

1. From Humility to Glory Humility Looks Up

This is the first Sunday of Lent, the season in which we prepare ourselves to celebrate the glory of the resurrection of Christ. On the day of Resurrection, Christ was glorified. Now keep in mind that we have been shown our future in Christ. On the day of resurrection we will be glorified also.

We were created for glory. We are children of God, for a time we are a little lower than angels. But the time will come when we will be elevated to our true status. Christ was glorified on the day of his resurrection. In his resurrection we see our future. We will also be glorified on the day of our resurrection.

If—and this is a big if—if we don't glorify ourselves beforehand. God will raise us up to glory, if we don't try to raise ourselves to glory. And that's been the problem with humanity from the beginning. You remember that Satan tempted Eve by saying that if she ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil she would become like God. Ever since, her descendants have been tempted to become like God. Over and over again we try to be more than we are.

The way to overcome this temptation is to keep our minds set on God. We need to look to God who is as far above us as the heavens are above the earth. When we consider the majesty and splendor of God, we humble ourselves before God. And God will lift us up.

The road to glory runs through humility. During this Lenten season, I want to remind us of the importance of humility. We will be glorified if we humble ourselves.

Now, I want to be clear about what humility is. We often mistake humility with self-abasement. We think that humility is sitting around thinking about how awful we are or how unimportant we are. We find it all through Christian literature and songs. We are evil worms, with no hope of ever being good. Paul even indulged in a little self-abasement when he said that he was the chief of sinners. He wasn't content to be an ordinary sinner. Christians think that God is pleased when we put ourselves down and make ourselves lower than we are, that doing so is humility. That's not humility. That's self-abasement, and self-abasement is sinful. Self-abasement and pride are two sides of the same coin. They are both about focusing on ourselves. Self-abasement is just a twisted form of pride.

No, true humility is not thinking about how awful or unimportant we are. True humility is to think about the glory and majesty of God. When we keep our minds set on God, humility comes easily and naturally. And it enable us to resist many of the temptations this world throws at us.

That's what Jesus showed us when he was tempted in the wilderness.

At his baptism, when God spoke from heaven and said, "You are my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased," Jesus received all the power and authority of God.

You would think that would have been a day to celebrate. To be given all the power and authority of God? Talk about winning the big lottery. Take all the lotteries and roll them into one, and they would be like a pebble beside the mountain that Jesus received that day.

Have you noticed how big lottery winners often wait a couple of days before they claim their prize? That's because they know that their life has been turned upside down, and they need some time to get their breath and think about what this means.

That's what Jesus needed. He went out into the wilderness to be completely alone and to think about what it meant to have this kind of power and authority.

With that kind of power comes a great temptation. The temptation is simply this: To forget about God and use that power for your own benefit. And that's what Satan tempted Jesus to do. He tempted Jesus to use God's power and authority for himself. Satan started out small and got bigger and bigger. First, he tempts Jesus to use his power to make himself a loaf of bread out of a stone. When that didn't work he tempted Jesus to use his authority to rule the world. That's a big step from making a loaf of bread. But the next step was even bigger. He was tempted to make God his servant by jumping off the wall of the Temple Mount and forcing God to save him.

Jesus had the power to rule heaven and earth, and Satan tempted him to use his power to do just that.

But Jesus overcame every temptation by humbling himself. He lifted his eyes up to God. He quoted scriptures which reminded him to humble himself before his Father:

One does not live by bread alone, but by every word which proceeds from the mouth of God.

Worship the Lord your God and serve only him.

Do not put the Lord your God to the test.

Jesus did not forget that he was given his power and authority to use on himself. He was given that power and authority to serve his Father and to do his Father's will.

Jesus knew that he would gain far more satisfaction and pleasure from pleasing his Father than he could gain from ruling heaven and earth. Because Jesus loved his Father more than power and humbled himself before his Father, after his death and resurrection, he was raised to the throne of Glory where he received the power and authority of God forever.

Many of you have seen the movie, *Bruce Almighty*. It explores that question. It's really a profound movie, although Jim Kerrey plays the lead and keeps it from feeling like it is profound. Bruce was a young man who was very frustrated with his life. He prays, and he doesn't get what he prays for. So, he becomes angry with God. Bruce is invited to a job interview. When he arrives, he ends up in a discussion with the custodian. The custodian turns out to be God, and God has decided to take some time off. So, God gives Bruce all of God's power and authority.

What does Bruce do with all this power and authority? He gives himself all the things he thought would make his life happy. He arranges to get his dream job. He gets his dream car. When he drives it, all the lights turn green and all the cars pull to the shoulder for him. He arranges his dream date. He even pulls the moon in several thousand miles to make it bigger. He potty trains his dog. Then, he gives everyone else everything they pray for too. Eventually he discovers that all the things he thought would make his life happy don't. They cost him the things that really made him happy. And giving everyone else all they want creates chaos. He discovers he was happier with his life the way it was before he had all that power and the things he got with it. He gladly returns to his life as an ordinary human being and turns the job of running the world back to God. What Bruce learned was true humility.

Now, here is the question for us. We will never be offered the power and authority of God. But we do have a certain amount of power and authority. The question is this: Will we use what we have for our own benefit, or will we use it to serve God?

This world is filled with temptations. It says to us, "Get this for yourself, and you will be satisfied and happy." But the truth is that nothing this world has to offer will ultimately bring

satisfaction. The only real satisfaction comes from humbling ourselves before God and using whatever God has given us to do God's will.

When you have learned that lesson, you can resist any temptation. Humble yourself before God in service and obedience to God's will, and you will be glorified on the day of Resurrection.

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