

## PRIDE

Luke 6: 20-26  
March 1, 2009

Lent began this week. And sin is one of its themes. There are sins of the flesh. Physical appetites like food and rest and sex met in unhealthy ways. Gluttony, laziness, lust. There are also sins of the spirit. And today we hear about one of those.

(Sing O Lord it's hard to be humble)

We all want to feel good about ourselves. We all want to feel important. Sometimes we are important. Sometimes we deserve praise. There is healthy pride. But there is also unhealthy pride.

Putting ourselves above others is pride. It is the basic sin. It is the sin Adam and Eve fell for. It is wanting to be God. It convinces me that my way is the right way, my perceptions of what is going on are true. Too much importance on oneself. Sinful pride is the root of all the other sins because it is trying to be God.

I'm not talking about the kind of pride in a job well done, hard work that pays off, pride in our team's effort. There is healthy pride and unhealthy (false) pride. Some other day I'll give a sermon on healthy pride. But today I'm talking about unhealthy pride. The sin of pride.

Jesus and Paul warn us against it. Jesus used religious leaders as an example. They show off their religious practices, loving the respect they get, wanting to sit at the head table and the front seat.

Paul warns Timothy to watch out for those who are puffed up with pride.

We know full well the Biblical warnings to pride:

God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble. James 4:6

Pride goes before a fall. Ps. 73:6, Prov. 16:18

Pride leads the nations to destruction Isa. 25:11

That's not us. Is it? If we only give money to church and charity when it will be noticed, then we are doing what Jesus criticized people for. Don't do it to win glory, he says. Pride

- Pride attacks us at our strongest points. Because I am good at something, therefore I am a good person, therefore others should do things my way. Pride
- Because I've been saved, therefore I am a good person, therefore others should do things my way. Pride
- Because I sacrifice for my children, therefore I am a good person, therefore my children should do things my way. Pride
- Because I work hard at my job, therefore I am a good person, therefore my coworkers should do what I decide is right. Pride
- Because I do well in school, therefore I am a good person, therefore other students should listen to me. Pride
- Because I have accepted Christ as my Lord and Savior, therefore my pride is washed in the blood, gone. Therefore my motives and thoughts are right. Pride

But those who are looking down on others are not looking up to God

Blessed are the *poor in spirit* for they shall get the kingdom of heaven. The poor in spirit know their weaknesses, the poor in spirit are humble.

Pride makes excuses for breaking the law. I know better than those who made the law. Pride makes excuses for disobeying God. It is telling God I know better.

Pride tells me that the current fashion I like is better than old fashion that the former people liked. The tunes I like are better than the songs the old people like. The style of clothes popular now is a better style than former styles. Digital is better than analog. Mpeg is better than vinyl. Twitter is better. Facebook is so last year. My way is the right way. Pride

The little front wave ran up on the sand  
And frothed there, wildly elated.  
"I am the tide" said the little front wave  
"and the waves before me are dated!"

Or pride tells me that the old is better than the new. What was good for kids 30 years ago should be good for kids today. The music, the styles, the ways to learn at school, the hairdos that were good for me then should be good for youth today. Why? Pride

Psychologists name it narcissism. Too much self and not enough others. They figure it comes from past wounds to self respect. It comes from past hurts that we are still trying to fix, years later, with unhealthy pride. False pride is a part of self-preservation. There is an urge inside each of us to create our own success. It is stronger in some of us than others. It is stronger in those of us who carry the pain of rejection.

There is pride of race, nationalism, pride of class like blue collar or white collar. Group pride. Jesus warns against it.

1 Tim. 3:6 tells the church not to make a new believer an elder because he might become proud and fall into the same temptation as the devil. That was the temptation to want to be God.

Pride

New Christians who have had a radical life change because of Christ many times go through a judgmental phase. Later they spoke of it. It was the time when they were so sure of themselves they judged everyone else as unchristian and were obnoxious and unloving. Pride

Pride convinces me I know all I need to know. (1 Cor. 4:8)

Pride tells me my lifestyle is the righteous one. Pride tells me my belief is the only correct one.

(1 Cor. 10:7, 10,11)

Pride tells me that others ought to like the same music I like.

Pride says my perception is accurate without checking facts.

Pride convinces me I am objective.

Pride makes me see my kids as I want them to be rather than the way they are.

Pride tells me I don't need to speak with the one who has displeased me.

Pride hides ego.

Pride tells me it is ok to listen only to those who think as I do. (1 Cor. 10:12)

Pride tells me there should be simple answers to complicated problems. If I don't understand what someone tells me, they must be wrong. Something tells me I should be able to understand everything. What is telling me that? Pride

Pride blocks the willingness to change.

Without the willingness to change, religion becomes a search for God's justification for my beliefs, assumptions and values. I seek religious terms for my biases. God becomes a tool for self-vindication.

Pride tells blue collars they are the important part of the business and the white collars are making a living off them. The only real work is work with the hands.

Pride tells white collars they are the important part of the business. The blue collars only have a job because of them. Important work is with the head.

Pride shows us the pride in others and hides it in ourselves.

Pride keeps us from noticing that the thing that bothers us about someone else is the thing that bothers us about ourselves, down inside. Pride lies to us. It is like alcoholism. One of the things about alcoholism is the lie that we are not alcoholic. One of the things about pride is the lie that we are not prideful.

Pride keeps us small.

It holds us to the same small circle of friends, and thus, the same conversations over and over. It holds us to the same kinds of music, the same kinds of entertainment, the same kind of job, and thus, the same experiences over and over. It holds us to the church with our kind of temperament or beliefs, and thus, the same limited word from God, over and over. Pride keeps us small.

Pride not only keeps us from growing, it shrinks us. It not only makes us small, it makes us smaller as we go along. When someone doesn't perceive the way I do and refuses to agree with my way, pride leads me to separate. Pride can separate me from the merchant, the sports league, the church, the friend, the doctor, etc. The places I can go get fewer, and my life gets smaller.

Marriages are in trouble because of pride. I expect my spouse to agree with me about money, or child raising, or time with my parents, or faith. If he or she doesn't agree, it might mean I am mistaken. And I'm convinced I'm not wrong. Disagreement hurts. Why? Pride. If I expect my spouse to stop the pain I carry from my past and she doesn't do it, it hurts. Why? Pride. Pride comes before a fall. Even a fallen marriage.

Many of us have experienced the Holy Spirit of God come into our spirit when we came to Jesus with a broken and contrite heart and felt His forgiveness and unconditional love. Many of us assumed this was the end of our personal pride and the beginning of total reliance on Christ. So, many of us believe that our beliefs are the right beliefs, our ways of prayer, worship and moral behavior are the right ones, and those who relate to God differently are wrong. After all, Paul says in Romans 2: 15 "Those who are spiritual discern all things, and they are themselves subject to no one else's scrutiny."

But what does it mean when some Christians judge others for not doing faith correctly?

Paul tells the Ephesians in 2:18 to watch out for those who would disqualify them, insisting on some religious practices that don't necessarily come from the head.

Some take pride in intellectual achievement, some in anti-intellectualism. Intellectual pride says, "I'm smart so I must be right. People should listen to me." There are verses that warn against that kind of pride. Rom 1:22 1 Cor. 3:18 1 Cor. 8:1,2 Romans 12:16 Don't claim to be wiser than you are" NRSV or "don't think you know it all" NLT. There is also anti-intellectual pride that says "I'm not smart so I must be righteous."

We see spiritual pride in other Christians. At times they disagree with us and judge us to be weak or lesser Christians, or non Christians, or false prophets. Their judgment seems to be based on their spiritual pride. We comfort ourselves with Jesus' reaction "Not every one who says to me, 'Lord, Lord' shall enter the kingdom of heaven" Matt. 7:21. He spoke of how the tree will be known by its fruits, so we set to looking for signs of the barrenness of their faith.

Their judgment and our defensiveness are signs there is still spiritual pride at work in both of us. The belief that my religious expression is right for everyone is a symptom of spiritual pride. It is a sign of the need to be in control. Finding beliefs the Bible doesn't give is another sign.

Mark 8:35 tells us what happens when we try to save our life.

You will know the truth and the truth will make you free. John 8:32 The truth about myself can make me free of pride. So can I rid myself of pride by diligently seeking the truth? No.

Intellectual pride is difficult to displace. Our pride blocks us from seeing that we cannot be objective. Too many who have tried end up imagining themselves the final thinker. Only in the Spirit can we be “set free from the law of sin and death” Rom 8:2 The only acceptable offering to God is a broken and contrite heart” Ps. 51:17 “Unless you change and become like children you will never enter the Kingdom of Heaven.” Matt. 18:3

### **What to do?**

So if we can't see it ourselves, what can we do about it?

1. Ask someone else. Ask someone who loves us to tell us where they see it in us.

2. What can we do? We can ask ourselves, why does their behavior bother me so much?

What am I trying so hard to protect about myself that their words or action seems like a threat?

3. What to do? We can remember the greatness of God and our smallness before God. We can meditate on the Bible's warnings against holding ourselves too high.

Of course that's hard to do. O Lord, its hard to be humble. But we have the power of the Holy Spirit. We have power to do what is hard.

Phil 2:3 “be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves” Have this mind among you that was in Christ Jesus, who did not hold on to his place as god but gave it up to be one of us.

(Sing God is God)