

Series: Humble King	Reference: Various Passages	Title: Humility	Date: 11.25.18
Website Writeup: This is our first sermon in this series, an intro into looking at Pride in comparison to Christ's Humility.			

Color changes in text indicate slide changes

I have a mansion, forget the price. Ain't never been there, they tell me it's nice. I live in hotels, tear out the walls. I have accountants, pay for it all. They say I'm crazy but I have a have a good time. I'm just looking for clues at the scene of the crime. Life's been good to me so far.

My Maserati does one-eighty-five. I lost my license, now I don't drive. I have a limo, ride in the back. I lock the doors in case I'm attacked. I'm making records, my fans they can't wait. They write me letters, tell me I'm great. So I got me an office, gold records on the wall. Just leave a message, maybe I'll call. Lucky I'm sane after all I've been through. I can't complain but sometimes I still do. Life's been good to me so far.

I go to parties sometimes until four. It's hard to leave when you can't find the door. It's tough to handle this fortune & fame. Everybody's so different, I haven't changed. They say I'm lazy but it takes all my time. I keep on goin' guess I'll never know why. Life's been good to me so far.

That was *Life's Been Good* by Joe Walsh. Compare that to the song, *Humble King*, by Brenton Brown.

Oh kneel me down again. Here at Your feet. Show me how much You love humility. Oh Spirit be the star that leads me to, the humble heart of love I see in You. You are the God of the broken, friend of the weak. You wash the feet of the weary. Embrace the ones in need. I want to be like you Jesus. To have this heart in me. You are the God of the humble. You are the humble King. Here in the dusty ground, I bow with kings. Where wise men laid before their offerings. I lay no golden crown here at your feet. Just this my broken life, I offer thee.

Walsh spins the story of pride. Brown exalts our humble King. Looking at Philippians 2:1-11, we see this humble image of Jesus in a powerful & moving description...

“Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind.

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others. In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:

Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage, rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death — even death on a cross!

Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

Why Does Humility Matter? Because the opposite, Pride, is so damaging. John Stott wrote: *“Pride is your greatest enemy, humility is your greatest friend.”* CS Lewis regarded pride as ‘*the Great Sin*’. Pride might be defined as the absence of humility. And, as Humanity concludes God’s dead, Pride’s released from all restraint, becoming a juggernaut destroying life & relationship at worst, and at best, keeping individuals quietly blind to the love & freedom they could find in relationship with Jesus.

Thomas Tarrants wrote, *“...what throughout history has been recognized as the deadliest of vices is now almost celebrated as a virtue in our culture. Pride & arrogance are conspicuous among the rich, powerful, successful, famous, celebrities & even some religious leaders. And it’s also alive & well in ordinary people, including each of us. Yet few of us realize how dangerous it is to our souls & how greatly it hinders our intimacy with God & love for others. Humility, on the other hand, is often seen as weakness & few of us know much about it, or pursue it.”*¹

In the chapter titled, *The Great Sin*, of his book *Mere Christianity*, CS Lewis wrote: *“According to Christian teachers, the essential vice, the utmost evil, is Pride. Unchastity, anger, greed, drunkenness & all that, are mere flea bites in comparison: it was through Pride the devil became the devil: Pride leads to every other vice: it’s the complete anti-God state of mind...it’s Pride which has been the chief cause of misery in every nation & family since the world began.”* Pride’s the one great impediment to intimacy with God & others; the locust eating away at the growth of peace in relationships - it should be soberly addressed. We should ask for the Holy Spirit to crucify our pride on the cross. Do you do that? Do you literally sit & ask for such things?

Lewis summarizes the thinking of great saints through the ages. Augustine, Aquinas Calvin, Luther & many others taught pride was the root of sin. But it’s not just Christian writers who agree, a Harvard psychologist wrote on neuroticism, *“Any neurotic is living a life which in some respects is extreme in its self-centeredness...the region of his misery represents a complete preoccupation with himself. The very nature of the neurotic disorder is tied to pride. If the sufferer is hypersensitive, resentful, captious, he may be indicating a fear that he will not appear to advantage in competitive*

¹ Article: Pride & Humility, by Thomas A Tarrants, III, D. Min.

situations where he wants to show his worth. If he is chronically indecisive, he is showing fear that he may do the wrong thing and be discredited. If he is over-scrupulous & self-critical, he may be endeavoring to show how praiseworthy he really is. Thus, most neuroses, are, from the point of view of religion, mixed with the sin of pride.”² In short, we’re a neurotic prideful mess, the definition covers almost everyone!

Pride is the great sin. It’s the devil’s most effective & destructive tool...spiritual leaders, Catholic, Eastern Orthodox & Protestant alike, unite around this conviction...it’s so vigorously & clearly taught in Scripture.

Pride first rears its ugly head in Genesis 3, where we see the devil using it to seduce Adam & Eve. In the appropriate form of a serpent, that which waits & strikes when you least expect, his approach was simple & deadly. First, he contradicts what God had said about eating the fruit & charged Him with lying. This rejection of God’s word introduced them to the hitherto unknown possibility of unbelief, something nonexistent before this. A deception intended to massage doubt into their minds about the truthfulness & reliability of God. Think about that, it’s why gossip is so strongly addressed in Scripture - when someone whispers in your ear something untrue of another, it can never be taken back & taints your view of the silent third party woefully absent to defend themselves. Satan did this concerning God.

In the next breath, he drew them deeper into deception by contending, God’s reason for lying was to keep them from enjoying all the possibilities inherent in being Godlike. He aimed to undermine their confidence in the goodness & love of God, arousing the desire to become as God.³ And it’s been our problem ever since, the desire to be godlike, Humanity, disregards Godly direction in lieu of our own collective opinion & falls in line with popular culture-speak to gain approval from each other. We no longer find our identity in the Creator, walking hand-in-hand with our Heavenly Father, listening to his lead; we now hopelessly seek identity & approval in the faulty notions of the created.

Sometimes it’s only those close to us who are able to identify our pride. A CEO of a Fortune 500 Company pulled into a gas station with his wife, pumped gas & went into pay. Upon returning to the car he noticed his wife by the pump talking to her old flame, the gas station attendant. As they drove away in silence, he finally said with an arrogant smirk, “I know what you’re thinking.” “What?,” she asked. “Your glad you married the CEO & not the gas station attendant?” She said, “Actually, I was thinking, if I’d married him, he’d be the CEO & you’d be pumping gas.” Pride in self is hardest to see.

Johnathan Edwards in 1737 commented on the seriousness of pride, saying: *“The first & worst cause of errors that abound in our day & age is spiritual pride. This is the main door by which the devil comes into the hearts of those who are zealous for the advancement of Christ. It’s the chief inlet of smoke from the bottomless pit to darken*

² Gordon Allport, quoted in Solomon Schimmel, *The Seven Deadly Sins* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 28.

³ Article: Pride & Humility, by Thomas A Tarrants, III, D. Min.

the mind & mislead the judgment. Pride is the main handle by which he has hold of Christian persons & the chief source of all the mischief he introduces to clog & hinder a work of God. Spiritual pride is the main spring, or at least the main support of all other errors. Until this disease is cured, medicines are applied in vain to heal all other diseases.”

We have a plethora of prideful role models in society from Conner McGregor, to Kanye West, to 'The Donald'. In the Biblical record we also find men such as Uzziah, a believer who began well, and ended sadly. When he became king of Judah at age 16, he sought God & saw need for spiritual direction under Zechariah. 2 Chron. 26:5 says, “As long as he sought the Lord, God gave him success.” As a result, he acquired wealth & power. Then things changed; chapter 26 vv15–16 gives us insight, “His fame spread far & wide, for he was greatly helped until he became powerful. But after Uzziah became powerful, his pride led to his downfall.”

After he'd risen in strength, he stopped seeking the Lord & the spiritual direction of Zechariah. He no longer depended on God, growing in reliance upon his own strength & thought. Pride often increases as we become stronger, more successful, prosperous & recognized by others. In fact, anything, real or imagined, which elevates us above others can be a platform for pride. Ironically, this is true even through avenues of God's blessing, as we see with Uzziah.

Uzziah's blessings hadn't lead to humble thankfulness to God, rather lofty thoughts of himself, developing an exaggerated sense of his own importance & abilities. This pride brought very serious consequences, becoming a living illustration of Prov. 11:2, “When pride comes, then comes disgrace.” And Prov. 16:18, “pride goes before destruction.”⁴

The truth is, until we choose to accept our existence as a work of God, pride will erode. Or, humbly trust his Word & direction, no matter where it leads, pride will eat away, like a moth, at the fabric of life. Until we can humbly begin with God, in our pride we'll never be able to appreciate others for their contributions to our lives. Artists know this well, you can't truly make anything original. Every so often there's a newness about a work of art which *seems* to break away, but it's still tethered to & built on the foundation of all artistic influence before it. Artists even feel the limitations of their material - we can't make our own paint, just as Humanity can't make its own dirt. Humility deflates, brings peace, equalizes, acknowledges & respects others, shows appreciation & fosters healthy relationships.

Humble role models are harder to come by; sometimes we stumble upon them. Like the day we realize a parent, grandparent, or friend is far more remarkable than we'd realized. And the prominent character trait which strikes us about them is, they approach what we perceive to be their success with a level of *humility*. They take no value in status or accolade, their good work's been done for the sake of others. They

⁴ Article: Pride & Humility, by Thomas A Tarrants, III, D. Min.

realize, if they do stand tall, it's on the shoulders of those in history & around them now. Keenly aware, they didn't become who they are without a measure of failure & weren't the only ones responsible for their successes. They understate their own talents in order to make us more aware of ours; humble people lift others up, not break them down.

Good heroes are always humble since **humility leads**. God chose to present Himself as humble, or better said, His humility is revealed in Christ. The word humility comes from the root word, "humus," or *earth*. It literally speaks of being "on the ground" & "of the ground." Words like *lowly, modest, small & meek*, all enhance the meaning of the word.

Humanity doesn't see itself as earthen, or part of the ground any longer. It feels no need of God any longer, with a push to regard faith as folly of weak-minded persons. Humanity, as a whole, can be personified as a man who met God saying, "*We can clone bodies, manipulate DNA, transplant organs, cure disease & do many things formerly thought to be miraculous. We've no more use for you.*" And God responds, "*Well, let's put your thoughts to the test? We can both make a man, but like in the beginning?*" Humanity responds arrogantly, "Fine," while bending down to scoop up some dirt to begin. And God says... "*Wait a minute...get your own dirt.*"

God could have led, like current leaders advancing themselves on social, online, or business platforms, with power & largeness of presence. But instead, He led with humility. His first move on the chess board of life is humility. It's where he starts from. A baby, rather than an angry mob, is the beginning of His revolution. A Carpenter, rather than CEO, is the founder of love's dynasty. Jesus didn't have the credentials we look for in leaders, he didn't flatter, or blow sunshine to gain favor. If we follow him, it's due to humility of character, the Truth he speaks & his willingness to go to death in love.

Humility transforms the celebrated leadership virtues of courage, wisdom & truthfulness, fueling their engines. Think about it...if someone shows courage in battle, wisdom in life, or even if they are technically right when they speak - we don't listen, nor think highly of them if we smell pride behind their words & actions. But...if they're humble...we seek them out & sing their praise. And today, if there's any elevation of the character trait of humility in public leadership, the ideal comes from Jesus himself, who chose the most powerful leadership stance of all when He washed his disciples' feet.

It didn't go unnoticed when Jesus stripped away his outer garments kneeling before his disciples with bowl & rag in hand to wash their feet. It was a powerful image, because it was the slave, or servant, who always waited at the door of the masters home to wash the feet of arriving guests. Everyone walking dusty streets needed foot washing. That servant though was the non-person. A tool. A mechanism. And Jesus called attention to them, and, by example, said, "*If you want to follow me this is the stance you must take - that of a lowly servant of other peoples needs.*" The great equalizing statement. We're all on the same footing in the light of God. Like Jesus, "*Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage, rather,*

he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.”

It seems God wanted to communicate something clearly about the kind of role model He intended for the human race to see in Himself. For those who make Jesus their role model, humility's a prerequisite to greatness.

Because **Humility Transforms**. What happens inside of us when humility comes into our lives? Actor George Clooney once said, *“I watch ‘Batman & Robin’ from time to time. It’s the worst movie I ever made, so it’s a good lesson in humility.”*

For most of us, lessons in humility usually come at a cost. We're embarrassed when how impressed we are with ourselves, makes us look silly in front of others. Or when we suffer a great failure, though we had absolutely convinced ourselves, and others, we had only sunshine & rainbows ahead of us. Or when we find ourselves confronted by a revelation that the success, or freedom, we're currently experiencing was built on the backs of others' sacrifice.

Golfer, Arnold Palmer related, *“It was the final hole of the 1961 Masters tournament, and I had a one-stroke lead & had just hit a very satisfying tee shot. I felt I was in pretty good shape. As I approached my ball, I saw an old friend standing at the edge of the gallery. He motioned me over, stuck out his hand & said, ‘Congratulations.’ I took his hand & shook it, but as soon as I did, I knew I had lost my focus. On my next two shots I hit the ball into a sand trap, then put it over the edge of the green. I missed a putt & lost the Masters.”* A humbling moment for him in a public way.

However humility comes to us, it transforms our worldview. Arrogance gives way to a humble confidence. Pride gives way to a quiet trust in Grace, rather than in our own abilities & talents to carry us forward. Humility's a correct understanding of ourselves – neither too high, nor too low. We're lifted up by humility. It tells the poor they're accepted & loved, and keeps us as aware of our great frailty, as much as our great strength. And through all transforming lessons, we learn to elevate others above ourselves, to serve them with our gifts & to truly see others as the immeasurably magnificent treasures they are.

In this series we'll focus on the God who comes to us in weakness every Christmas, through the passage of Philippians 2. *As Andrew Murray wrote, “Christ is the humility of God embodied in human nature; the Eternal Love humbling itself, clothing itself in the garb of meekness & gentleness, to win & serve & save us.”*⁵

This Humility of Christ isn't acquired quickly, or even easily, it's the work of a lifetime of devotion to Jesus. Elephants are eaten one bite at a time & this is our first mouthful.

⁵ Andrew Murray, *Humility* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell, nd), 17.