

April 1, 2021
Maundy Thursday

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Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father, and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Well, as we continue in our study of the seven deadly sins, we come off of number five, gluttony. We saw the biblical view of gluttony and the biblical answer to gluttony. Basically, it comes down to this; there are two ingredients, in a four-word recipe: more Jesus, less me. This leads perfectly into the traditional number one sin in the seven deadly sins. Pride is the word that is almost always put in the first position.

Pride; what do you think of when you hear that word? Perhaps the first thing that came to mind is a little quote; "Pride goes before the fall." This is actually a misquote of proverbs 16:18, which says "pride goes before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall." Of course, it's pride that leads to that haughty spirit, so it is 'pride goes before the fall.' Maybe you also thought of someone, a person that was very proud, maybe even their words betrayed it. Someone like Mohammed Ali, the greatest fighter ever, who said, "I am the greatest." And then again in today's climate and political world, maybe you thought of a group that's been in the news quite a bit, The Proud Boys. I had to look them up, what a definition. A far right, neo-fascist, chauvinist, an exclusively male, white, national organization that promotes and engages in political violence. And then again, maybe you thought of something good about pride. Maybe a song came to your mind like; Lee Greenwood's 1984 classic God bless the USA. Do you remember the refrain? I'm proud to be an American, where at least I know I'm free. Proud to be American.

But if someone gave you some paper, and a pen, and said, you need to write a dictionary. The first word I want you to write a definition for is the word pride. What would you put down? You see that was the struggle of a missionary whose job it was to translate the Bible into the language of the native people. How do you translate it? What words do you use so that they understand what pride is? He chose to use the words that means the ears are too far apart. In other words, they've got a big

head, or a big ego. Why would we suffer from that? Well, the answer is again found in the Bible.

The very first instance of pride in the Bible; you find it recorded and Ezekiel 28:13-19 and begin in Isaiah 14:12-14 where Ezekiel speaks of the guardian cherub. The Lord says, "Your heart was proud because of your beauty. You corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor." Isaiah writes: "How you are fallen from heaven, O daystar. You said in your heart, 'I will, 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. Ah, I will ascend above the heights of the clouds. I will make myself like the Most High.'

Who is this Guardian cherub, this daystar? Satan. And note, both prophets immediately tied his sin to the chief characteristic we have seen in all of the deadly sins. It is a condition of the heart. Satan's beauty led to his pride. He began to think of himself more highly than he ought because of his physical beauty. This pride, thinking of himself higher than he ought, led to him exchanging God's wisdom, for his personal wisdom. The result is literally the epitome of 666 in action. That number from Revelation, where man puts himself above God, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. That's exactly what Satan was doing. It's what led him to say that "I will, I will ascend to heaven, set my throne on high, sit on the mount of assembly, ascend above the heights of the clouds. I will make myself like the Highest. I will replace God." Wow! What is the result of that? So, he was cast down or out of heaven. Or as Jesus says in Luke 10:18, "he fell from heaven." Pride.

So now let's go back to Genesis chapter one, the very beginning of the Bible. Satan in his pride shows contempt for God as he addresses Eve and said, 'Did God actually say, you shall not eat of any tree in the garden?' Eve comes right back and says, 'we're not to eat of it, or even touch it.' Which some people have said is actually the first sin, because nowhere in the Bible is it recorded that you shouldn't touch it. Probably Adam and Eve just said, 'if we are not supposed to eat it, we better not even touch it. Best to stay away from that. We as Christians have been known to do this and well the Pharisees did too. Where we make up some rules to try to enhance what God has said.

But notice what Satan does. He just immediately denies, while showing contempt for God. You will not surely die! And now he inserts his wisdom. For God knows that when you eat of it, your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God. Wow, that's an appeal to envy; be like God, that's what we want. When Eve looked at the fruit, she saw that it looked good, which I'm sure it did because God made it. She saw that it was good for food, because well it has calories, it's going to give her energy. She also saw, and this was, is so important, it was desirable to make one wise. She thought of herself first and what would make her on a par with God. And so, she took, she ate, she shared. And in this account, we find Satan's insidious lie, sin is to be desired. Who would argue that we should not want to be wise? But if it comes at the expense of breaking what God has said, then wisdom is not wisdom.

If you look at our society, we have a lot of things out there that are saying, sin is to be desired. Why not sleep around with everybody? Because God says no. Yeah, but think about the friends. Why not kill a baby, before it is born? It is so much better for the mom. But it's murder. Why not... and we can just go on and on with the list. In every case, where exchanging God's wisdom for our own thinking. We're the ones who were wise. That's called pride. It can even infect the church leading to compromise. We are not going to use that verse or say that word because it might offend others. We're going to do this; even though the Bible doesn't say anything about this as being a good thing in church. We are going to do this because it will make us more attractive. If we don't offend, and if we become more attractive, we'll have greater numbers. Do you notice how it is all coming back to us?

This sin of pride and actually contention with God continues throughout the Bible. We go just the Genesis 4, and you have Lamech talking about his revenge and how his revenge will be greater than God's. We go two more chapters; chapter 6, and we read that every intention of the thoughts of man's heart was evil continually. He was full of himself and the result was the flood. After the flood, what's the next account? The tower of Babel. What were they doing? They were building a tower up to heaven for their glory. And basically, their wisdom was, we are going to build it right up to heaven. If God tries to flood us out, He's going to flood Himself out. Those are the thoughts of very proud people.

What is the answer to pride? Humility. We read in Philippians 2:5-8, "Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who though He was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself by 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.

There we have before us laid out, this action that is taken that is so immense, we can't even fully grasp it. Eternal God, Creator, Master of the universe, becoming a mortal man and allowing Himself to be confined to the body of man and everything that goes with being a man, including death. What are we as humans supposed to do? In word or deed we are to do all to the glory of God. We are to seek to praise God in everything. That is what we are created to do. That is our purpose in life. And what did God do? He came, humbled Himself, to become the servant of those who are supposed to be serving Him. And so, Jesus says; "whoever wants to become great among you, must become your servant." It's what He did. It's humility. It's putting others first before self. It's wiping out pride.

Paul addresses it in another way in Galatians 6:3 "if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself. And understand, that is what we are. We are nothing because of our sin. We gave everything up. We are only something, God's redeemed children, because of what God has done, not us. You can't take any pride in that. That's what He did. And like all the other heavenly virtues, this is especially, humility is Spirit given, a Spirit led matter. It is the Holy Spirit that uses God's word to convict us and show us our need for repentance. We see this in Psalm 51 and Isaiah 66. It is the Holy Spirit that can change our focus from self to others and lead us to encourage others.

There is a unique thing about that encouragement of others, and what happens when we do it. It reminds me of back when I was in high school, I had a coach who I still to this day think was probably about the world's best coach. During games, he didn't say much, he sat there usually quite calm. When asked about that once, he said, "boys, men, I let you do the talking for me. I've trained you; I've coached you, I've

taught you. You go out and do what I say, that's all I need to say, because you go out and you win.” You see, he encouraged us with those words. He lifted us up and for him, he took joy when we succeeded. And when you think about that, isn't that the mark of any good manager? A good manager enables his workers to do well because he takes joy in that. That is what makes him a successful manager. It is what a principal should do in a school. Enable the teachers to be able to teach and to perform well. In the long run, not only are the children taught, which should be the number one goal; the teachers feel great because they are a part of it. But the principle is one who can sit back and say, ‘that's my team.’ You see, it's taking the focus off of ourselves, and putting it on others and encouraging them and enabling them to succeed, and then taking joy in seeing them succeed. Ultimately again, it's outside of self. It's the Spirit that then leads us to give glory to God, which again is what we are supposed to do. We are supposed to serve.

This brings about one of the greatest; what is the greatest little, yet huge characteristics of God. God lives by what He says. We are supposed to serve Him, bring Him glory, honor, and praise. What did He do? We go to our Gospel tonight. God's only begotten Son took off His outer garment, put on an apron, got on His hands and knees, and washed His disciples' feet. Then He told them, ‘You call me Lord and teacher and rightly so, because that is what I am. But if I your Lord, your Teacher, have washed your feet; then you must become the servants of all in washing their feet.’ Wow! That is our goal. When you think about how great our God is, that He lives by His own rules, tells us to be servants and He, Himself became a servant to us, even to the point of death, death on the cross. That now enables the Holy Spirit to take us and well to do something that we would think is very prideful. It enables us to boast. But as Paul says, so that as it is written, “Let the one who boasts, boast in the LORD.” There is where we boast. It does not start with the word I. It does not start with the word we. It starts with Jesus, God, the Spirit. We boast in them because they have taken us who are nothing, and made us something, the redeemed children, and servants of God.

In His Name, Amen