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Tillamook, Oregon

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The Words, Works, and Person of Christ

The Gospel of Luke

The Barren Fig Tree (Part 5)

The Bad Fruit of Pride

January 22, 2023

Sermon Text: Luke 13:6-9

Scripture Reading: Deut 8:1-20

Luk 13:6-9 And he told this parable: “A man **had** a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came seeking fruit on it and **found** none.

(7) And he said to the vinedresser, ‘Look, **for three years now** I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and I find none. Cut it down. Why should it use up the ground?’

(8) And he answered him, ‘Sir, let

it alone this year also, until I dig around it and put on manure. (9) Then if it should bear fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down.’”

This morning I would like us to consider a “fruit” that the barren fig tree produces in its barrenness. It is an evil fruit which the sinner’s heart inevitably bears and which will be found hanging on our own branches if we fail to put it to death by the Spirit. That sin, of course, is *pride*.

Just as *love* is a foundational fruit from which other kinds of good fruit proceeds, so *pride* is a foundational rotten fruit which leads to the production of still more types of evil.

You have probably heard of “The Seven Deadly Sins.” This is not a

biblical doctrine as such, but was developed in tradition. Listen to it explained:

The seven deadly sins, also known as the capital vices or cardinal sins, is a grouping and classification of vices within Christian teachings. Although they are not directly mentioned in the Bible, there are parallels with the seven things God is said to hate in the Book of Proverbs.

Behaviors or habits are classified under this category if they directly give rise to other immoralities. According to the standard list, they are -

pride, greed, wrath, envy, lust, gluttony and sloth,

...which are contrary to the seven capital virtues.

John Cassian with his book **The Institutes** brought the classification to Europe, where it became fundamental to Catholic confessional practices as documented in penitential

manuals, sermons such as "The Parson's Tale" from Chaucer's Canterbury Tales and artworks such as Dante's Purgatory where the penitents of Mount Purgatory are grouped and penanced according to their worst sin. Church teaching especially focused on pride, which was thought to be the root of all sin since it turns the soul away from God; and also on greed or covetousness. Both of these were to undercut other sins.

The seven deadly sins are discussed in treatises and depicted in paintings and sculpture decorations on Catholic churches as well as older textbooks. The seven deadly sins, along with the sins against the Holy Ghost and the sins that cry to Heaven for vengeance, are taught especially in Western Christian traditions as things to be deplored. [Wikipedia]

Roman Catholic teaching on these things is, of course a false gospel of works righteousness. They are to be countered and fought against by the sinner's own practice of seven

countering virtues, earning merit toward God. However, we would agree with the placement of *pride* at the head of the list. Some thought on our part will easily conclude that the other sins in the list proceed from the first, *pride*.

As *love* for God and His people, produced in the regenerate new creation heart, leads to the other fruit of the Spirit, so *pride* can be seen bearing the deeds of the flesh Paul gives us, even though he doesn't include *pride* overtly – yet it is there lurking in the background-

Gal 5:19-21 Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, (20) idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, (21) envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Pride is a root expression of *self*.

Let's spend some time then this morning considering this rotten, evil fruit – and particularly how it springs up in us, opposing the Spirit of Christ in us.

[Jonathan Edwards, Works, Vol 1, page 399]-

The first and the worst cause of errors that prevail in such a state of things is spiritual pride. This is the main door by which the devil comes into the hearts of those who are zealous for the advancement of religion. It is the chief inlet of smoke from the bottomless pit, to darken the mind and mislead the judgment. This is the main handle by which the devil has hold of religious persons, and the chief source of all the mischief that he introduces, to clog and hinder a work of God.

—This cause of error is the main spring, or at least the main support, of all the rest. Till this disease is cured, medicines are in vain applied to heal other diseases.

It is by this that the mind defends

itself in other errors and guards itself against light, by which it might be corrected and reclaimed.

The spiritually proud man is full of light already; he does not need instruction, and is ready to despise the offer of it. But, if this disease be healed, other things are easily rectified. The humble person is like a little child, he easily receives instruction; he is jealous over himself, sensible how liable he is to go astray, and therefore, if it be suggested to him that he does so, he is ready most narrowly and impartially to inquire.

Nothing sets a person so much out of the devil's reach as humility, and so prepares the mind for true divine light without darkness, and so clears the eye to look on things as they truly are; Ps. xxv. 9. "The meek will he guide in judgment. And the meek will he teach his way."

Therefore we should fight, neither with small nor with great, but with the king of Israel. Our first care should be to rectify the heart, and pull the beam out of our eye, and

then we shall see clearly.

In the Beginning

We do not know the specifics of Satan's fall, but there are OT Scriptures which are thought to be his very words when he rebelled against the Lord:

Eze 28:11-17 Moreover, the word of the LORD came to me: (12) "Son of man, raise a lamentation over the king of Tyre, and say to him, Thus says the Lord GOD: "You were the signet of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. (13) You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone was your covering, sardius, topaz, and diamond, beryl, onyx, and jasper, sapphire, emerald, and carbuncle; and crafted in gold were your settings and your engravings. On the day that you were created they were prepared. (14) You were an anointed guardian cherub. I placed you; you were on the holy mountain of God; in the midst of the stones of fire you walked. (15) You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created, till

unrighteousness was found in you. (16) In the abundance of your trade you were filled with violence in your midst, and you sinned; so I cast you as a profane thing from the mountain of God, and I destroyed you, O guardian cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire. (17) Your heart was proud because of your beauty; you corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor. I cast you to the ground; I exposed you before kings, to feast their eyes on you.

Isa 14:12-14 “How you are fallen from heaven, O Day Star, son of Dawn! How you are cut down to the ground, you who laid the nations low! (13) You said in your heart, ‘I will ascend to heaven; above the stars of God I will set my throne on high; I will sit on the mount of assembly in the far reaches of the north; (14) I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.’

Pride then is a particularly *satanic and devilish sin*. It is not surprising that this arrogant being brought the first man and woman under the

curse by tempting them and snaring them with pride:

Gen 3:4-5 But the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die. (5) For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”

“*You will be like God.*” Pride likes the sound of that! This has been Satan’s motive all along. He hates God because he wants to be god himself. In his final grasping at this self-glory, he will establish his short-lived kingdom throughout the entire world before Christ returns. In fact, his anti-Christ efforts are at work throughout the world right at this very moment.

Rev 13:4-6 And they worshiped the dragon, for he had given his authority to the beast, and they worshiped the beast, saying, “Who is like the beast, and who can fight against it?” (5) And the beast was given a mouth uttering haughty and blasphemous words, and it was allowed to exercise authority for forty-two months. (6) It opened its

mouth to utter blasphemies against God, blaspheming his name and his dwelling, that is, those who dwell in heaven.

The ugliness of pride, you see. It is the very same spirit of the evil one which was at work so long ago at Babel:

Gen 11:4-6 Then they said, “Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the heavens, and **let us make a name for ourselves**, lest we be dispersed over the face of the whole earth.” (5) And the LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of man had built. (6) And the LORD said, “Behold, they are one people, and they have all one language, and this is only the beginning of what they will do. And nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them.

If you ever wonder what is at the root of these evil efforts we see so much at work today (and ever since the beginning of time) which constantly press toward a *one-*

world kingdom, you can be sure that the thing energizing these kinds of efforts – to destroy borders, to effect a one world economy – these efforts are energized by Satan and his minions in his lust to be god, to be worshipped, to have absolute power and control. In this fallen world, it never has been God’s will to permit these things – until He permits Satan to make that one final bow on the stage of world history. The Beast will rise from the sea, having Satan’s authority, and will be permitted for a short time to reverse Babel and thereby feed his insatiable pride.

The sin of pride then, is the sin of Satan and we as Christ’s people must be wise about it and stamp it down by the Spirit whenever we see it trying to rise up in our own hearts. We also must be wise about evil in this present world so that we are not deceived by the workings of the spirit of antichrist –

1Jn 2:18 Children, it is the last hour, and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many

antichrists have come. Therefore we know that it is the last hour.

1Jn 4:1-3 Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world. (2) By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, (3) and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already.

If you study history, including church history, a large part of those studies will focus upon *wars*. Specifically, wars launched by tyrants who lust to be the ruler of the entire world. You have seen it in:

- Egyptian Pharaohs
- Babylon
- Assyria
- Alexander the great (Greece)
- Rome and the Caesars
- Religious ecumenism – World Council of Churches as

an example

- You see it in the Popes
- Hitler's Third Reich
- And you see it today as evil world leaders jostle for position to have ultimate power

This is pride. It is self-worship. These things are all manifestations of antichrist striving to reverse Babel and build that tower up to the heavens in one single kingdom. Each time however, the Lord has stepped in and brought those towers down. He will not permit such a ruler to come to power until that time appointed by Him when that man of lawlessness is revealed:

2Th 2:3-4 Let no one deceive you in any way. For that day will not come, unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, (4) who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God.

As it was in the beginning when the

serpent snared Adam and Eve by pride, so it always has been. Right now, at this moment here in our own community, in our nation, and in the nations of the world – this arrogant lust to be god, the spirit of antichrist, is at work. This is wisdom and we as Christ's people must refuse to be part of it no matter the cost. Do not love the world or the things in the world – it is the arena of antichrist and it is going down.

A Look Within

Psa 139:17-24 How precious to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them! (18) If I would count them, they are more than the sand. I awake, and I am still with you. (19) Oh that you would slay the wicked, O God! O men of blood, depart from me! (20) They speak against you with malicious intent; your enemies take your name in vain. (21) Do I not hate those who hate you, O LORD? And do I not loathe those who rise up against you? (22) I hate them with complete hatred; I count them my enemies. (23) Search me, O

God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! (24) And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!

We need the Lord's searchlight within us to expose and root out our own pride.

1Jn 2:16 For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world.

This evil trilogy rooted in pride, you see. My flesh, the things my eyes gaze upon and desire, my pride in self – it is from the world, and from the god of this world. Search me, O God.

Even godly king Hezekiah was snared by it for a time-

2Ch 32:24-28 In those days Hezekiah became sick and was at the point of death, and he prayed to the LORD, and he answered him and gave him a sign. (25) But Hezekiah did not make return

according to the benefit done to him, for his heart was proud. Therefore wrath came upon him and Judah and Jerusalem. (26) But Hezekiah humbled himself for the pride of his heart, both he and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the wrath of the LORD did not come upon them in the days of Hezekiah. (27) And Hezekiah had very great riches and honor, and he made for himself treasuries for silver, for gold, for precious stones, for spices, for shields, and for all kinds of costly vessels; (28) storehouses also for the yield of grain, wine, and oil; and stalls for all kinds of cattle, and sheepfolds.

It is no exaggeration to conclude that all the evils within local churches, within the visible church in this world, are rooted in the sin of pride.

3Jn 1:9 I have written something to the church, but Diotrephes, who likes to put himself first, does not acknowledge our authority.

What is it that energizes heretics and false prophets to ply their evil trade in the church? *Pride. Self.*

Their gospel is an “improvement” when in fact it is cursed by God.

If anyone thinks that they are immune to pride, that they regard themselves as so humble that pride is not a problem for them, think again and look at this:

2Co 12:2-10 I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows. (3) And I know that this man was caught up into paradise—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows— (4) and he heard things that cannot be told, which man may not utter.

(5) On behalf of this man I will boast, but on my own behalf I will not boast, except of my weaknesses— (6) though if I should wish to boast, I would not be a fool, for I would be speaking the truth; but I refrain from it, so that no one may think more of me than he sees in me or hears from me. (7) So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the

surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, **to keep me from becoming conceited.** (8) Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. (9) But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for **my power is made perfect in weakness.**” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. (10) For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

See it? Even the Apostle Paul, so far ahead of us in knowing the Lord, required a preventative humbling against the lurking danger of pride. He needed to be *weakened* by the Lord so that he would be strong in the Lord. And so it is with us.

Do you ever wonder about why God permits suffering and hurtful things to come our way? Here is the big part of the answer – because

we need to be humbled. We need to have these doses of weakness to enable us to stand against this evil pride that still lurks in our flesh.

How many professing Christians today, and down through history, have been snared by false gospels and false prophets and false churches, all because of *pride*? Consider this:

Col 2:18-19 Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize by delighting in self-abasement and the worship of the angels, taking his stand on visions he has seen, inflated without cause by his fleshly mind, (19) and not holding fast to the head, from whom the entire body, being supplied and held together by the joints and ligaments, grows with a growth which is from God.

His “fleshly mind,” you see. Lust for indulging the flesh – the self. So that when a false teacher comes along offering another Jesus who is more acceptable to the arrogant mind...well, such a person delights in it all. He is “*inflated without*

cause by his fleshly mind,” and that precludes such a person from holding fast to Christ and the true gospel. Such a person becomes an enemy of Christ.

2Co 11:3-4 But I am afraid that, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds will be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ. (4) For if one comes and preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted, you bear this beautifully.

Pride becomes then the devil’s open door into our minds. By his crafty deceptions he entices with another Jesus who is attractive to our own sinful flesh. You see people all around us to are just soooo sure that they are saved and on their way to the Celestial City and it all feels so good to them, but they have long since been led into a detour that ends only in hell unless in humility they turn back around. Pride prefers Broadway,

not the Narrow Way.

Be thankful then for your times of suffering. The Lord uses these things to chasten us and keep us looking to Christ. To keep us *humble in weakness – and thereby make us strong.*

Let me close by listing some verses which address the evil fruit of pride and the Spirit’s fruit of humility –

(Psa 10:4) In the pride of his face the wicked does not seek him; all his thoughts are, “There is no God.”

(Psa 18:27) For you save a humble people, but the haughty eyes you bring down.

(Psa 25:9) He leads the humble in what is right, and teaches the humble his way.

(Psa 31:18) Let the lying lips be mute, which speak insolently against the righteous in pride and contempt.

(Psa 31:23) Love the LORD, all you his saints! The LORD preserves the faithful but

abundantly repays the one who acts in pride.

(Psa 34:2) My soul makes its boast in the LORD; let the humble hear and be glad.

(Psa 73:6) Therefore pride is their necklace; violence covers them as a garment.

(Psa 147:6) The LORD lifts up the humble; he casts the wicked to the ground.

(Psa 149:4) For the LORD takes pleasure in his people; he adorns the humble with salvation.

(Pro 3:34) Toward the scorers he is scornful, but to the humble he gives favor.

(Pro 8:13) The fear of the LORD is hatred of evil. Pride and arrogance and the way of evil and perverted speech I hate.

(Pro 11:2) When pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with the humble is wisdom.

(Pro 15:33) The fear of the LORD

is instruction in wisdom, and humility comes before honor.

(Pro 16:18) Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.

(Pro 18:12) Before destruction a man's heart is haughty, but humility comes before honor.

(Pro 21:24) “Scoffer” is the name of the arrogant, haughty man who acts with arrogant pride.

(Pro 29:23) One's pride will bring him low, but he who is lowly in spirit will obtain honor.

Let's be certain then to regularly ask the Lord to show us any nook or corner of our hearts and minds where pride is lurking and give us a holy hatred of it, replacing it with Christ's humility.

Php 2:3-7 Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; (4) do not merely look out for your own personal interests,

but also for the interests of others.
(5) Have this attitude in yourselves
which was also in Christ Jesus, (6)
who, although He existed in the
form of God, did not regard
equality with God a thing to be
grasped, (7) but emptied Himself,
taking the form of a bond-servant,
and being made in the likeness of
men.