

Rev. Janet Doyle
Elmer Presbyterian Church
Sunday, October 23, 2022
Scripture: Luke 18:9-14

Sermon: Humble Yourself in the Sight of the Lord

A well-known Christian businessman was visiting a church and was asked to give his testimony. He said, "I have a fine family, a large house, a successful business, and a good reputation. I have plenty of money so I can support some Christian ministries very generously. Many organizations want me on their board of directors. I have good health and almost unlimited opportunities. What more could I ask from God?" As he paused, a voice shouted from the back of the auditorium, "How about asking God for a good dose of humility?"

Humility. What comes to your mind when you hear the word "humility"? Humble. What do we mean when we say someone is a humble person? "*God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.*" (Proverbs 3:34) First Peter 5:5-6 makes it clear that we are responsible to put on the garment of humility. "*So humble yourselves under the mighty power of God, and at the right time he will lift you up in honor.*"

People proudly flaunt their accomplishments, possessions, or qualities they deem admirable in expectation of praise. Yet, selfish pride is a hindrance to salvation and to a fruitful relationship with God and others. This is the kind of pride that stems from self-righteousness or conceit.

God opposes the proud because pride is sinful and a hindrance to seeking him. Those who insist on elevating themselves and refusing to trust God as sovereign, good, and trustworthy will find their way opposed by God.

Psalm 10:4 explains that the proud are so consumed with themselves that they make no room for God. God will oppose those attempting to be the god of their own lives as we see in our world

today. Pride refuses to bend the knee to God or repent of sin, and that keeps many people from salvation.

In contrast to God's opposition to the proud is God's grace to the humble. Those who humble themselves find God's favor.

Psalms 138:6 says, "*Though the Lord is great, he cares for the humble.*" God shows his favor to those with a right view—a humble view—of themselves, and he promises them restoration. Humility is related to repentance.

Exalting ourselves pushes God out of his rightful place in our lives, and he will humble us "*because the Lord disciplines the one he loves.*" (Hebrews 12:6)

As we humble ourselves, he "*gives grace generously.*" (James 4:6) God gives us grace that is sufficient to meet every need we have and every sin we face if we are humble enough to receive it. We must remember that God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble. Do we elevate ourselves or turn to God? God calls us to repent of self-righteousness, self-demands, and proud exaltation and instead "*submit ourselves, then, to God.*" (James 4:7)

Each believer is called to "*look not only to his/her own interests, but also to the interests of others*" (Philippians 2:4). As we humble ourselves, we will experience God's grace and the rewards he promises.

Luke 14:11 says, "*For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.*"

In Luke 18:9-14 Jesus told the parable of a self-righteous Pharisee who entered the temple at the same time with a self-conscious tax collector, and we see that they are two different men with two different prayers to God. The Pharisee was very religious and regularly went to temple. The Pharisees were the self-appointed legal watchdogs and a very powerful political group. On the other hand, tax collectors were the old IRS agents. The tax collectors were the social outcasts of society.

One man knew he was a sinner and acknowledged it before God, and the other didn't see his sin and boasted of his righteousness. Here

we see two different attitudes. One man is boasting of himself; putting others down, and the other man is pouring out his heart to God. One man saw his great need and the other his great self.

The Church isn't a glorified social club, it is a hospital for sinners. The saved come to church to worship almighty God and invite the lost to get saved but we are all sinners, every one of us.

People say, "I am a good person. Look at all the fine things I am doing but look at that person. I am so glad that I am better than they are." In God's eyes there are no distinctions. Jesus died on the cross for everyone's sins to be forgiven. God hates sin but loves the sinner. That is the Good news.

Everyone can be forgiven and be made new creations. Being good won't save you. Ephesians 2:8-9 says, "*For by grace are you saved through faith, and this is not of yourself, it is the gift of God; not of works lest anyone should boast.*"

As we look at the prayer of the Pharisee, we see that he prayed with himself and not to God. He was simply boasting to others and letting them know about the good things that he was doing and bad things he wasn't doing.

Jesus said, "*The Pharisees love to stand praying in the marketplace that men may hear them.*" The Pharisee boasted of his morality and trusted in himself that he was righteous and not like the others who were cheaters, sinners, adulterers and he certainly was not like that tax collector. He started to look around him and judge others thinking he was better than them. The Pharisees thought they were spiritual. It can all become meaningless if your heart is not right with God. You need to repent and ask for forgiveness.

In contrast, when we look at the prayer of the Tax Collector, he came humbly, and he came confessing his sin.

1 John 1:9 says, "*If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*"

Psalms 24:3-4 says, "*Who may ascend into the hill of the Lord? Or who may stand in his holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart.*"

We need to be like David in Psalm 51, *“Have mercy upon me, O God, according to your lovingkindness, according to the multitude of your tender mercies. Blot out my transgressions, wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.”*

The Pharisee went away just as he had come, lost and self-centered, trusting only in himself and not God. He kept track of all the good things he had done, but he never acknowledged himself as a sinner in need of forgiveness. He didn't cry out for mercy like the tax collector. He told God how good he was instead of how sinful he was.

The tax collector left a changed man; a saved man; a forgiven man. Jesus said that he went away justified. Anyone who comes humbly, who repents of their sin, confesses to God, cries out for mercy, will be saved.

Isaiah 1:18 tells us, *“Come now, let's settle this, says the Lord. ‘Though your sins are like scarlet, I will make them as white as snow. Though they are red like crimson, I will make them as white as wool.’”*

It is interesting to remember that the first of Jesus' Beatitudes in Matthew 5:3 is *“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”* It is not an accident that the first of the Beatitudes is about being poor in spirit. This is a necessary trait and an essential requirement for a Christian in order to follow God's way of life. With this humble spirit, it becomes possible to develop the rest of the characteristics that Jesus lists so we can walk in step with his Spirit.

This first Beatitude refers to someone who is humble enough to recognize how powerless he or she is compared to God, who has awesome power, and someone who is willing to submit to that power. The poor in spirit are given an incredible promise that they will inherit the Kingdom of Heaven. It is a promise for those who are humble and poor in spirit.

Jesus was the greatest example to us of humility. Jesus humbled himself and was willing to serve others. Jesus came to serve and not be served, and he is our example of servant leadership. Jesus humbled himself to die on the cross for the forgiveness of our sins.

Mark 10: 43-44 says, *“Whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant. And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all.”*

Researchers at Arizona State University released a study showing that while arrogance and self-importance impress outsiders, it's bosses with humility who impress their employees. When a CEO displays a humble spirit, he or she gains the long-term respect of coworkers. The Arizona researchers called this kind of attitude: “Servant Leadership.” I guess they could learn something from Jesus after all.

Management expert Ken Blanchard points out that Jesus Christ not only taught servant leadership, but he modeled it perfectly. As we humble ourselves and serve others, God changes things; God changes our hearts of stone to make them hearts of flesh.

M.R. De Haan, the founder of Daily Bread, said, “Humility is something we should constantly pray for, yet never thank God that we have it.”

Do not just act humble; be humble. Do not exalt yourself; exaltation goes to God alone and comes from God alone. Do not pray with eyes on others; pray with eyes on God.

Pastor, professor, and writer, Haddon Robinson once said, “The proud Pharisee had a good eye on himself, a bad eye on his neighbor, and no eye on God.”

Humility isn't easy or natural. Most people don't even try to be humble. To many, humility and independence on God are seen as weaknesses. This prevents true repentance and humility God desires from us.

Those who are humble acknowledge God's greatness and their dependence on him.

Humble yourself in the sight of the Lord.