

MESSAGE TRANSCRIPTS

Humble Myself?

Wendell Anderson, Director of Spiritual Maturity

Weekend 01.15/16.11

Well, Good Morning. The video that we were just watching showed some chickens meeting each other for the first time in a chicken coop. And if you took ten chickens, any ten chickens that had not been together before and put them in a coop together, spread some feed out along that chicken coop, an interesting phenomenon would happen in just a very short order. By instinct, these chickens that previously were strangers would form a higher anarchy of dominance. They would start pecking at one another and, in very short order, they would establish who was chicken number one and who was chicken number two...what we refer to as the pecking order. And it just happens naturally when they are down there. And interestingly again, what happens is once that is all sorted out is that chicken number one is the “top dog” if you will and he will peck at chicken number two but he won’t be pecked back at after that pecking order is established. And after chicken number two is pecked at, that chicken will turn around and peck at chicken number three who will take it and not retaliate but will turn to chicken number four until unlucky chicken number ten gets pecked on and turns around and there is nobody left to peck on. You know, that is just the way it is. And it is a pretty miserable life for number ten.

You know, we have all observed this, if it is not in a chicken coop, we have observed it in our households as well. When Madeline and I moved into the community a few years, we were away from our kids and our grandkids, so after a few months, we adopted a little kitten. You know, I am the man of the house and I am number one. (laugh) And I said well this is going to be an outdoor garage cat. Well, that lasted two days until I had the little thing in my lap all the time inside the house. That outdoor garage cat came to actually be number one in our house. Well, after about six months, I got another kitten for a birthday present. I did not know that I needed another kitten but I did. And I got kitten number two. Well, it was very interesting to see how that pecking order got established with those kittens. In fact, for the new kitten, we spent a lot of money at the vet because it had been bitten and got infected until it grew enough that it could avoid kitten number one that had established its dominance in the household. It had established a pecking order. And again, we have observed this.

And not only have we observed it but we participate in pecking orders as well. You know, if we are put together in a group of strangers as well...if we are put together perhaps in a banquet room or maybe it is a wedding or something and we do not know a lot of the people and we might be there...you know, there is us and nine other strangers, ten of us around and they spread some chicken food on the floor...I mean they put some banquet food on the buffet tables...and real quickly we will start establishing and realize where we fit in the pecking order. We will do that through all kinds of queues...conversational queues, visual queues—we will notice how people are dressed or not dressed, whether they have on the right designer clothes or don’t have that on. They talk about where they live or what kinds of cars they drive and immediately we start sorting ourselves out into a pecking order. And once that is established, we just know where we fit and we know what is expected of us.

Now there is a convenient aspect to this social ordering. It provides us with understanding roles and expectations...you know what is expected of management versus the working class—the laborers; what is expected if you are in middle class versus the lower class or if you are a college graduate or a high school dropout...what is expected; if you are starting player on the team versus if you are a bench player...what is your expectation or your role. There is somewhat a convenience or an understanding or a benefit to that, but on the other hand, you limit yourself and others limit you by that understanding of that role as well.

Well, it does provide again some comfort in our lives. We know when we need to accept a peck or when we can peck back as well. Each of us have a natural tendency to treat those that are above us in the pecking order with admiration and to be cordial even though inside we might be muttering to ourselves about that situation. And then those that are below us, we have this natural tendency to perhaps be a little less cordial, a little less sensitive—maybe even treat them with a little contempt. And we do this even as Christ followers—we find ourselves doing this as well. Even when we realize and recognize that it is not the right thing that we should be doing. I mean just think about how that happens. What happens if somebody that is below you in the pecking order, perhaps the janitor or whatever it might be in this social pecking order wants five minutes of your time and you are busy and you just can't seem to make that five minutes happen. And yet when the boss walks by and asks if you have five minutes of your time, immediately, well, “of course, no problem, what do you need?” We honor one above another. Honor is optional.

Well, you know in all of history, no one was more deserving of being number one in the pecking order than Jesus Christ. I mean, think about it. He created everything. He owns everything. He owns and created everybody. He could have chosen any career; he could have been in politics, he could have been in business, he could have been in any career but by choice, he chose to be born into the humblest of means—a little baby without any protection needing complete care. The pecking order was his for the taking but he stepped aside from that. In fact, Jesus throughout the ministry demonstrated and taught how he hated pecking orders. He really spoke about ripping them down and tearing them down at the roots.

Let's look, if you will, at Matthew 23 in one encounter where He is teaching and explaining his disdain if you will for the pecking order. In Matthew 23 in verses 11 and 12, on page 828 in the Bibles that are provided for you, He is speaking to those who had reached the top, the religious leaders of Israel. And he often scorched them with their words because he really had this zero tolerance for the pecking order. And in verse 11, He says, “The greatest among you shall be your servant.” And in verse 12, “Whoever exalts himself will be humbled and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.” Now look at verse 12...I am going to read it again but as I do but listen to who will be humbled. It says, “Whoever exalts himself will be humbled and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.” What does that verse say? Who is going to be humbled in this situation? Well, everybody is going to be humbled. The choice is: Are we going to exalt ourselves and

then be humbled or will we humble ourselves and, at some point in time, be exalted? The choice is ours. Of course, Jesus is giving us the right answer to that test...that we should, in fact, humble ourselves. We should take steps to humble ourselves.

Well, of course, when Jesus is speaking to these Pharisees who had risen to a prominent place in the pecking order within society and he spoke about this, they did not like that very much at all. But he had no need for externals at all. He had essentially voluntarily stripped himself of all of the titles, all of the roles that, in fact, he was entitled to as creator, as owner...His position of sitting at the right hand of God. Jesus' perspective was shaped by a deep sense of humility. There was humility where really none was called for because He certainly was entitled to be number one in the pecking order. As God he clearly deserved all titles, all positions and all praise but he modeled for us an example of humility that turned the pecking order upside down.

Turn with me to the Book of Philippians, chapter 2, page 980, and we are going to see at the beginning of chapter 2...actually, I am going to pick up in verse 5 but at the beginning of chapter 2, you see a subtitle there that says, "Christ example of humility". And we are going to look to a few other scriptures as we go forward. We are going to come back to Philippians 2 so you might want to hold your place there. Look in verse 5. It says, "Have this mind among you which is yours in Christ Jesus." Or in the NIV, it says, "Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus." Or my attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus. So here is the Son of God who was entitled as Creator, as Owner, as one who sat at the right hand of God, entitled to all the praise, all the glory, who said our attitude should be the same as him. And what did he do? Well, in verse 6, it says, "Although he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped but made himself nothing taking the form of a servant being born in the likeness of men and being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross." And in verse 9, "Therefore, God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name." So verse 5 says have this mind among yourselves which is in Christ Jesus. And look at verse 9, it says, "Therefore, God has exalted him..." God has exalted who? God has exalted Jesus Christ and has bestowed on him a name that is above every name. Now the verse that we just looked at a moment ago in Matthew 23 said, "Whoever humbles himself will be exalted." Christ was teaching the people in that case there in Matthew that as we humble ourselves, we will be exalted. This passage we are reading here in Matthew tells us that we should have the same mind in us that is in Christ. And what did Christ do? He humbled himself and, in verse 9, it says, "He was exalted.." Why was Christ exalted to have a name that is above every name? Because he humbled himself. So we are told that we should be just like him. That we should, in fact, humble ourselves.

So, if you will, the title to my talk is "Humble Myself?" Of course, the right answer is yes...we are to humble ourselves. Christ modeled that in his own life as well as instructed us that we should take action to humble ourselves. Of course, in verse 10, it continues, "So that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow in Heaven and on earth and under the earth and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God

the Father.” Jesus wanted to relate with us...with mankind on an equal level where the religious leaders of the day relished this separation between themselves and the common people. Jesus sought to break down that barrier. His focus more often than not, instead of being on chicken number one or chicken number two, he was focusing on chicken number eight and chicken number nine and chicken number ten...on the common person, on you and I—that is who he was focusing on. Well, you know, humility is important to us. Certainly because Jesus modeled it and instructed us but also at the very root of what humility is all about. It is to break down this pecking order and the pecking order is based on pride. It is based on prejudice; it is based on us trying to think that we are better than someone else...that somehow I am better than someone else in that I need to stand on someone else to get to a higher position if you will. But humility is the wisdom to realize that each and every one of us is the same—we are deeply flawed, sinners that are deeply in need of a Savior and we are very precious to that God that sent Jesus for us. We are all deeply flawed and yet precious. None of us regardless of our titles or our possessions, or our cars or our homes or our job titles or whatever it might be, are deserving of anything more than hell. That is what we are deserving of for the sin that we have. None of us can climb into a pecking order that is going to get us out of hell in and of ourselves. But through God’s redeeming mercy and His grace, we are offered that free gift totally undeserved—offered freely.

You know, Dave Ramsey is teaching one of the video classes that we are going to be offering here—the Financial Peace University—and if you ever heard Dave Ramsey on the radio or on TV, he has a lot of cute little quips—cute little sayings. And one of them that I particularly like is when people will ask him, “Dave, how are you doing?” He will say, “Better than I deserve.” And if you do not listen to it enough for him to explain it which he does every once in a while or periodically, what does he mean when he says I am doing better than I deserve. What he is saying is what I deserve is a life of eternity in hell because I am a flawed person, I am sinner. And yet, because of Christ’s redemptive work in my life, I am doing better than I deserve. A great response! A great response to also recognize that we need to act in humility—that the pecking order really does not matter but that in humility we are doing better than we deserve. In fact, in Philippians 2:3, if you look just up from where we started reading, it says, “In humility, count others more significant than yourselves.” “In humility, count others more significant than yourself.” Can you think of any idea that is more opposed to the pecking order than instead of me trying to peck at somebody else to think that I am one level up from them that I say, “No, I want to think of you as better than myself.” How, if you will, is contra to the entire society.

Well, the implications of living this verse are just staggering. Think about it in society. Can you imagine that if everybody in the workplace was entitled to VIP treatment, that if bosses were treated with the same respect as all clerical workers were, or if the boss showed honor and respect to the third shift janitor that often does not get that same level of respect. Think about our marriages as well. What if the husband stopped viewing himself as chicken number one and pecking away at chicken number two who then kicks

the dog or the kids, right? I mean, what would it be if we said that is not right. In humility, count others more significant than ourselves.

Well, here is an illustration that you might be familiar with that I saw a number of years ago from Campus Crusade for Christ. It looks at a self-directed life and then compares it to a Christ-directed life. Before we become a Christ follower, we are living this self-directed life—where self or the S in the illustration is on the throne of our lives. We are number one in the pecking order of our life. And all of our interests are scattered throughout that circle of influence within our lives and Christ is outside of the realm or sphere of our influence, not within our lives. And these different interests are all in different pecking orders but then once we become a Christ follower and adopt a Christ-directed life, we put Christ or the cross on the figurative throne of our lives and self or S is at the foot of the throne of our lives where we kneel at that throne and, in a balanced life of practicing what Christ is teaching us, we, in fact, have these other interests in harmony with not a significant difference between the pecking order. Now, of course, that is what happens as we enter into a Christ-directed life but over time, probably daily, we tend to try to crawl back on to the throne ourselves because we are living sacrifices and we try to crawl back on to the throne and put ourselves one step up on the pecking order.

So this whole living a Christ-directed life is certainly a daily walk—a number of daily choices. Romans 12:1, a verse that is familiar to many of us says, “I appeal to you, therefore brothers, by the mercies of God to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God which is your spiritual worship.” That as we strive to count others better than ourselves, as we do not attempt to promote ourselves in the pecking order, we are becoming living sacrifices. And as we do that, as we humble ourselves, as we voluntarily do that, we are actually worshipping. The act of humbling ourselves is spiritual worship.

Well, scripture repeats this encouragement to humble ourselves in a number of places. James writes in James 4:6, he says, “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.” And then in verse 10, it says, “Humble yourself before the Lord and he will exalt you.” Just as we saw Jesus teach in Matthew 23 to humble ourselves and then we will be exalted, James, as well, through the inspiration of God is writing and telling us to humble ourselves. We are encouraged to do the humbling.

Peter writes the same and teaches the same that we should not participate in the pecking order. In I Peter 5, it is written, “Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time He may exalt you.” Who is to initiate the humbling? Who is scripture repeatedly saying should do the humbling? We should do the humbling. We should humble ourselves. And why do it? Why go to the bother? Well, if you just look back up if you are in I Peter 5, there in chapter 5, verse 5, it says, “Clothe yourself all of you with humility toward one another for God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.” Well, not only do we need grace for eternity but we need grace each and every

day of our lives and, as we humble ourselves, we open up ourselves to receive God's abundant grace.

So how do we go about doing this? How do we humble ourselves? Well, let us just look at six practical ways, if you will, that scripture would say we can go about humbling ourselves. One of those is to routinely confess our sins to God. To routinely confess our sins to God. And here in Luke 18 beginning in verse 9, we see a teaching where Jesus is teaching and showing us how we, in fact, can and should do that. What we see here is a discourse, a parable that he is teaching about a Pharisee and a tax collector. And, of course, from other teachings, you probably understand that the Pharisees were the religious leaders in the community—they were very highly esteemed in society. They were very high up in the pecking order. A tax collector is also referred to in this passage that we are going to read through here momentarily. Tax collectors were looked at as very low on the pecking order. They basically were extortionists who extorted taxes from people as they could so they were not favored whatsoever. So in verse 9 in Luke 18, verse 9, it says: So, He, Jesus also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and treated others with contempt. “Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus, ‘God I thank you that I am not like other men, extortionists, unjust, adulterers or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and I give a tithe of all that I get’...” or in other words, he says, don't you see where I am at in the pecking order? I am way up here. I am not like the tax collector that is down here. And in verse 13, it says, “But the tax collector standing far off would not even lift his eyes to Heaven but he beat his breast saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, a sinner.’ I tell you that this man went down to his house justified rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.” Jesus, once again, in this parable, repeating the teaching that he taught in Matthew 23, verse 11 and 12, “Whoever humbles himself will be exalted.”

You know, all of us, whether we are the Pharisee or think we are up here on the pecking order or whether we are down here in society's pecking order, we all are sinners and deeply in need of forgiveness. So we need to routinely be reminded of I John 1:9 which says, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us of our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.” That we continually, routinely humble ourselves to recognize, not try to justify our actions, but to confess our shortcomings as the tax collector did in this parable that we just read.

Well, a second way that we can learn to practice humbling ourselves is to be quick to forgive. In Matthew 18 beginning in verse 15, there is this whole passage here instructs on how we should in fact restore relationships when we have been wronged. And in verse 15, it says, “If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother.” Then it goes on, if that does not work, what the second step and third step and so forth—the process of reconciliation that is spoken for. But who takes the initiative? You know, society would say, “I am wronged; they deserve to come to me.” But scripture tells us that we need to

humble ourselves and go to that person that has wronged us, go to that brother or sister that has wronged us and why do we do it? To get even? No, to say, “Look where I am on the pecking order versus where you are?” No. We go there because God wants us to reconcile the relationship. He wants us to humble ourselves and say, “You may have wronged me and, yet, I am not going to hold that against you.” You know, forgiveness is perhaps one of the greatest acts of humility that we can do—to acknowledge that a wrong has been done and to release our right that we feel we have for some restitution as a result of that. It is denying ourselves; it is denying that we have any right to that. It is not insisting on our way or justice. Forgiveness is, if you will, figuratively staying on our knees at that cross, at that throne, and keeping Christ on the throne of our lives—that Christ-directed life.

Well, a third way that we can practice humbling ourselves is to take wrong patiently. I Peter 3 beginning in verse 8 says, “Finding all of you have unity of minds, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart and a humble mind. Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling but on the contrary bless for to this you were called that you may obtain a blessing.” And then down to verse 16, it says, “Having a good conscious so that when you are slandered those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame. For it is better to suffer for doing good if that should be God’s will than for doing evil.” Now again this is very difficult for us—when something unjust happens we just want to react then and to rectify it. Our patiently responding to the unjust accusations and actions of others demonstrates the strength of a godly character and as we practice it that strength can grow and grow and grow. It is a strength that we can grow. We can grow in our humility by practicing taking wrong patiently when it occurs.

Well, a fourth way is to purpose to speak well of others. Ephesians 4:29 and 32, in verse 29, it says, “Let no corrupt talk come out of your mouths but only such as is good for building up as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear.” And in verse 32, “Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another as God in Christ forgave you.” You know, saying negative things about others, putting one down and us up on the pecking order is clearly a form of pride versus speaking well of others that edifies and builds them up instead of ourselves. Our words should be tenderhearted and kind, building one another up.

And number five, accept a lowly place or, if you will, accept a lower position on the pecking order than what perhaps you feel you are entitled to. Now if we go back to Philippians 2 where we were at earlier and look at verses 3 and 4, it is written, Paul writes, “Do nothing from rivalry or conceit but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interest but also to the interests of others.” You know, if you find yourself wanting others to recognize your contributions or become offended when others are honored instead of yourself, then there is a pride that is present. We may not even take action but when that sense comes to it, there is the root of pride that is there. Now, do we take action on it? Or do we not? Do we say, “No, I am going to accept right where I am...I am going to humble myself because You promised you will exalt me.” So we accept and look for that lower place; it

is a place of humility. It is not that God has a problem with seeing us; you know, his children as Christ-followers receive honor and glory. In truth, he longs to exalt us. But he wants it to be him that exalts us rather than us striving and seeking for that at the expense of others.

And number six, choose to serve others. Mark 10:45, “For even the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.” You know the word, “servant”; it is an honor to serve others. It is an honor to serve others. There was a time when that was considered a very high calling. Now I recall some people that have served me in the past that I have been amazed when they have done that. In doing so, they have demonstrated humility and I believe that people who have demonstrated humility in their life, that it is one of the most attractive character qualities that I have ever seen. And it is often demonstrated through servants where people serve when they do not even have to; when it is not expected of them. Serving others reduces our focus on ourselves and builds up the kingdom.

Well, there was six ways. You know, there is a lot more. I mean, we could receive correction and feedback from others graciously; we could purposely associate with people that are in a lower, if you will, place in the pecking order than ourselves and practice that as a way of developing and practicing this character trait of humility within our lives, and many more. But as we looked at a few moments ago in Philippians 2, Jesus modeled this for us. In Philippians 2, verse 5, it says, “Our attitude...your attitude...should be the same as that of Christ Jesus.” And what is that attitude? Well, in verse 3 and 4, it says, “Doing nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit but in humility consider others better than yourselves.” Each of us should look not only to our own interests but also to the interests of others. So like Jesus, we need to take steps. You know, I listed six real quickly for us to practice. There might be others. I really think that we need to be conscious of perhaps having a Holy Spirit alarm that goes off in our mind when we see that we want to exalt ourselves on the pecking order. And as we recognize that happens, we say, what can I do to not take that step up—to not to exalt myself but to humble myself in this situation? In our fallen nature, in our sinful nature, those situations will occur. We will have the thoughts to want to step up on the pecking order to exalt ourselves. But it is our choice to have that mind within us that Christ had within him to practice saying, “I am not going to do this. I am going to have this mind within me and I am going to accept a lower place. I am going to serve someone else. I am going to be gracious to someone else. I am going to speak well of someone else.” And in time, in God’s time, he will exalt us...he will exalt us. Peter writes, “Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God so at the proper time he may exalt you.”

Well, Pastor Tim will be back next week. And next week, we will hear Part 1 of the message, “This is Crossroads”. Would you join me in prayer? Father, I thank you for this weekend and this opportunity to teach this message to remind myself and to share this message that we need to humble ourselves. You knew that we needed to hear this message and, as a Sovereign God, you prepared the message and you prepared the people

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to hear this so we are thankful for that. Just encourage us, sharpen that Holy Spirit alarm within our minds, within our spirits that will go off and make us sensitive when we will attempt to exalt ourselves on the pecking order so that we might step back, take a pause and humble ourselves. Thank you for this reminder. In Jesus' Name. Amen.

Have a great week and we will see you back here this next weekend.