

“ON BEING HUMBLE.”

Rev. Robert T. Woodyard

First Christian Reformed Church, Lynden, WA

July 3, 2016, 10:30AM

Text for the Sermon: I Peter 5:5-7

Prayer: Holy Father, we are a poor and needy people and we need your Word to mold us, shape us, guide us, direct us, convict us. Come Holy Spirit, shine the light of your truth into the innermost parts of our minds and hearts that as we hear your Word we might also understand and obey for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Introduction.

The chapter and verse divisions in the Bible are not inspired by the Holy Spirit. They were added many centuries later by men. The chapters were added by Stephen Langton in 1227. The verses were added by a man named Robert Stephanus in 1551. Paragraph divisions are even more recent and those can vary from translation to translation.

Some of the breaks are rather arbitrary and unfortunate. And some of them if followed too strictly can lead to misinterpretations, which is why when you study your Bible you need to always look at the context before and after and sometimes ignore the chapter and verse numbers.

Our text is an example. The second half of verse five should be a new verse and a new paragraph, it is a new thought. Peter is changing subjects here from pride and humility with regard to leaders, to pride and humility among all of us.

Pride.

Someone has said everyone has within them the soul of a king, that is the desire to be first, to rule or lord over others. This desire must be subdued.

Pride is a disease that we must always be treating knowing that it is never cured in this life. We all have it and we all struggle with it and just when we think we have wrestled it to the ground it rears its ugly head yet again. Of all our sins pride might be the most resistant to treatment.

It is resistant, first, because it's often hidden, it's not necessarily a public sin like anger or impatience. It is also tough to fight because the proud don't see their pride.

And if someone points it out, there will be a strong protest. “I’m not proud, I haven’t done anything wrong, and who are you to say? Why are you being so critical?”

We have very strong defense mechanism to protect ourselves, our honor, our respect, our identity. It is human nature to be proud, to be the center of our universe, independent and self-reliant. It was the first sin, Satan started it. It was Adam’s first sin. The world we live in and the air we breathe in this culture is hostile to humility.

To deal with this engrained besetting sin Peter gives three commands with three reasons, each reason being a divine word of encouragement.

Humble yourself before each other, vs. 5.

I Peter 5:5 Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”

Peter had just written to the church leaders and now he addresses the entire congregation. *All of us*, new Christians and mature Christians, young and old, men and women, church leaders and non-leaders, all Christians are to be humble people.

By definition a church should be a gathering of humble people. All of us are sinners, right? We all admit that we have sinned against God and one another, that we all have a lot of sin in our hearts, that we are poor and needy spiritually, that we can’t save ourselves.

So we should all be a humble people before God and each other, right?

Human community thrives where there is humility, whether we are talking about family and relatives, school, sports, work, or church. Pride ruins relationships.

Remember Cain and Abel, and Joseph and his brothers. Peter knows this well, he once proudly boasted he would never deny Jesus.

So what is humility? Humility is simply the attitude which puts others first, which gives the needs, desires and thoughts of others attention before our own.

Paul defines it well in Philippians 2:

Philippians 2:3-4 Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. 4 Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.

Clothe yourself with this most Christian of all the virtues. If you are *fashion conscience*, if you care about how you look and what you wear, then you cannot do better than to clothe yourself with humility. If you put it on every morning you will be the best dressed person in town, no matter what else you are wearing.

This is one time when it is really OK to be wearing the same outfit as someone else. We should all have the same outfit on, the outfit of humility.

When God or others look at you what do they see you wearing? If you are dressed in humility what will that outfit look like? How can you recognize it?

Humility rejoices at other's successes and victories and blessings.

Humility doesn't have to have the first word or the last word, they know when to be quiet.

A humble person is hard to offend, and if offended forgives quickly.

I was in a conversation with someone last weekend and gave some opinions and a couple of days later the conversation came to mind and the more I thought about it the more I thought I could have really offended them so I made a couple of phone calls to clean up my mess and both of them said they never even gave it a second thought. God bless them for a humble spirit and for not being easily offended or hurt.

A humble person is teachable and not wise in their own eyes.

A humble person can ask for help and doesn't have to have things done their way.

A humble person doesn't make a big deal about other's weaknesses; they can admit their own.

A humble person has a servant heart, is quick to offer help.

A humble person has a thankful spirit, not a critical spirit.

A humble person isn't quickly frustrated or impatient with inconvenience or long lines or bad traffic or being on hold forever.

A humble person is willing to let another get the credit, or have the upper hand.

I had the experience some 20 years ago now of sitting in my study with a young couple with three little kids. Their marriage was on the rocks and we were trying to work through the issues. It boiled down to lack of forgiveness and lack of humility. The husband wouldn't forgive because he was afraid it would give his wife the upper hand. He thought vulnerability was weakness. Humility would put

him at a disadvantage, and he couldn't handle the thought of it. His pride and arrogance eventually ended his marriage. It was the price of winning.

Parents, let your children see and hear you repent and confess when you sin, when you blow it. Let them witness humility and learn it firsthand.

Why should we be this way toward others?

This admonition comes with a *serious threat*, if you are proud, if you try to put yourself above others you will make God your enemy. Those who humble themselves have God for a friend.

There is nothing worse in this life than to have the infinitely powerful God opposed to you and there is nothing better than to have the infinitely loving God being gracious to you.

God breaks down those who lift themselves up, and God raises up those who are bowed down. When you have God as a friend you have favor, kindness, blessings, in a word, grace, which is God's undeserved favor.

Humble yourself under God, vs. 6.

I Peter 5:6 Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you.

Peter now switches from humility toward one another to humility toward God. What does it mean to humble yourself before God? What does that look like?

It means bowing to His wisdom, bowing to His plans, bowing to His interruptions and interference, bowing to His time table, bowing to the twists and turns and changes and unwelcome intrusions. It means bowing to His infinite and superior providence.

It means saying yes to that baptism question, "Are ready to accept God's will for your child, whatever that will may be?"

I learned that from Coleson Brink and Cash Parriera. Those two young boys taught me what humility before a sovereign God looks like. Doug Vander Woude and Curt Meenderinck have taught me what it means to humbly say, "Thy will be done, not my will."

Humbling ourselves before God and under God is a humbling thing. It's scary to let go when we don't know what will happen or what He will do. It's humbling when God does something for which He gives no reason, for which He gives no answer to our why questions.

We truly don't know God until we have come face to face with His unsearchable and inscrutable wisdom, with the infinite and unfathomable depths of God. We truly don't know God until our questions of Him are only answered with questions or not answered at all, until like Job we are reduced to only being able to say God is God and may He be forever praised.

Why should we humble ourselves before Him?

Because of His second promise, that in due time, in God's time He will exalt us if we do.

Humbling yourself under God means humbling yourself under His wisdom and will, patiently waiting for when He deems it best to raise you up.

Humbling means trusting by faith that what seems like a bad path, a path that looks like a serious disadvantage, is in God's providence in our best interest and in due time will turn out well and to our advantage when He chooses to exalt us.

Whose schedule do you want to live by, God's or yours?

The kind of exaltation is not mentioned. Will it be honor or reward in this life, will others see it or just us, will it be spiritual growth and blessings, will it just come in the life to come? All of that is hidden from us, we humble ourselves by faith, not sight, trusting God's will.

Peter experienced this. His pride was met with a terrible fall. After he denied Jesus he broke down and wept in repentance. Later, in due time, Jesus extended grace to him and restored him.

Humble yourself by casting your cares on God, vs. 7.

I Peter 5:7 casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.

This is how you know you are being humble, when you are able to let go of your worries and fears and anxieties and give them over to God completely. Anxiety is a form of pride. Humility is letting go of the reins of our lives and giving them over to God.

Psalm 55:22 Cast your burden on the Lord, and he will sustain you.

Isaiah 46:4 Even to your old age I am he, and to gray hairs I will carry you. I have made, and I will bear; I will carry and will save.

God is a burden carrying God. Lay your burdens on Him and let Him carry them.

What should we cast off onto the Lord? What fears or anxieties or worries do you have? The future, finances, losing your job, marriage, kids, health, cancer, death, earthquakes, uncomfortable situations, what other's think, embarrassing yourselves, saying the wrong thing, being left out, being the last one picked.

God cares about the very thing you are worrying about right now.

Humility is the secret of contentment, of rest for your soul. Humility is the path to freedom, free to think more about others and less about self. Trusting in God's power and goodness and providence sets us free from turmoil and stress.

How many times have I done a funeral here of someone their children praised as a person who put others first, who gave little thought to themselves, who was content to be last?

Because He cares for you.

Dwell on this thought, meditate on this, what does it mean the God cares for you? Do you believe it? Have you experienced it? Do you doubt it? Look at the cross, what more proof do you need? If He did spare His own Son, what more will He not do for us (Romans 8:32)?

The God of the universe, the creator and ruler of all that is cares for us. Rest in this thought, let go of fear and anxiety and distrust and hopelessness and despair and impatience.

Matthew 6:31-33 Do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' 32 For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. 33 But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

Pagans have reason to worry, but those who believe in and trust God don't. God is mighty, we have nothing to fear or truly worry about.

You all know the means for doing this in the simple truth of Philippians 4:

Philippians 4:5b-7 The Lord is at hand; 6 do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. 7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

When you start to feel worry or fear or anxiety coming on preach this truth to yourself. Say to your heart, “Heart, who do you think you are getting anxious and acting like there is no God who loves you and knows what you need and has promised to take care of you? Who are you to say God is not trustworthy? Who are you to try to trust in yourself? Why are you trying to exalt yourself with anxiety? No, cast all your cares on God, He is infinitely powerful and wise and good and will do right for us.”

Implications and application.

The Gospel is a beauty and beast kind of story. First, it brings us down, it shows us our ugly side, that we are sinners and our hearts are filled with sin. It show us that despite our proud efforts we are not able to save ourselves, that apart from God we truly are nothing and have nothing.

Then the Gospel shows us the beauty of Christ who *humbled* Himself and became flesh and then humbled Himself again and died for us and was raised to justify us and reconcile us to God.

The Gospel exalts us when we humble ourselves under it. It exalts us by showing us God’s love for us and God’s care for us. It redeems us and makes us valuable to Him. It exalts us by making us children of God, heirs with Christ of eternal life and glory.

Go from here determined to be clothed with humility. Let humility guard your mouth and thoughts, let it permeate your actions. Humble yourself before God and each other and leave it to God when He exalts you and how. Because of His care for your, cast your cares on Him.