

7 Life-giving Virtues Humility
2 Chronicles 7:14; Philippians 2:1-4
WRCoB 8.14.22

Today's sermon is on humility

And in my opinion

It will be the best sermon you've ever heard!

Proverbs 16:18 KJV Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.

There's a story told of a turtle

Who wanted to spend the winter in Florida

But he knew he could never walk that far.

He convinced a couple of geese to help him

Each taking one end of a piece of rope

While he clamped his vise-like jaws in the center.

The flight went fine until someone on the ground looked up

In admiration and asked

"Who in the world thought of that?"

Unable to resist the chance to take credit

The turtle opened his mouth to shout, "I did--"

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After resigning her pastorate to go to another church

The minister was approached by an endearing

Older member of the congregation.

She wept over the pastor's decision to leave and said

"Things will never be the same."

The pastor tried to console her.

Don't worry, I'm confident you will get a new pastor

Who will even be better than me.

She continued to sob.

*That's what the last three pastors said
But they just keep getting worse.*

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Winston Churchill was once asked.

*Doesn't it thrill you to know that every time you make a
speech the hall is packed to overflowing?*

Yes, *it's quite flattering*, replied Sir Winston.

*But whenever I feel that way I always remember
That if instead of making a political speech
I was being hanged
The crowd would be twice as big.*

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Today we come to the last of our sermon series
On the 7 Life-giving virtues.

Today's sermon is, of course, the virtue of humility.

Humility counters the sin of pride.

Let's remind ourselves of the 7 virtues and their counterparts

1. Chastity vs Lust
2. Temperance vs Gluttony
3. Charity vs Greed
4. Diligence vs Sloth
5. Patience vs Anger
6. Kindness vs Envy
7. Humility vs Pride

Strangely enough, of all the 7 deadly sins
Pride is considered the worst of them all.

The theologian John Stott.

At every stage of our Christian development and in every sphere of our Christian discipleship pride is your greatest enemy, humility your greatest friend.

In our day of excessive celebrations in sports
The dance in the end zone
The strut following the winning hoop
The primeval roar over a goal

What so bad about a little self-exaltation?

Well according to Jason Meyer
One of the authors of *Killjoy the 7 Deadly Sins*

*Other sins lead the sinner away from God
But pride . . . [seeks] to elevate the sinner above God.*

Jonathan Edwards said of Pride; *it is the most hidden, secret, and deceitful of all sins.*

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Let's begin by making something perfectly clear.

Humility does not imply having low self-esteem.

That is not what God is after
Quite the opposite.

C. S. Lewis says it perfectly.

*Humility is not thinking less of yourself . . .
but thinking of yourself less.*

Whereas pride places self in the center of the universe
With everything revolving around it.

Humility rightfully places God in the center.

The etymology of the word itself explains it.

Humility's root is the Latin word humus.

Humus means "of the earth".

Along with humility

Words with the same root word as humus are
Humanity, humor, exhume, and humble.

The Franciscan priest Richard Rohr wrote:

Being human means acknowledging that we're made from the earth and will return to the earth.

We are earth that has come to consciousness. And then we return to where we started—in the heart of God.

Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust.

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Humility is one of those elusive qualities
Impossible to achieve as its own goal.

You can't just say, humble is a good thing
From now on, I am going to be humble.

Martin Luther, "True humility does not know that it is humble. If it did, it would be proud from the contemplation of so fine a virtue."

Like the song, "Oh Lord it's hard to be humble
When you're perfect is every way."

It is hard to "will" oneself to be humble.

In other words, if you think you're humble . . . you're not.

Sometimes purposely trying to be humble backfires
People can see right through it.

Like what Helen Nielsen once wrote.

Humility is like underwear, essential, but indecent if it shows.

Humility comes from the heart.

You can't fake humble.

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God sees humility as a strength.

It places us where we need to be.

Humility offers perspective

In how to relate with others

An awareness of our strengths

And acknowledgement of our weaknesses.

Humility is being honest with yourself.

Indeed, humility and honesty are two sides of a coin.

If we can be honest with ourselves

We can be honest with those around us.

If we can't be honest with ourselves

Then how can we be honest with others?

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In essence, then,
 True humility comes from an awareness
 Of our standing before God.

I remember as kids
 Laying down under a starlit night
 Feeling very, very, small and insignificant.

Or standing on a small knoll
 Out on the great plains
 Seeing the vastness of it all.

It makes you aware of your place in the universe.

The great psalm invites us to consider this.

Psalm 8:3-4 NRSV When I look at the heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars that you have established; what are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them?

Standing before the universe is a humbling experience.

It makes us feel small and insignificant.

Psalm 8:5 NRSV Yet you have made them a little lower than God, and crowned them with glory and honor.

When we stand before God the Creator
 And realize we were made from the earth
 And to earth we return

We acknowledge the humus of our humanity.

When we stand before the throne of God
When we come into God's presence

We stand aware of our sinfulness and God's holiness.

It is quite humbling.

The English Christian martyr John Bradford
Coined the wonderful phrase.

There but by the grace of God go I.

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Jesus taught humility to his disciples.

Matthew 23:11-12 NLT The greatest among you must be a servant. ¹² But those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.

John 13:14-15 NLT And since I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash each other's feet. ¹⁵ I have given you an example to follow. Do as I have done to you.

Jesus not only taught humility
Humility was his greatest strength.

Philippians 2:6-8 NRSVUE

⁶ who, though he existed in the form of God,
did not regard equality with God
as something to be grasped,
⁷ but emptied himself,

**taking the form of a slave,
assuming human likeness.**

**And being found in appearance as a human,
8 he humbled himself
and became obedient to the point of death—
even death on a cross.**

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The Apostle Paul, in our Scripture Lesson, writes
That we should do nothing out of selfish ambition or conceit

But instead look to the interests of others.

Being of the same mind
Having the same love as Christ.

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Rather than creating a negative low self-esteem
Humility has the ability to do the opposite.

Humility gives you

- A positive self-view and good self-esteem
- Increased gratitude, forgiveness, and general health
- Being more helpful and agreeable
- Appearing less threatening to others
- Having greater emotional wellness, self-regulation, and resilience
- Being more tolerant

In a study by Exline and Geyer in 2004
Which asked 127 psychology students
If they thought humility a strength or a weakness.

They consistently reported is as a strength.

*“They typically described humble individuals as kind,
modest, and high in ability or other positive attributes.”*

Humility is a strength.

It is an awareness and an acceptance
Of one's humus or humanity.

We are frail, faulty and fragile.

We are honest with ourselves.

We know we make mistakes

But we have grace to forgive ourselves.

And with an honest appraisal of ourselves
We can offer sympathy, mercy and compassion
To others.

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Ron Sider died this past July 27.

He was of Mennonite background born in Canada.

He founded a Christian organization called
Evangelicals for Social Action.

He combined an evangelical Christianity
With an emphasis on social justice.

He was a very humble man
And lived a very humble life.

He purposefully lived in an inner-city neighborhood
In Philadelphia.

Cooked out the Mennonite's *More-With-Less* cookbook
And wore used clothing bought at local thrift stores.

Though a well-known and successful church leader
He didn't flaunt it with a fancy mansion
Top of the line suits
And expensive watches
As some church leaders do.

Sider exemplified what Jesus taught
In the Sermon on the Mount when he said

**Matthew 5:5 Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit
the earth (humus).**

Let us do the same
For the glory of God and our neighbors good.