**Humility**

Based on [Luke 14:1-11](https://biblia.com/books/esv/Lk14.1-11)

Preached on October 13, 2019

The Seventeenth Sunday after Trinity

Pastor Nathan Fuehrer

This weeks readings center on the theme of humility. I was in a class a few weeks back where we were talking about teacher accountability. Teaching standards require that if you think your child deserved a different grade than what he received, there is supposed to be a way to appeal. I explained that this reminds teachers of the need for humility; by that I simply meant that no human being should think themselves perfect, or incapable of making mistakes. But what surprised me is that my classmate didn’t like that word I used. “Humility”, she said, “sounds like humiliation and no one should feel humiliated.” It shows just how counter-intuitive Christianity is to the spirit that is at work in the world. It says a lot that the LGBT movement has adopted for itself the slogan and virtue of “pride”. Only pride is not a virtue...it’s what comes before the destruction, and a haughty spirit before the fall.”

The pharisees were also prideful. They also disliked humility. On the Sabbath, Jesus went to dine at the house of a ruler of the Pharisees. There was a man with dropsy there. They often criticized Jesus for healing people on the sabbath. But Jesus, being in no way a people pleaser, saw a man with dropsy, had compassion, and healed him right before there eyes. And knowing their thoughts, he said to them, “**Which of you, having a son or an ox that has fallen into a well on a Sabbath day, will not immediately pull him out?**” And they could not reply to these things.

With these words, Jesus accuses these men of hypocrisy. They are hypocrites, shown in the fact that practice a sort of of cronyism by enforcing God’s law selectively. For example, think of a police officer who finds two people who are caught speeding. The first is a stranger, and he gives a speeding ticket. When he pulls over the second, he finds out it is his friend, and lets him off without a ticket. Such a police officer is prideful, because he thinks his friends are more important, because they are his friends.

Jesus says this is what the pharisees did with the Sabbath Day, and really is at the root of their character. They didn’t like Jesus or his disciples, nor did they care for the lowly people he healed, so they criticize him for healing on the sabbath. And yet, it was well known that they were willing to rescue an animal or their own family who were in danger on the sabbath. What’s the difference? Cronyism. Confirmation bias. The Pharisee decide who to reward and who to punish based on their own judgments, not God’s. To believe your judgments are better simply because they are yours, that your family is better because they are yours, that your church is better because it is yours...that is pride.

Some conclude that Phariseeism is simply a sin unique to religious people. But really, it’s simply the sin of pride. Pride is seen most clearly in hypocrisy and in double standards. It is plainly seen in those who accuse others of what they excuse in themselves. **And it is a gateway to all kinds of sin...to the point where people will trample on innocent strangers in order to make a way for themselves.**

Friends, pride is a spirit at work in the world and in the flesh. It is the spirit that is at work in the world teaches that you must assert yourself above others, because you deserve more than they do. I remember in Law School, hearing stories of students who, **after they went to the library and researched to complete their assignments, would rip out the relevant pages in the books so that their classmates--obviously seen as competitors--would have a harder time completing the assignment and maybe it would affect their grade.** I was shocked to hear this, but really it makes sense. We are all guilty of at least a little pride I’m sure, and try to justify ourselves in it. “I deserve this; why shouldn’t I get to do a little of that.” Well, want to sabotaging other people so you can get ahead...all that is is pride taken to its full logical conclusion.

We ought to thank God, not just at Thanksgiving, but every day. Thank God that when humanity fell, he made sure we still had a sense of right and wrong. People still fear God, even if they don’t know the God they fear. People still have a degree of humility, because they know they aren’t all powerful. Superstitions have arisen throughout human history, false religions that try to give expression to this feeling of weakness, and fear, and guilt that humanity feels towards heaven. Sure, we are all born selfish, but we are all born with a conscience too, and that tension helps to keep our race from the full extent of evil its capable of.

Over against this primordial sin, God continued to reveal his word to his people throughout history. Not only did it’s vestige remain on the hearts of all humanity so they are without excuse...but he continued to speak to his people through his prophets. Even in the earliest days of the Fathers, and of Moses...God taught mercy, self-sacrifice, the obligation to love the neighbor, help the sojourner, help your enemies when they are in need.

And then, when the fullness of time arrived, he sent his son into the world to contradict the world. He taught that when you are sinned against, don’t sin back. When you are reviled, don’t revile in return. When your enemy demands your cloak, give him your tunic as well. When he demands you go a mile go two; and offer the other cheek when he strikes you. He taught that it is better to give than to receive, and his apostles taught the same. They taught that we are to help our enemies and in that way heap burning coals upon them. They taught that wives should submit to their husbands, even those who don’t themselves obey the word...and that husbands should love their wives and deal with them in an understanding way as the weaker vessel. They taught that servants should cheerfully serve their masters, even unworthy ones, because they have been bought at a price and their treasure is stored up in heaven.

And so Jesus taught humility, to consider others as more important than yourself. Because if you rush to the head of the table, the master will embarass you. But if you sit at the lowest place, he will honor and exalt you. God does not exalt those who exalt themselves. Don’t believe that lie of the devil that says you have to stick up for yourself, push others around who would push you. What is it to you if you suffer?...better to suffer for doing good than to deserve it for doing evil. Better to be humble than prideful. If you exalt yourself, God will humiliate you. If you humiliate yourself; God will exalt you in the day that he sends his son to come again in clouds of glory.