

Jesus, Humility, and the Greatest Man who Ever Lived—John the Baptist

Mark 1:1-8; Matthew 11:11

Are You HUMBLE?

We have been studying the Gospel by Mark now for several weeks. First we saw the human author that captured the words onto paper was Mark. Then we saw the man behind those words, the eyewitness to Christ's life and ministry, Peter. Now we come to the first mentioned character in the book, John the Baptist.

This morning I invite you to consider Jesus, humility—and the greatest man who ever lived up until Christ. That greatest man was also the humblest and his name was John the Baptist. John is the first character introduced in the Gospel by Mark. He is so vital that we need to examine his life closely.

The Lord declared we are sinners from birth and because of that we all want our own way (Isaiah 53:6). Wanting our own way is a simple definition of pride. All of us this morning share one thing in common and that is the sin of pride. Though most of us never may murder another human—we are proud.

Though we may never get involved in witchcraft or sodomy—we will have a life long involvement with pride.

No matter what else we do in your life, if humility is not ours then God will resist everything else we do. God is moment-by-moment in a personal warfare against pride in the life of believers.

Pride is the sin God hates most, sees first, and wants us to likewise hate.

If we are not consciously humbling ourselves daily, hourly, and moment-by-moment, then we are losing the battle with pride. That brings us to Christ's messenger named...

John The Baptist

When God wanted to introduce His Son, who did He send? John the Baptist—a messenger who displays the supreme character God seeks in His servants called humility.

When God described the messenger He would use as the herald announcing the coming of the Lamb of God who would die for sin, how is he described? Note in Mark 1:3 he is called a "voice", no name, no rank, no flowery introduction—and how profoundly these words about John the Baptist remind us how important humility is to God.

The supreme lesson of John the Baptist's life is humility. And there can be no more vital message that we all need to hear than that God HATES pride. God used John because he was willing to obey the Lord and by the power of the Holy Spirit in his life cultivate humility.

Now look back in Matthew chapter 11. When Jesus describes John He calls him the greatest man who had ever lived until that time. Listen what Jesus said:

"Truly, I say to you, among those born of women there has not arisen anyone greater than John the Baptist" (Matt. 11:11).

May I introduce you to the greatest saint who ever lived up until Christ's time? Jesus called him that. Great saints are like giant markers that point the world to God. Before John were many incredible saints, but Jesus said none of them were greater than John.

Jesus no saint more fully or greatly pointed to God than when a simple man dressed like a peasant, after a lifetime of discipline and self denial thundered from the wilderness, "Its time to look at Jesus!"

John the Baptist has been prepared by God as a man alone, a man apart, a great man, greater than had not been born from among women Jesus said. Why? What had refined and shaped this man to such a point as that? Listen to the testimony of John and we will hear his secret.

He Must Increase

Please turn with me to John 3, stand and follow along as I read from v.22-30!

The key to God's attention is humility. The pathway to being constantly showered with grace is humility. The heart attitude that leads to humility is summed up by John's testimony, "Christ must increase and I must decrease".

Can you say this morning that those words are your heart's desire? "I want Christ to increase and for me to decrease".

Have you come to the place in your life as a believer where you want to increase Christ's attitude as your's decreases? Christ's actions increase through you as your selfish actions decrease? Christ's gracious words increase in your mouth as your words decrease? Christ's desires and passions increase in you and your fleshly passions and

desires decrease? "Christ must increase and I must decrease". That is the essence of humility.

Humility produces spiritual blessing. Just as every sin starts in pride, every virtue begins in humility. Humility allows us to see ourselves as we are, because it shows us before God as He is.

Just as pride is behind every conflict we have with other people and every problem of fellowship we have with the Lord, so humility is behind every harmonious human relationship, every spiritual success, and every moment of joyous fellowship with the Lord.

The greatest plague on earth is pride. More people miss heaven for pride than any other sin.

All conflicts and troubles have flowed downward from pride. The source of every gossip, every hurt feeling, every church division, every departed sheep is pride. At the heart of every fight is pride.

God is at war against any and all pride He sees in our lives. Both Peter and James warn us of this ongoing "pride-resisting" that God promised.

Open with me to James 4.

*James 4:6, 10 But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: "God **resists** the proud, But gives grace to the humble." 10 Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.*

*1 Peter 5:5 Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to your elders. Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for "God **resists** the proud, But gives grace to the humble."*

Why is God so opposed to pride? Because...

Satan is the Father of Pride

The original sin was pride; and the first sin as Lucifer challenged God. Pride is the ultimate sin, and every sin after that has been in some way an extension of pride.

Because the bright "star of the morning" continually said, "I will, I will, I will" in opposition to God's will, he was cast out of heaven (Isa. 14:12–23). Because he said, "I am a god," the Lord cast him "from the mountain of God" (Ezek. 28:11–19).

Likewise, the original sin of Adam and Eve was pride, trusting in their own understanding above God's (Gen. 3:6–7). Solomon often warns of pride in Proverbs.

- “When pride comes, then comes dishonor” (11:2),
- “Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before stumbling” (16:18), and again
- “Haughty eyes and a proud heart, the lamp of the wicked, is sin” (21:4).

Pride is the supreme temptation from Satan, because pride is at the heart of his own evil nature. Our only protection against pride, and our only source of humility, is a proper view of God. We must understand that our pride is the sin of competing with God, and humility is the virtue of submitting to His supreme glory.¹

In James 4:6 and I Peter 5:5 the Greek tenses and words are powerfully the same. God is constantly Himself resisting the proud, but is constantly giving grace to the humble.

The best way to be frustrated, discontent, and empty is pride. God resists the proud—always remember that! Our greatest enemy is pride and our greatest friend is humility.

The greatest conduit for God’s grace is humility. So what we need to do is identify pride in our lives, humble ourselves in God’s sight—and let Him pour out His grace upon all we do!

How To Identify My Pride

The best source of insight into pride is an examination of your self asking honestly—which of these areas apply to me.

Pride always makes me think that the sermon was for someone else other than me—because I’m okay!

Pride makes me always critique church on the basis of “what I got” rather than “what I gave”.

The Gospel is all about the reality that I am a failure because of sin and only Christ’s becoming my Substitute and taking my sin, and guilt, and shame gives me any hope.

The Cross is a constant reminder on my own I am unable to do right, unable to stop sinning, and helpless to do anything about my weaknesses, fears, and problems. That is why God wants my...

Pride Exposed

Pride makes me think of myself first and others second.

¹ Adapted from MacArthur, New Testament Commentary, Ephesians 4:2.

Pride makes me always look for **my name** on a list, always look for **my face** in a picture, and always look for **my presents** at a party.

Pride always makes me compare myself with others, excusing my failures while condemning theirs.

Pride makes me sensitive to how **I look**, how **I feel**, and defensive about what **I do**.

My pride also makes me expect special treatment, want to be in control, think my opinion is important, and always want to be right.

We have **proud attitudes**: pride makes me impatient, resentful, bitter,

We have **proud looks**: haughty looks, arrogant expressions,

We have **proud words**: they are angry words, belittling words, harsh words, harmful words, defiling words, thoughtless words, self-aggrandizing words... proud words dominate conversations, are boastful, critical, and argumentative,

We have **proud actions**: pride makes me **pushy** with my agenda, **nosy** about others business, a **gossiper** about others actions, **competitive** for my way, **obsessive** about my wants, **compulsive** for my needs, and **anxious** about the outcome when it relates to me.

My pride makes me want to be recognized and noticed.

My pride makes me proud of **my** looks, **my** travels, **my** education, **my** ministry, **my** Bible knowledge, **my** cooking skills, **my** decorating skills, **my** social skills, **my** social status—**or jealous of any of yours!**

Pride makes me: resentful when disrespected, while at the same time expecting recognition and respect.

Pride makes me discontent, restless, anxious, jealous, and selectively lazy. Pride makes me late for you but fumes when you are not early for me.

Pride doesn't want to wait, and doesn't want to try for fear of failure.

Pride makes me **exaggerate** my work, my opinion, my needs, my wants, my plans—while **minimizing** all of yours, and jealous if I can't.

Pride makes me break the rules, bend the rules, and impose my own rules on others—while resisting all of your rules.

Pride makes me resistant, hesitant, and belligerent towards other's ideas and leadership because I want my own way.

Pride makes me hold a grudge against you—and want to get even, while forgetting my similar failures, and then get angry when you get even with me.

Pride **always** remembers wrongs, **always** thinks it deserves better, and **always** wants more.

Pride makes me cover my sins while seeing other's faults first and clearest.

Pride wants the best seat, takes the best parking place, and won't wait in line.

My pride makes me need the best clothes, buy only the finest things for myself—but shop the bargain basement for others. So pride makes me always seek the best for myself—and not care about the needs of others.

Pride makes me **not like** my old car, always want a new car, and get **completely jealous** of you when you get **any** car.

Pride makes me either think my house is not good enough for me, or my house is better than yours.

Pride makes me buy the biggest house possible and then say it's just an investment without first asking where I have more invested—on earth or in Heaven.

Pride makes me buy things I can't afford, find reasons to not give, and do things I often regret.

Pride makes me **love money** and hate sacrifice; **love praise** and hate criticism; **love prosperity** and hate adversities.

Pride makes me **pursue** pleasures and **avoid** pain.

Pride makes me worry about what **I wear**, how **I look**, and what **others think**.

Pride makes me **never quite content** with my hair color, my skin color, my body weight, my physical condition, or my health. Pride will also makes me think my hair is **better** looking, my tan is **better** looking, my body is **better** looking than yours--or jealous if it's not!

Pride is when I get focused more on **my skin** than my heart, when I get focused more on **my hair** than my mind, when I get focused more on **my clothes** rather than being clothed with compassion and love, when I am more focused more on **my car** than serving Christ, and **my house** than on Heaven.

Pride makes me **resentful** when corrected; **hurt** when disappointed; **impatient** when hindered; **greedy** when given choices (remember Lot); **critical** when speaking of rivals; **jealous** when seeing others advancing in any way; **untruthful** when confronted; and **distant** when slighted.

Pride will make me exaggerate my accomplishments, possessions, and abilities while minimizing my faults, weaknesses, and deficiencies.

Pride makes me unthankful for others sacrifices, services, or gifts.

Pride makes me irritated at others, short with those I feel superior towards, and flattering towards those that can help me in some way.

Pride makes me driven with me agenda, hurried with others needs, and impatient with life.

Pride always makes me picky, finicky, touchy, choosy, nose, and bossy.
Pride makes me jealous of the strength of youth, and disdainful of the weaknesses of the elderly and incapacitated.

Pride makes me secretly rejoice in others catastrophes and sullenly endure my own.

Pride makes me think that I am vital and irreplaceable, and my life is so important--that I will do all I can to save my life and not lose it.

Pride makes me spiritually superficial, artificial, and critical.

Pride makes me think **much about my life** and gaining as much as I can and **little about my death** and my face-to-face appointment I have with Christ when I explain just what I did with my life.

Pride makes me prejudiced, bigoted, and calloused.

Pride makes me:

- Self-reliant
- Self-absorbed
- Self-deceived
- Self-confident
- Self-conscious
- Self-sufficient
- Self-satisfied
- Self-focused
- Self-centered, and
- Self-driven

Pride makes me **unreliable** (because you can't tell me what to do and when); **unloving** (because I won't sacrifice for you); **unteachable** (because you can't correct me), and **competitive** (because I will always try to outdo you)!

Pride makes me **quick to speak** and slow to hear; **quick to anger** and slow to forgive; **quick to take** and slow to give.

Humble Yourself in the Sight of God

Back to James 4:6 and 10.

James 4:6, 10 But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: "God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble." 10 Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.

What can happen if we humbled ourselves in the sight of God?

There are several immediate results of a humbled life:

- Humbled believers spend far less money (because so much spending is prompted by pride) then we are able to fund greater and greater kingdom work.
- Humbled believers trim their schedules of what doesn't please God but just is selfish activity (prompted by our pride to keep up with everyone else) then we have more time for ministry because we'd do God's work first and our pleasures second.
- Humbled believers find God's Word attracts them more than their hobbies and pursuits because they've stopped living for self.

If we were humbled believers we'd go to more mission fields and less spas; we'd go to more prayer meetings and less shopping outlets.

If we were humbled we kneel before God far more than we sat before our television; we'd communicate and lift our face to God more than we update our Face Book and My Space pages.

Humility means I don't have to be asked nicely, reminded, and recognized before I'll serve Christ's church—rather I know that I am Christ's bondservant and I go around looking for ways to serve Him.

Humility takes the **attraction** away from sports, the **captivation** away from finances, and the **fascination** away from media as God's grace makes movies offensive to me—and God becomes more important than my entertainment.

Sunday: end by standing and singing “Worthy is the Lamb” because only He is worthy of our devotion—not us. Our pride is fighting against His Lordship and His Glory.

Then take 3 minutes to quietly humble ourselves before God.

You can sit, stand, kneel, come to the steps of the platform, or lay face down.

After 3 minutes I’ll start us singing “Worthy is the Lamb” to close.