

2. From Humility to Glory
Humility is Not Macho
Luke 13:31-35

This is the second Sunday of Lent. During this Lenten season our theme is “From Humility to Glory.” We were created for glory. On Easter Sunday, Christ was resurrected to glory. In his resurrection, we see our future. We will also be raised to glory, if—and this is the big if—if we don’t fall into the trap of trying to raise ourselves to glory. We are to recognize the glory of God and humble ourselves before our Lord.

Last week I talked about how true humility is not self-abasement. True humility is not thinking putting yourself down and believing that you are terrible or insignificant person. It is simply recognizing that you’re not God. True humility is not being more than you really are or less than you really are.

False pride and false humility both have a couple of things in common. Both cause us to focus our attention on ourselves, rather than on God. And both are unrealistic. None of us are gloriously wonderful, and none of us are hopelessly awful. We are just ordinary human beings. We all have our strengths and our weaknesses. We all have our moments of success and our times of failure. True humility is simply to be who we really are—to be our best selves, certainly, but to be who we really are, no more and no less.

And that’s not hard to do, if we keep our eyes focused on God and God’s will.

One of the joys of humility is that you don’t worry about what people think about you.

There were a great many people who didn’t think very highly of Jesus. The Pharisees in Galilee were some of them. He was undermining their authority with his teachings and his miracles. They got wind that Herod was not happy with Jesus either. So, they saw a way to get rid of him. They didn’t know it, but Jesus had already decided it was time to go on to Jerusalem, and he was slowly making his way from Galilee to Jerusalem. These Pharisees didn’t know that, so they decided to scare him off by telling him that if he were smart he get out of Galilee, because Herod was out to kill him.

We don’t know whether Herod was out to kill him or not. After all, Herod was the one who beheaded John the Baptist. However a few weeks after this when Jesus was arrested Pontius Pilate sent him to Herod to give Herod an opportunity to condemn him. But Herod just made fun of Jesus and sent him back to Pilate. In other words, when Herod had the opportunity to have Jesus put to death, he didn’t. That would cause us to think that the Pharisees were at least exaggerating, but not out and out lying

But Jesus wasn’t worried about Herod. Herod ruled in Galilee, not Jerusalem. Jesus knew he would not die in Galilee. Jesus knew that he would die in Jerusalem at the appointed time, not anywhere else and not before then. Herod would have nothing to do with Jesus’ death, and Jesus knew it.

So, Jesus told the Pharisees to give a message from him to that pest Herod. (A fox was a pest, not a real threat like a lion, or a bear, or even a wolf.) He said, “Tell that pest I’ve got a little while to go before my work is finished. But I will be moving on to Jerusalem as I continue my work of casting out demons and curing the sick.” And Jesus did that. He moved on. He left Galilee and continued on his journey to Jerusalem.

But Jesus knew what the Pharisees were thinking. They were thinking, “He’s trying to put a good face on it, but the truth is that he is tucking his tail and running for his life. This so-called high and mighty prophet is nothing but a coward, and we have run him out of town.”

If Jesus had been a man of false pride, he would have stayed right there in Galilee just to show them what kind of man he really was. A real man wouldn’t turn and run. A real man wouldn’t even let people think he was running. A real man would have stayed put and shown the world that nobody, not even a king, is going to push him around. No, sir. He’ll show them that he is in charge of his own life. And nobody, but nobody, is pushing him around.

Have you ever known anybody who thought like that? Most men and I’m sure a few women have made really bad decisions because they had something to prove.

I remember being called to visit one of the boys in the church at the county jail. He had been arrested, along with a group of other boys, for breaking and entering a private business at night. I asked him if he was guilty. He said he was. I asked him why he did it. He said that one of the other boys had dared them to join him in breaking into this business. And this kid went along because he didn’t want to lose his friends’ respect by chickening out. Being macho caused him to make a very bad decision.

Why are we so concerned about what others think of us? I used to take lessons in cardio-kickboxing. I still punch and kick the bag a couple of days a week. We had a guest teacher one day. He attended the church I pastored at the time. He was a black belt in several different martial arts. He was teaching us basic self-defense techniques. He asked us what we would do if someone came up from behind us and caught us in a headlock. Several of us offered dubious responses which would have resulted in both we and the assailant getting hurt pretty badly. He said that all we had to do to reach around behind the assailant and pinch a very sensitive nerve behind his knee opposite the leg where our head was. The assailant would involuntarily lift that leg, let go of the headlock and grab the area where the nerve was being pinched. Then, while he is standing on one leg, holding you with just one arm, you pull your head out, push him forward and turn and run in the opposite direction.

After demonstrating this to us, he asked for questions. I said, “When I was a boy, my daddy taught me that only sissies pinched and only cowards run from a fight.” He said, “Let me see if I have this straight. Without any provocation, someone comes up from behind you and assaults you by putting you in a headlock, and you’re worried about what this person thinks about you?”

He went on to say that he too used to worry about what people thought about him. He went into martial arts in order to force people to treat him with respect. For some years, he would never walk away from a fight. And he was involved in many fights, because, when people discovered he was a black belt, many wanted to challenge him. He said that he usually won the fights, but he never won their respect. He discovered that those kind of people didn’t have the capacity to respect others. He also discovered that even when he won the fights, he lost. He never came away from a fight without injuries, and he often ended up having to bail himself out of jail.

He said, “I don’t care what people think about me anymore. I know who I am and what I can do. I don’t have to prove anything to them or to myself. I no longer give them power over me by having to submit to their standards of what they think makes me a man. When I’m challenged to a fight, I walk away. I’ve got more important things to do than to spend the next few days in a hospital or a jail.”

If Jesus had been a macho man, he would not have gone to Jerusalem to die on the Cross for the salvation of the world. He would have stayed in Galilee and shown the world that he was a real man.

Thank God that Jesus was an humble man. He had far more important things to do than to prove to the world that he was a man. His Heavenly Father had given him a job to do, and he wasn't about to let anyone or anything keep him from accomplishing his Father's will for him. What the Pharisees, or anyone else, thought about him was of no importance to him whatsoever. The only thing that was important to him was to do the will of his Heavenly Father.

True humility does not try to win people's respect. True humility is more concerned serving God and winning respect for God and the ways of God.

When the humble are treated with respect, they receive it gratefully and graciously, recognizing that it is a gift that says much more about the one who gives it than the one who receives it. Those who treat others with genuine respect are always moved by the Spirit of God.

Those who try to force you to win their respect by jumping through their hoops and acting like what they think deserves respect are not the time and the trouble. Jesus said that anyone who calls his brother a fool is in danger of the fires of hell. That's because anyone who treats a child of God disrespectfully is already a slave of the powers of evil. Those who look down their noses with contempt for another human being are glorifying themselves.

But those who are more concerned with giving respect than being respected will be honored in the day of resurrection, and those who lift up the name of the Lord will be lifted up by God.

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