

January 23, 2022  
Third Sunday After Epiphany  
Pastor Matt Duerr

“Make That Check Out To...”

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Amen. As we continue in this Epiphany season with our sermon series on Epiphany; things being made manifest, being revealed or obvious to us in a sudden way. We look back on last week and remember that we had such a heartwarming beginning with a message of I'm dirt; a message about pride and humility. Both being vices or sins and yet both can be admirable.

We take it a step further today as we make manifest biblical humility. We go to our gospel this morning, the very beginning of the Sermon on the Mount; and what did Jesus do? He began with nine beatitudes or blessings. The very first one interestingly, is 'blessed are the poor in spirit;' why, theirs is the Kingdom of heaven. Now this is not a call for works righteousness, that by being humble you're guaranteed heaven. No, it's actually an understanding of true biblical humility. Yes, seeing oneself as dirt, as modified dirt, in the hands of the Creator.

But as we see that, and we put ourselves into the hands of the Creator, we can't help but ask sometimes; “how many times Lord?” Now when might we ask that question? Well as we grow closer and closer to our Lord, as He molds us into who He wants us to be, we will be in church more, we will be reading our Bible more, we will be doing devotions more and praying more. But as we do this, especially being in Bible study, and reading God's word, and coming to church, and hearing sermons. We're going to start seeing the people in the Bible. And as we see them, we will see them making very proud mistakes and we might find ourselves asking; “What in the world were they thinking?” “Were they really that stupid?” “What was wrong with them?” “How gullible could someone be to fall for that?” And as soon as we start thinking like that, there should be a great big yellow sign with black print on it saying **“BEWARE!”** Beware because we know this, scripture was written so that we can know, and in this case so that we can know what pride looks like, how it works, and what the result of proud living is.

And so, remember I said **BEWARE!** One of the things we learn from scripture is right away is not to in our pride, let it invade our worship, our prayers, our Bible study. Not to be like that Pharisee who said, 'Father, I think that I'm not like that tax collector.' We have to make sure that we don't fall to that and say, 'Father I thank you that I'm not like that proud Pharisee who said thank you for not being like that tax collector.' Because right there we have the hypocrisy of pride coming in that we're so proud that we're not like the Pharisee. No, we are every bit as bad as the Pharisee. And that is why Jesus said, 'Blessed are the poor in spirit.' Because it's not looking at the Bible or looking at each other and comparing ourselves to each other. It's looking at God, comparing ourselves, seeing ourselves in the light of His Holiness, and His righteousness, that we are humbled.

But let's go to the Bible. Let's look and learn from those who struggled with pride and with those who through the power of the Holy Spirit overcame it with humility. Let's begin with King Uzziah. In 2nd Chronicles 16:16 we read: "but when he was strong, he grew proud to his destruction." Notice that word "but." Those of you who have known me for a while, know I refer to it as the great eraser. Because anytime someone says 'but,' they basically are erasing everything that was said before it. So, looking at that, King Uzziah had been poor in spirit at one time, but when blessed by God and he grew strong, he grew proud. Basically, he said, 'I did that,' and that led to his own destruction.

Or consider King Hezekiah. Those of you in the Isaiah Bible Study will remember that name. Hezekiah is the king that followed his terrible dad Ahab; but got Jerusalem and Judah back on the right path. Then the king of Assyria came to destroy them, and he prayed. God sent an Angel at night, destroyed the Assyrian army, and wiped out the biggest threat to the entire region. What happened to King Hezekiah? "But Hezekiah did not make return according to the benefit done for him, for his heart was proud." He started to think highly of himself. 'You know, I prayed to God, talked to Isaiah the prophet, and because of what I did, Sennachcherib got a whipping. So, we see pride taking glory for self instead of giving glory to God.

But it can get even worse. Consider the king of Tyre who has spoken about Ezekiel 28:1-2 where Ezekiel is the prophet telling him 'You are in trouble buddy.' Why? Because your heart is proud, and you have said 'I am a

God. I sit in the seat of the gods in the heart of the seas.' Yet you are but a man and no god. So you make your heart like the heart of a god.' And again, notice the king of Tyre made a decision to act like a god and to make his heart like that of a god; where he thought he was above everybody else, and he deserved all the glory. What was the prophet's message to him from God? "You shall die the death of the uncircumcised by the hand of foreigners. For I have spoken, declares the LORD God." And it's interesting there if you look at that in our English language the LORD is all capital letters. That's what we put when the word is Yahweh, the personal name of God, I AM. But follow that with Elohim, which is what we translate as God. Notice what he's saying. "I AM God" to the king of Tyre, who said he was a god.

What's this death of the uncircumcised? Well first of all, it is literal death, a pagan death. And when you consider that the heart of man is deceitful above all things and is always bent on violence; they did have some way of coming up with some really, horrible disgusting ways of dying. And that's what the king of Tyre had to look for. He would die at the hands of foreigners, and it wasn't going to be pretty. But worse than that a Pagan death, is also eternal death. It is consignment to hell. Literally God's message to him was that you're going to have a brutal death. You're going out of the frying pan and into the fire. Then you're going to suffer my death, my punishment.

And it's not just the Old Testament, consider Acts chapter 12, King Herod, the one that Jesus was taken before. He had a robe of silver made for him and he delivered a speech to the people. Of course he did it at such a time when the sun was shine upon his silver and it would glow in the radiate and he gives this speech; and what did the people say? The voice of God and not of a man. What does the Bible record? Because he did not give God the glory, well he was eaten by worms and breathed his last.

Now thinking of all of these kings, it kind of makes you want to go into politics, doesn't it? but let's also take a look at the religious. Jesus looked at the religious ones, the ones that were up on the pedestals the leaders the Pharisees and condemned them for doing everything for show. It can worm its way into the church very quickly and I'm afraid sometimes even right into the heart of the pastor. I wonder how many pastors would be OK with not being called Pastor? I wonder how many would be OK with, well with it being like this? 'Hey Matt, come over here, I've got a job for you.' You might say, 'Oh

come on, that's like you would treat a dog.' That is exactly my point! The Scripture is so clear that Jesus is the Good Shepherd. So then who is the Pastor? He is the underling of the Good Shepherd. Who's the underling of the Good Shepherd? I go back to what I have said and any times, the dog. When he hears the master whistle, he goes, or he comes, whichever is needed. If he's the dog, how would he feel if the people whistled and said, Matt come here?

As I was thinking about that, it took me back in time a little bit to a commercial I saw number of years ago was for pizza company. And I like pizza, so I remember pizza commercials. It was for Tombstone Pizza. The question was always what do you want on your tombstone? It usually was a western sort of scene. I got to thinking about that. What should a pastor want on his tombstone? You know a great one would be: "He (capital H) whistled and you came." Or- "They whistled, and he came running."

You see, humility is something that we're all supposed to have. That means that we don't rank ourselves higher than others. When we look to scripture, we can see some great examples of humility and look and learn from them as well. And I'm going to start with one that you're going to think is probably crazy about King Nebuchadnezzar. As you might remember that account from Daniel chapter 4. Which by the way is a good read. You should probably go home and read it. Nebuchadnezzar is out on a balcony and he and he's looking out over Babylon and he says; "Is this not the great Babylon which I have built by my mighty power as a royal residence and for the glory of my majesty?" And God spoke to him and so basically, because you don't give the glory to me, you're going to lose your mind, you're going to be like a beast in the field, you're going to crawl around eat grass like ox, your hair is going to grow and you're going to look like a beast, until you get your head straight. And that's what happened. This is what Nebuchadnezzar himself wrote, it's there in Daniel 4, "At the end of the day, I Nebuchadnezzar lifted my eyes to heaven and said my reason returned to me, and I blessed the Most High, and praised and honored Him who lives." So unlike Uzziah or Hezekiah or the King of Tyre or Herod or the Pharisees who all heard from prophets, or from Jesus Himself, King Nebuchadnezzar heard and he changed and he basically said, 'I'm dirt in the hands of the Creator. Notice in his writing he lifts his eyes to heaven and says my reason returned to me, and I bless the Most High. That's a huge right there because he is saying 'God is Most High, everything else is not, including me. And, 'I praised and honored Him who lives,' that's big

because he's saying the Most High God, the God of Daniel, our God, is the one who is alive. All the stone ones, they're dead. They're stone. They don't really exist.

Another perfect example of humility that we can learn from this Joseph. Remember Joseph? He was sold into slavery by his brothers, and Potifer and the jail experience, then he's before Pharaoh because Pharaohs had some dreams and Pharaoh wants to know what it means. What does Joseph say to him when Pharaoh asks, 'can you interpret my dreams?' It is not in me. God will give Pharaoh a favorable answer.' That impressed Pharaoh. Pharaoh listened. Or consider Daniel with Nebuchadnezzar. Nebuchadnezzar also had some dreams. Daniel was a part of the wise men and none of the wise men could interpret his dreams. so Nebuchadnezzar said 'kill all the wise men.' Daniel went back told his buddies Shadrack, Meshach, and Abednego, we need to pray. They prayed, God gave them the answer, he went back to Nebuchadnezzar. Nebuchadnezzar asked him, 'can you interpret my dreams?' Daniel's answer begins with this. "No, no man can interpret the dreams but, (I quote) there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries. And He has made known to me." And he interprets them. And then at the end, he repeats that so that King Nebuchadnezzar would know it wasn't Daniel, it was God.

And why do we look at King David as being so great? It's because of his humility. Yes he was a sinner and he made some horrible mistakes. But when God makes a covenant with him and lets him know that the Messiah is going to come through his lineage, King David's response is, "Who am I oh Lord God and what is my house, that you have brought me this far?" 'I'm the king, you've made me king, you've brought me this far and now you're going to bless me with being a part of the lineage of the Messiah? I don't deserve it Lord!'

Or maybe Mary. When told that she would give birth to the Messiah; "My soul magnifies the LORD, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior." As we heard last week; she's thanking God and she's saying it. For He has looked on the humble estate of His servant. For behold from now on all generations will call me blessed. Not only was she humbled, but she was also smart. She realized if I'm the mother of the Savior, people are always going to remember me. I bet now she grieves that people actually worship her and pray to her.

Humility, it's huge. Bringing it home, let's go to Philippians 2:3-4 where Paul writes to this young church that he planted in Philippi. And Philippi, you should know, was a town that was overrun by the Romans and then turned into like a gated community for military officials, government officials, those who retired and had served the emperor well. So now think about everything we've had in the sermon. What is the tendency of such people? To be pretty proud. It's to them that Paul writes: "Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit. But in humility, count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look, not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others." I ask you, what would a country whose leaders were focused like that look like? More importantly, what would a church look like when no one was above the other and each person looked not only to their own interests but to the interests of everyone because they love each other care for each other? You realize we are all in the Master's Church. It's a pretty good church. Wouldn't it be a pretty good country too? And if you like that message, that sermon, and you'd like more, please get out your checkbook, write a check make it payable to no, no, no, no, no! I say that in jest.

That's not the end of what Paul told those people in Philippi. Ones who were evidently were struggling with some pride. He ends it with this. I'd like you to meditate on this: "Therefore, God has highly exalted Him (that is Jesus) and bestowed on Him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God."

And that is why we are here right now. Because Jesus deserves our praise, our honor, our glory. Just as King Nebuchadnezzar had, we come to say "Your Name is above every other, because You are the Savior. You humbled Yourself for our sake. You did not think of Yourself and Your own interest. You thought of our interest. And so we thank You, we praise You, we honor You, and we ask that You would mold us into that; so that like Mary, we would say, "my soul magnifies the Lord," for He has looked on the humble estate of His servants we are blessed, and we are in this service, and it is why we can right now go before the Creator of the universe knowing that because of Christ, we're in His hands. He is molding us and making us and what He wants us to be. He tells us come to me, come to me right here right now the created before the Creator. In the name of our Lord and savior Jesus Christ. Amen.