**Lost Words: Humility**

**Mark 1:9**

Today we’re starting a new message series entitled: Lost Words. In these messages we’re going to talk about words that are just about gone from our culture. But more important than the words are the lost virtues and character traits they represent. I’m going to warn you these are Christian virtues.

***A virtue is a character trait or quality valued as being good.***

***Wikipedia***

They’re considered good by a culture because they promote individual and collective well-being. The opposite of a virtue is a vice.

Christian virtues are good because they are commanded by God and modeled in the life of Jesus Christ. For example,

***But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is not law.***

***Galatians 5:22-23***

So this is a list of the qualities that should be evident in the life of a follower of Christ—a list of virtues. They aren’t optional and we don’t get to pick and choose. They’re called the FRUIT of the Spirit, not the FRUITS of the Spirit. They are treated together.

But the Lost Word we’re going to begin with today isn’t in this list of the fruit of the Spirit. Why isn’t humility listed? It’s because all this fruit of the Spirit comes from a life of humility. Pride loves self, humility loves other. Pride lacks joy because it’s never satisfied. Humility breeds joy because it’s content with God’s provision. Pride is impatient. Humility is patient. And so on.

So if we are people of humility, the fruit of the Spirit doesn’t seem far-fetched, unreachable, or unreasonable at all.

A PICTURE is worth a thousand words, so let’s start by seeing some examples from the sports world of acts of an act of humility vs. some acts of pride.

[SHOW VIDEOS LOU GEHRIG, RICKY HENDERSON, AND ALAN IVERSON].

In the speech by Lou Gehrig, he also praised his former teammates, the grounds-keeping crew, and even his mother in law. Ricky Henderson made the statement about being the greatest with Lou Brock in the stands, who record he broke and who was also a class act. And I really don’t know what Iverson’s beef was. Except it was PRACTICE, MAN.

So what’s so special about humility? Why does God want us to demonstrate it? And why does He hate pride so much? That’s right. God actually hates something. He hates pride. Proverbs 6:16-17 lists seven things that God hates and the first on the list is HAUGHTY EYES. The word haughty means proud or arrogant.

**Proverbs 3:34** says God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble. And the principle is so important it’s repeated twice more in the NT (James 4:6; 1 Peter 5:5).

So whether we a person of humility at least in part determines whether we receive God’s scorn or His grace.

But what is humility and if we aren’t naturally humble people how do we become humble. Wouldn’t our attempt at humility really just be an expression of pride? Well, it doesn’t have to be. There are some attitudes we can have and some actions we can do that will help us

Humility isn’t natural, but it’s the supernatural expression of the selfless life of Christ in my.

***Do nothing from selfish or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men.***

***Phil. 2:3-7***

**Life-Changing Lesson 1:**

**To practice humility means I will put the well-being of others before my own personal fame (glory).**

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And what you’ll notice is that the more you help others, the more you’ll be gratified and God will give you want you need and much of what you desire as well.

**Life-Changing Lesson 2:**

**Humility is often expressed in non-obvious ways.**

Modesty

Decency

Politeness (Graciousness). Being grateful.

Respect for people in authority

**Life-Changing Lesson 3:**

**Humility will lead me use my gifts and abilities to point people to Christ and not just for my own gain.**

Now if you’re good at something there’s nothing wrong with getting paid and even paid well for it. Jesus was a Carpenter. That’s how he made his living. The disciples were fisherman. The Apostle Paul was a tentmaker.

**Some research indicates that top athletes are those who actually show humility.**

Dr. Wade Rowatt, an associate professor of psychology at Baylor, surveyed nearly 200 college students about humility. Rowatt said, “If you are humbled by something, some would think you would get depressed and question your self-worth. But our findings indicate that humility is a positive quality associated with self-esteem, well-being, and even performance benefits.”

Rowatt points to athletes as an example. Rowatt said nearly every top athlete in any particular sport has traits associated with humility. Those traits influence everything from the way they prepare for a game to how they respect their opponent to how they conduct themselves during the game. In fact, after an athlete retires, those who are modest and humble will have a better reputation than those who are arrogant.

“Coaches are the ones who really recognize the importance and benefits of humility,” Rowatt said. “It’s important to be confident, but if you don’t respect that the other team is at least as good, or better, than you, you probably won’t train as hard and probably won’t prepare yourself mentally to succeed.”

In another study, Rowatt examined whether humility is associated with higher academic performance. The preliminary findings indicated that college students who showed more humble traits got higher grades than those who were arrogant and narcissistic.

Rowatt defines humility as a psychological quality characterized by being more modest, down-to-earth, and respectful, rather than arrogant, immodest, or egotistical. This conception of humility implies that one acknowledges mistakes, realizes limits, avoids bragging, and is respectful of others.

<http://www.newswise.com/articles/view/524541/>

Recently I was talking to an employer, who employs over 100 people, who told me the people they hire must have two qualities or they don’t get hired. They must show humility and they must work hard. He said, “If they’re not willing to pick up some trash lying on the floor, they can’t work here.”

**DANNY GAITHINGS**: Last year (2008), High Point University forward Danny Gathings was named the MVP of the Big South Tournament. Gathings claimed he didn’t deserve the award. I want you to witness this amazing act of humility. (Gave trophy to Liberty player, Larry Blair).

Now I want to ask you, “After seeing that, do you respect Danny Gathings more or less? Would you trust him more or less? Who would you want to be your friend or neighbor—Danny Gathings or Ricky Henderson? Or maybe Carmelo Anthony, who thanked himself during a 2003 ESPY acceptance speech.

There is something inherently beautiful about humility…somehow we all find it gross when people are prideful like in the stories above and somehow we all find it beautiful when people show humility. Our appreciation for humility can only be grounded in the image of God that sits within us that tells us we are dependent upon the grace of God for subsistence and life itself.

Humility is honestly assessing ourselves in light of God’s holiness and our sinfulness

Humility is not the same as humiliation, as in “I received a dose of humility.” Expressing humility is done voluntarily, not when circumstances forces us to.

Dismissed as an athletic anachronism, Humility suffered a series of deathbed indignities: Mike Krzyzewski proclaiming himself a leader of men while hawking credit cards; football players preening like synchronized swimmers following first downs; college basketball’s jersey-popping epidemic; Maryland fans rioting after watching their team beat Duke in a regular-season game; the Laureus World Sports Awards (a made-for-television award show featuring fawned-over athletes fawning over each other); a youth T-ball coach taking his job so seriously that he paid one of his players to bean a mentally disabled teammate.

Ways humility is expressed: modesty, respect for others, forgiveness.

It’s not in our nature to be humble, but to be proud.

Why does humility please God?

Reasons we shouldn’t be proud:

 God gave us everything we have. 1 Cor. 4:7. Gal. 6:14

 It’s an attempt to take glory away from God

What does he hate pride so much?

Some people think they’re humble because they come to church when they could be doing something else. Or because they degrade themselves all the time. Humility is not synonymous with having a low self-esteem.

Jesus said no one who’d ever been born was greater than John.

1:5 John was man of great influence and popularity

He had the status of a Rock Star.

1:7 John was humble in his speech and in his self-assessment.

JOHN’S DISCIPLES: John 1:35-37. John said about Jesus, “Behold, the Lamb of God.” Two men who’d been disciples of John heard John’s testimony and began to follow Jesus.

Background: Jews were usually not baptized, but Gentiles baptized themselves when they were converted to Judaism.

**Proverbs on Pride & Humility**

3:34 The choice is between God’s scorn and His **grace**. **He scorns the** scoffer **but gives grace to the humble**. The importance of this choice is seen in that the verse is quoted twice in the ﻿[[1]](#footnote-2)NT﻿ (Jas. 4:6; 1 Pet. 5:5).[[2]](#footnote-3)

11:2 First, **pride**; then a fall; **then comes shame** connected with the fall. But to be **humble** and down-to-earth reduces the danger of stumbling.[[3]](#footnote-4)

14:3 **In the mouth of a fool is a rod of pride.** He will have to take a beating for his arrogant talk. **Wise** people’s speech **will preserve them** from any such punishment.[[4]](#footnote-5)

16:5 God **detests** pride, or independence of **the Lord**; therefore He will punish it. **Be sure of this** is literally “hand to hand.”[[5]](#footnote-6) (cf. Proverbs 15:25)

16:18-19 A tall tree attracts lightning. So God puts down those who are conceited. Stuck-up people usually suffer some humiliating experience, designed to deflate their ego. It takes only a small pin to prick a large balloon. It’s **better to be** **of a** **humble** **spirit** yourself and to be a companion of **the lowly**, **than to** share the seeming advantages of **the proud**.[[6]](#footnote-7)

18:12 Pride has one foot in the grave and another on a banana skin. Humility walks securely toward honor. William Law draws the contrast sharply: “*Look not at pride only as an unbecoming temper, nor at humility as a decent virtue—one is all hell and the other all heaven.*” [[7]](#footnote-8)

22:4 **Humility and the fear of the** **Lord** go together ([[8]](#footnote-9)cf. 15:33). A person cannot be fearing God (worshiping, trusting, obeying, and serving Him) and be filled with selfish pride at the same time. **Wealth . . . honor, and life** result from fearing God, and as in 21:21 (see comments there) they also come from righteous living. So the fear of the Lord and righteousness are closely related.

25:14 **Clouds and wind** usually give farmers promise of **rain.** But if no rain comes, the farmers are keenly disappointed. Similarly people who claim they will give presents but never keep their promises are frustrating to the supposed recipients. A person ought not promise something if he knows he cannot follow through.

29:23 The reverse effects of **pride** and humility warn against the one and encourage the other. Ironically pride, by which a person seeks to elevate himself, actually results in his being brought **low** (šāp̱al) whereas one who is **of lowly** (šāp̱al) **spirit** is elevated by others to a position of **honor** ([[9]](#footnote-10)cf. 3:34; 15:33; 16:18-19; 18:12). God hates pride because it influences a person to live independently of Him.

Luke 14:7-12 Seats of honor

APPLICATION: So I advocate using your morning moments wisely, letting the light of God’s grace shine in to brighten your entire day. Im convinced that your purposeful application of these daily morning habits (referenced above with the “Begin[‘s]”) are the most effective things you can do to more deeply experience the promise and the pleasures of humility.

APPLICATION:

A classic Peanuts cartoon opens with Linus curled up in a chair, quietly reading a book, while Lucy stands behind him with a funny look on her face. “It’s very strange,” Lucy tells him. “It happens just by looking at you.” “What happens?” Linus asks. Lucy calmly answers, “I can feel a criticism coming on.” How often do you feel the same way when you look closely at those around you? The truth is, that’s the tendency we all have apart from grace. In Jane Austen’s Pride and Prejudice, one of the central characters, Mr. Darcy, is described as a man “who never looks at any woman but to see a blemish.” How often do you function like Lucy or Mr. Darcy? Are you frequently critical of others? This proud tendency is a deeply rooted habit for man of us who have sown seeds of self-exaltation over the years. This is why the next item on my list is such an important practice for cultivating humility: *Identify evidences of grace in others.* This means actively looking for ways that God is at work in the lives of other people.

The end of each day offers us a unique opportunity to cultivate humility and weaken pride, as well as to sense God’s pleasure. How? By reviewing our day and carefully assigning all glory to God for the grace we’ve experienced that day.

If possible, make your final thought each night an expression of gratefulness for the Savior’s sacrifice on the cross as your substitute for your many sins. So don’t just fall asleep tonight or any night. Seize this opportunity to mortify pride and cultivate humility by setting apart sleep as a holy gift from God, as a reminder of your full dependence on Him and as an occasion to examine your heart before Him.

The pursuit of humility cannot be a solitary endeavor. That’s why the next practice – *Invite and pursue correction* – has a prominent and vital place on my list of ways to mortify pride and cultivate humility. Pride not only destroys; it deceives.

Defining true greatness for our children…you need to teach them that greatness doesn’t equal success, or talent, or ability, or power, or applause. It equals servanthood. And it equals humility.

“Humility is the proper estimate of oneself” – Charles Spurgeon

“If you are looking for an example of humility, look at the cross.” – Thomas Acquinas

“The only hope of a decreasing self is an increasing Christ.” F.B. Meyer

“God created the world out of nothing, and as long as we are nothing, He can make something out of us.” Martin Luther

“Be not angry that you cannot make others as you wish them to be, since you cannot make yourself as you wish yourself to be. “ Thomas A Kempis

***Humble yourselves, therefore, under God’s mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time.***

***1 Peter 5:6***

1. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. William MacDonald and Arthur Farstad, *Believer's Bible Commentary : Old and New Testaments* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1995), Pr 3:34. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. MacDonald, Pr 11:2. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. MacDonald, Pr 14:3. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. John F. Walvoord, Roy B. Zuck and Dallas Theological Seminary, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary : An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1983-c1985), 1:940. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. MacDonald, Pr 16:18-19. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. MacDonald, Pr 18:12. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
8. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
9. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)