of Lubbock, informing us that our bill was paid
In full.

Paid in full by the Methodist Foundation.

Isn't that nice,
The Methodists are taking care of Baptist preachers.

One day I made mention to Larry Hoyle
A former Methodist that our hospital bill
Had been paid by the Methodist Foundation.

He said, "Do you believe that?"

Well, I have no idea why else they would send that letter.

Larry said, "I bet that Winifred paid that bill.
It sounds like something she might do,
But you will never know."

²³**A person's Pride will bring humiliation,
but one who is lowly in spirit will obtain honor**