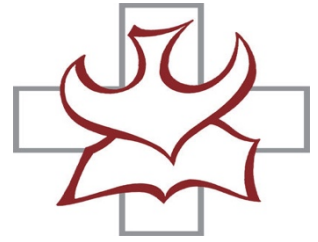


Jars of Clay

Phil 3:4b-11 2 Cor 4:7-11 John 15:1-8

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During this Lenten season, we are looking at the idea of humility, and what it means to be humble. **The antonym of humility is pride.** Biblically speaking, pride might be your greatest enemy.

Pride is all about you. Pride is self-exaltation, self-centeredness, self-reliance, and self-importance. You deceive yourself into thinking that the world revolves around you; that you are actually better than others. You lift yourself up above other people, as if *you yourself* were the only one who matters – your needs, your wants, your life, your rights, your time --- **You** are the only one that matters. A proud person “puffs themselves up” like a frog. Pride is a deceptive enemy that separates you from God and damages your relationships with other people!

If anyone had a right to be proud and prideful before God, it would be St. Paul. Note St. Paul’s Jewish pedigree:

If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, **I have more:** circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless. Philippians 3:4b-11

As a rabid Pharisee, St. Paul’s pride led him to persecute the Church and murder Christians. But the Lord intervened in His life; literally knocked him off his “high horse”; the Lord humbled him (see *the story in Acts 9*). After Baptism and faith, St. Paul became a humble person. Here is what he wrote:

But whatever gain I had, I counted as **loss** for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count everything as **loss** because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For His sake I have suffered the **loss** of all things and count them as **rubbish**, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ Philippians 3:7-9

St. Paul can teach us about humility to today. Humility is turning away from yourself, and confessing your pride as sin.

Your sinful nature is 100% prideful.

It looks only to itself – you are the center of the universe and you will do everything you can to keep it that way. Pride leads to arrogance, anger, gossip, envy, and a host of other sins against God and against other people. Pride is one of your greatest enemies.

Today humble yourself and search your heart for pride. Ask the Holy Spirit to expose your pride, and then confess it to God.

- † Where do you “*puff yourself up*”?
- † Where do you insist on things having to be “*your way or the highway*”?
- † When or where do you think *only* of yourself?

Ask the Holy Spirit to expose your pride, and then confess it to God.

Christ humbled Himself for you; the Son of God left heaven to become a Man, to suffer and die for you and your salvation. **The humble Christ has taken your sinful pride upon Himself.** When He died, so did your pride. Your pride is buried with Christ. It was washed away from you in your Baptism. Pride no longer controls you; nor does it define you. You are now forgiven. You are renewed. In Christ’s resurrection, you are a new person: God creates humility within you. Humility is a gift of salvation; humility is the power of the Holy Spirit at work within you.

- † Humility is seeing yourself as God sees you.
- † Humility is having the “*right view*” of yourself before God.
- † **Humility is a constant awareness that you belong to the Lord and are dependent on Him for all things.**

Both *the Son of God* and *the Apostle of Christ* teach humility to us.

Today we heard *Jesus, the Son of God* teach us about humility. Here is part of what He said:

I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing. John 15:5

This is a humble way to think about yourself... isn’t it?

Jesus is the vine, you are just a branch. By His grace and mercy alone, you have been grafted into the Christ; like a branch is grafted into a vine. It means that your life, and everything about you, comes from Him. That is seeing yourself as God sees you. Jesus reiterates it when He said, “*Apart from Me, you can do nothing.*” Those are sobering words. We are dependent on Him.

Jesus goes on to explain that humility means that we abide in Him, remain faithful to Him, and bear much fruit. Jesus teaches that

Your world does not revolve around you!
Your world revolves around Christ, your Savior!

We are **not** to be self-absorbed and thinking only about ourselves; but rather, we are to think about others and their needs. Jesus the Vine works in and through you to help others; so that you can bear much fruit. Jesus said, *By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.*

Jesus, the Son of God, teaches us that humility is a constant awareness that you are connected to Christ; and your identity and purpose is in Him. Without Christ, you are nothing (John 15:5).

St Paul the Apostle teaches us the same thing about humility using the image of “**Jars of Clay**” --- He teaches that we are like **fragile jars of clay** and that its God's power at work in and through us to do anything good.

But we have this treasure in **jars of clay**, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us.
2 Corinthians 4:7

This is a humble way to think about yourself . . . isn't it?

Rather than seeing yourself as strong, independent, and self-reliant; the Apostle teaches us that we are weak, mortal, and fragile . . . **like a jar of clay.**

When you realize that you are like a Jar of Clay, then you see that it is God and His mighty power is at work within you to do good things.

† You can do all things through Christ who gives you strength Philippians 4:13

† God is your refuge and your strength, an ever present help in times of trouble
Psalms 46:1

† God's grace is sufficient for you, His power is seen in your weakness 2 Corinthians 12:9

† The Lord will meet all your needs according to the riches of His glory in Christ

Jesus Philippians 4:19

God works through humble people;

we are fragile, weak, and mortal **Jars of Clay** that show God's surpassing power!

Finally, one other thing.

You might be having a hard time with all this.

Christ-centered humility is counter-cultural; this is not the way of the world; you didn't learn this in school; you don't see it on TV; the celebrities, pro-athletes, and politicians are **NOT** examples of humility for us.

**This is counter-cultural;
this is the way of faith, you learn this only from the Lord Jesus Christ.**

You might not like thinking of yourself simply a **Branch** completely dependent on Jesus; or you might not think of yourself as a fragile **Jar of Clay**.

If you are having a hard time, *that's good!* Because that means that the Holy Spirit is at work within you. He is challenging your pride with His Holy Word. If you are having a hard time with humility, then soften your heart and listen to the Holy Spirit.

Maybe a good place to start is by understanding this saying:

**Everything I am
and everything I have
is a *gift* from God's good hand.**

Once you understand that saying, then it is pretty easy to understand that **Jesus is the Vine and you are a Branch**; and you will begin to see how you are like a fragile **Jar of Clay**.

Humility is seeing yourself as God sees you.

Humility is having the “*right view*” of yourself before God.

Humility is a constant awareness that you belong to the Lord and are dependent on Him for all things.

*Today, may you repent of your pride, and
may the Holy Spirit work to make you humble.*

AMEN.