

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

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SPEAKER

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Stunning Love

PART

5

TITLE

Love Is Humble

SCRIPTURE

1 Corinthians 13:4-5



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For God's word says that love does not boast, that love is not arrogant, it is not rude, and it does not insist on its own way. And yet you look at our hearts, you look at homes, you look at our country, you look at the entire world and what we find is it is our inclination to do just the opposite, to live a life that is not love. What we are most naturally like is the guy who's sitting at a meal, he's enjoying his friends and suddenly he remembers that he's talking too much. And so he says, "God, I am so sorry. Here I have been going on and on and on about myself. Let's talk about you. Why do you think I'm so great?"

The fact is it's hard to imagine a world but just try just for a moment to imagine a world where selfishness was extracted from the human soul. Just try to imagine a world where our first instinct, our natural instinct was to consider the needs and longings and protection and provision of others even before we consider the same things about ourself. Just imagine a world where it was absolutely easy to apologize when we found that natural to walk up and say, "I am so sorry I was wrong." Or where maybe serving never felt threatening. No kind of service, no length of service, no service would be too small for us to feel like our personhood was injured in giving ourselves to such a menial task. Just imagine living in such freedom to where your heart was so full that the world was a place to where we never thought we needed to be noticed.

The Bible calls this world love and the Bible calls this world a miracle when it takes place. Even in fractions, even in little doses here on the earth, that the good news for those of us who are in Christ is this is the world the Bible calls heaven. One day this will come, but there can be seeds of it that are actually seeing right here, right now in your life and in mine, but it requires a supernatural influence. So let me pray for us and ask God for his help.

Father in heaven, we come to you and we look everywhere including our own mirror and what we see are people who are in need of being noticed. We see selfishness in us and around us. We see pride, we see arrogance, we see rudeness. God, we see that so frequently we insist on our own way. We ask father as we open up your word now and as we, as we learn a little bit more about what you have written down, these qualities of love that we find in 1st Corinthians, I pray God that you would give us grace upon grace. Would you fight through, knock over every hurdle within our heart that would cause us to see this as unimportant?

Would you help us to see that our relationships are at stake? Would you help us to see that piece of mind is at stake? Would you help us to see God, that we can live in this world with such confidence and yet that confidence can be so different from the confidence that we normally see? And so would you speak through weakness in myself and would you bring glory to Jesus Christ? Would you mow down all of the distractions? Help us to find interest in what we read, help us to believe and help us to have the courage to apply it to our life. We pray all of this in Christ's name. Amen.

In your Bible, I would love for you to look at 1st Corinthians chapter 13. If you don't have one with you, there's lots of bibles I guess near you in those chairs. And if you don't have at home, take that home as a gift. We would love for you to have your own copy so that you can read God's word anytime you want to. We'll also look here this morning at Luke chapter 18. So if you want to look at two places and hold both places, we will be in each of those places.

But in 1st Corinthians 13 what we've been looking at all last month, and we'll look at this month as well, is that what Paul does is he hangs love. He first describes it, then he hangs it like a mirror on the wall so that when the church walks by, we can give ourselves an examination of if our life resembles Christian biblical, unconditional, sacrificial, selfless kinds of love. And the fact is his first readers, the church in Corinth, they fell drastically short of the mark. In fact, what we're told that these people is they were talented, they were ambitious, they also loved the Lord, but they were very confused about things.

You see, what happens in their life and what happens in our lives is really the same. And that is after they believed in Jesus Christ, they said, "Okay, now it's time to grow in Jesus Christ." And they've found growing in Christ to be very arduous, very difficult, slow going, like pushing a boulder up a mountain. And so they just thought, "Man, let's just redefine what growing in Christ looks like." And that's exactly what they did. So the first several chapters, they actually redefined maturity and spirituality as who you know. So they formed factions on the basis of these Christian celebrities and were like, "Well, I follow Paul," and "I follow Apollos," and "I follow Peter." You always have some group that, "We don't follow people, we just follow Jesus."

But there are some people and they find that they're basing their own spirituality and their growth in Jesus Christ by who they follow. "I'm near that guy who's following the guy." And then move a little bit further and they based their confidence and their standard of growing in Christ on the basis of the things that they knew. So Paul comes to me and he says, "Man, you know a lot of stuff and because you know a lot of stuff, when you come to church, you're not intending to learn, you're intending to evaluate and judge and be critical of everything around. Because you know all kinds of theology and all kinds of things about the Lord and yet you're really unkind."

And then it gets to the place where what they started to do is they say, "Actually, there's these gifts and we want to serve the Lord." And so they started rating the gifts on the basis of their importance. So "Hey, what's your gift?" "I just like to serve people in quiet." Like, "Oh, so sorry, poor thing. My gift is the cool gift. It's the stage gift." Sister one is like "Put him on stage and put a microphone in his face so that we can all hear that gift." And they started basing superiority on the basis of their gifts. And so this is what Paul noticed from a distance.

He says, “Guys, you’re looking at everything in your faith in Jesus Christ on the basis of who you know other than him, what you know and what you can do and as a result of that, you’re really talented. You know some really cool people and yet you’re impatient and you’re unkind and you’re rude and you’re arrogant. You’re irritable. Your kids don’t like to be with you. Your marriage is unraveling. And yet you know a lot.” And so Paul was utterly grieved. And the reason he’s grieved is because he knew what Jesus longed for. He knew what Jesus said. Jesus stood on this earth as the man who loved like no other. And he says, “By this, all people will know that you’re my disciples if you have love for one another.”

And so Paul looks at the perfect image of love in Jesus Christ and he looks at the church that’s been called to represent and point the world to look at Jesus Christ on the basis of how they live. And he looks at this church in Corinth and he sees such a distortion that he feels compelled to write them. And this is what he says in chapter 13. He says, “If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers and understand all mysteries and have all knowledge, and if I have all faith so as to remove mountains but have not love, I am nothing.

If I give away all I have and if I deliver up my body to be burned but have not love, I gain nothing. Love is patient and kind. Love does not envy or boast. It is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way. It is not irritable or resentful. It does not rejoice at wrongdoing but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends.” What we’re doing over these two months is looking at each of these qualities of love, examining our heart, examining the life of Jesus Christ. And the fact is that when you look, Paul doesn’t necessarily spend a lot of time or anytime and in seeking to explain what these words mean.

And the reason is because he’s leaning on what he knows they know from the life of Jesus Christ and the teaching of Jesus Christ. And so what I also want to do is read to you Luke chapter 18. You see, we’re going to look at those four different attributes that love does not boast, it’s not arrogant, it’s not rude and it does not insist on its own way. And Jesus spoke to our pride in a pretty amazing way in Luke chapter 18 starting in verse 9, and there he says this. He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and treated others with contempt.

“Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee standing by himself prayed thus, ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other men: extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week. I give tithes of all that I get,’ but the tax collector standing far off would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, a sinner.’ I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.”

This morning in a few moments, we're going to take the Lord's supper, a supper where Jesus comes to us and he says, "I'll tell you what, you bring all your sin and you bring all your past and I'll bring the bread and I'll bring the cup." This is what we're about to do, but before we get there, what we want to do is look at two principles we see within this text that shapes our heart; that even gives us confidence to take the supper and to appreciate what he's done for us. And so let me show you two overarching truths from the text that we just read.

The first is this is that pride is the deepest expression of spiritual confusion. Pride when we have it, when it's living within our heart, it is evidence of deep and unfathomable confusion within. See, the Bible says that we were created in the image of God. Psalm chapter 8 says, in doing so that God literally endowed us with remarkable dignity and honor, and as image bearers of God, our responsibility and privilege, the gift of our life was the point people's attention to God. "There he is. Look at his majesty. Look at his holiness, look at his mercy. Look at his kindness. Just look at him." That's our life purpose.

Your business, your abilities, your family, your personhood, it was all created and gifted for that purpose to say, "Look at him." That being the case, nothing reveals our confusion more than when we seek to point to our own. "Look at me. Look at my business. Look at my home. Look at how high I can jump." You see friends, our glory compared to God's glory is like a toothpick compared to a skyscraper. Just imagine for a second if we were at this city with this building and I stood on the street and we're looking up and you don't know me and I don't know you. And I stand up and I say, "Do you see this toothpick? This is my life. Do you see how amazingly tall it is? Do you see how glorious it is? Do you see how straight it is?"

And we'd all be, "He's psychotic. Look behind you. You want to see something glorious. It's there. It's not you." This is the folly of our pride, of our boasting, of our arrogance. That God is there in the backdrop of our life and we're intended to only deflect and point people's attention to him and we're out in front saying, "Look at me." It's the height of confusion and I want you to think about this for a second. If this is true, like if that is ridiculous from our perspective of human eyes sitting on the earth, just imagine if this was your perspective. Just imagine if from space where the clouds literally they cover... You can't even see the skyscrapers much less our little toothpicks.

God looks upon the entire earth. Psalm chapter 113 says, from the rising of the sun to its setting, the name of the Lord is to be praised, and yet we would have the audacity to say, "Look how high I jump." God's like, "Really? Way down there, you're jumping?" This is the height of confusion. It's also a portrait of a lack of love. This is what I mean. Just imagine how unloving it is to stand in the sight line between God and his people if God is the majestic one and we're only supposed to be pointing to him.

Let's just say that you go to a ballgame, you intend to go to the ball game. You bought your own tickets to go to the ballgame, and so you intend to watch the ball game. You intend to see what's happening on the field or on the court. But let's just say that the guy right in front of you who also bought a ticket, he doesn't want to watch the game and he wants to help you not watch the game. He turns around and he's like, "Hey, look at me." He's right in front of you. And he's like holding huge signs, "And look how big I am. Look how high I can jump. Look how amazing I am."

We would become really irritated. Why? Because that person is not living in love. And yet when we choose as individuals to deliberately stand in the sight line between God and his people, it is the height of unlove. It's a portrait of our confusion. And Jesus knew this and Paul knew this. This is why Paul says, "Love doesn't boast." Boasting is when we speak highly of ourselves and he says, "Love is not arrogant." Arrogance is when we think highly of ourselves. He says, "Love is not rude." Rudeness is when we act towards other people indecently and we do so on the basis that we think that we're better than them and so we can get away with it. Love does not insist on its own way. This is where we're demanding of other people and we're demanding on the basis that we think that we're better and so we can get away with it.

The New Testament says, "No, no, no. This is not love." And Jesus knew that we needed pictures. He knew that pictures were more memorable than words to us. And so he says, "Let me paint you a word picture." And so here in this passage in Luke 18, that's exactly what a parable is. It's a word picture. This is what he does. He wants to teach a central truth, and this is that truth that we are never so empty as when we are full of ourselves. You find a heart that is literally overflowing with self, with selfishness, with looking at himself, and you'll find someone who is not only desperately empty but also desperately unloving.

We are never so empty as when we are absolutely stuffed full with ourselves. If this is true, just imagine how empty this Pharisee must have felt for his prayer to God to refer to God one time and himself five times. "God, we're done with you. I thank you that I am not like these other people for I fast twice a week and I give what I get." It's just stuffed with self. He's so empty. And notice what it says. You see, he has to inflate his heart. And so how we inflates his heart, he compares himself to others, and this is what we do.

It says that the Pharisee stood by himself and yet did you notice that he knew who was near? This is what people who were empty do. They may stand by themselves, but they know everybody in the room. They know everyone in the group and their sizing everyone on, they're putting everyone into a pecking order, "I'm better than that person. I don't know about that person. At a three I'm second. At least I'm better than that person." This is what prideful people do. This is what arrogant people do. This is what empty people do because we have to size up because we can't be last. "Just don't let me be last."

Did you notice that the 12 disciples, they argued who was the greatest? They were like, “Look, I don’t have to be. How about third? I’ll just be third. Just tell me I’m not very last.” And so what happens? He proves that he’s doing this because he says, “God, I thank you that I’m not like the other men. I’m not like extortioners or like this tax collector guy right here. You see this guy right here, God? Yeah. I’m glad I’m not like him.” He knows who’s near, “And like unjust people. Yeah. I like him. I thank you that I’m not like him.”

Now, let me step on some toes real quick and then I’ll jump back so that you can move your feet back under the chair. Parables are not real. Jesus didn’t observe a Pharisee and a tax collector and he’s telling us what he saw. He’s not describing two people, he’s describing all people. You today are one of these individuals. You’re acting like one of these today. You only get two options. And sometimes like you may be the Pharisee yesterday, and you come in here and you feel so bad about it that now you’re the tax collector and so God’s going to heal you because you’ve been humbled, but the fact is this is us. He’s talking about us. We do this.

You see, when we’re spiritually confused because we’re so full of ourselves, we look to a validating record in order to inflate our heart. We say, “God, I feel so empty, but thank God I’m better than him.” And when then we go, “Well, I’m not better than him because that guy’s really, really great, but at least I’m a good father. He’s not a good father at all. I know that.” And someone says, “Well, I’m not a good father but at least I’m successful in my business.” Someone else looks at him and say, “Well, I’m not as successful but at least I study the Bible. He doesn’t study the Bible.”

We just go on and on and on finding our mark so that we can say, “Well, I don’t have that, but at least I’m better than him or her.” And so here’s the deal. If on our record we find validation, we tend to have content for other people, and if in our record we fall short of validation, we tend to have contempt for ourselves. One leads to self-exaltation, one leads to self-hatred. One is the response of pride to success. The other is pride’s response to suffering. Both are so packed with self that there is no love, and so it’s a lose-lose.

When you see it, you just have to understand, “Right now I’m confused about something.” When you’re boasting about how high you can jump, you’re confused about something. When you’re boasting about your car or your jump shot or whatever it is that you’re boasting about, you have to admit right then, right now, “I am confused and I am acting without love, and if I’m acting without love, I am nothing,” he says. “I gain nothing,” he says. “I’m like a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal,” he says. Prayer is the deepest expression of spiritual confusion. It’s like, “Would you hurry up and get us some good news? I know you always do this. You always devastate us, and then you go, ‘Hey, Jesus.’” All right, let’s do that.

Let’s talk about Jesus. The second thing, humility is the deepest expression of spiritual confidence. And some of you, “Wait a minute. Shouldn’t that be clarity? Like if pride is the deepest expression of spiritual confusion then isn’t humility the deepest expression of spiritual clarity?”

It is, but so that you can see what takes place within this amazing parable, the word it's right is actually confidence and if it sounds offbeat to you, let me encourage you to lean in right now because the quality of your relationships and even your peace of mind is at stake in this.

Just imagine just for a second how amazing it would be for you to be so full of something that you became so confident in who you were that you could actually leave work and come home to be with your family or when you left work and you were home with your family, you were fully present. You weren't always thinking about how you can go and be somebody and do somebody and have some record of validation so that I am somebody. What if you were just so full, so confident that you could be with the people who you were with. Enjoy them, serve them, love them.

What if the people in your life, what if you were so full? Just imagine the quality of your relationships if you were so full that instead of seeing someone that might be able to prop up your ego, you saw somebody that you could serve unconditionally? Because you're just operating in fullness. Just imagine that, and this is what we find here. See the tax collector, it says that he stands far off and he wouldn't even lift his eyes and he beats his chest and he says, "God have mercy on me, a sinner." And what's amazing is it can be translated, it should be translated the sinner. And this is why. We don't translate it that way because it kind of sounds weird. We're all sinners, I'm a sinner but the definite article, the word T-H-E, the, is there. In other words, what he actually says is this, "God, would you have mercy on me, the sinner."

Now, this is why that's so amazing. Inside the parable, Jesus is describing, he's setting the table in order to make a point. He's not seeing this taking place. He's describing what he sees take place in all of our lives. He says that this tax collector he stands far off. He knows he's a sinner and yet he knows that there's a Pharisee who's looking at him, sizing him up and saying, "You're not enough," just like this picture. He's being condemned at the very moment. He knows that there's somebody who's pointing at him saying, "Well, at least I'm better than him." And yet what's amazing is though that is rude and unjust and unkind and it's happening to him, is he is not conscious at all of the sins around him because he's only conscious of what's within him.

He's so overwhelmed by his own pride, by his own need, that all he can say is, "God have mercy on me, a sinner," and this may be you. You may come in here and you just say, "I am so messed up. I couldn't even sing. I know you guys sang three songs. I couldn't sing them because how can I sing them when I'm this dirty?" You may even feel like because people look the part in this room, all these people, they're probably pointing their fingers saying, but if they only knew, they just pointed out, "At least I'm better than you." If that's where you're at today, I have amazing news for you and it's the news that you find within the scriptures that we call the Gospel, that it calls the Gospel and it is this that Jesus Christ came to this earth and he came in weakness.

He loved perfectly in he's spoken message and the message was remarkable. The first thing a part of his message was this is that God is holy and heaven is holy. It's set apart. It's perfect. That he lives in unapproachable light, that he is so pure and so holy that it says that he cannot even look upon what is impure. Jesus stood on this earth and this is what he said. He says, "You, therefore, must be perfect as your heavenly father is perfect." Jesus stood on this earth and he says, "Do you want to know who's going to go to heaven? It's perfect people and only perfect people."

You have to be morally spotless, morally righteous. No pride, no selfishness. And there's always somebody who says, "I think that's me." And so he goes, "Well, let me tell you something else about all of humanity." He says, Romans 3:10 he says, "None is righteous. No, not even one. We've all fallen short of the glory of God." We've all sinned. We've all transgressed. We all have the selfishness and pride within us. We've all done this. The third part of his messages is, "But I have come and I've come to rescue you. I've come to deliver you. I came as a baby, grew up, lived without any sin whatsoever. And yet I am going to a cross."

In Luke chapter 18 for the third time in verse 31, he says, "Guys, look, we're going to Jerusalem and this is what's going to happen to me. I'm going to be delivered. I'm going to be mocked. I'm going to be flogged. I'm going to be killed and crucified on a cross, but three days later I'm going to rise from the dead." And that's exactly what he went and did. And the Bible says that when we trust him, and that is the fourth part of his message, the fourth part of the good news is this, is you can trust in me, that he has a record for validation that can be given to us. We have to either trust our record of validation or his record. Our accomplishments or his accomplishments.

And this is what he says. He says, "If you'll stop believing in yourself, in your ability, and you trust me and place all of your faith in me and confess me as lord of your life, I will take away all of your sin. But not only that, I'll give you my righteousness." Do you know what that looks like? It's like a cup that's so full of water that literally it's brimming to the place where it's just overflowing. Now here's the deal. When you live like this and you know that you live like this, it produces a tremendous amount of confidence.

You see, all parables are written in a context and when the new testament does not prescribe exactly what the context is... What I mean is this. It's Jesus is interacting with people, sometimes he's talking and suddenly he busts out in a parable. He says, "I'll tell you what. We're talking about things you're sort of glazing over. So let me tell you a story." And he would say, "Okay, this is it." Well, his story always connected to the context and so when the New Testament gives us a parable and doesn't give any immediate context like Luke 18 then we're supposed to apply it to the big context of the narrative of the New Testament; what Jesus came to do. And every parable ends with something shocking and then Jesus gives his final conclusion.

The shocking thing is this, there's this righteous person and there's this tax collector and the tax collector goes home justified. He goes home where his cup is now overflowing. He's not full of himself. He's full of Jesus. And as a result of that, now he has confidence, and his confidence is so full then now he is able to love people. He's able to give to people. He's able to say, "I am sorry," and that's not threatening to him whatsoever. You see, the confidence that we have in trusting in Jesus record of validation is nothing we do today so bad will take an ounce, even an iota of the righteousness that's already been given us in Jesus and there is nothing that we can do today so good that will contribute to it.

The confidence that we have is that we have been made complete in Jesus Christ and therefore we can treat other people in love. You see, this changes how we love people. Jesus said at the beginning of his parable, it says, Jesus, it says he spoke these things to those who thought highly of himself and treated others with contempt. So there's a connection. There's a connection between how we view ourself and how we treat people. In Luke chapter 7, we don't have a parable, we have a real story. Jesus is asked to dinner at a Pharisee's house. When a leader ask another leader for a lunch or for dinner, anyone who heard of it was welcome to come, not to eat, but they could listen. Sometimes they would just listen on the outside of the house. They listened to the window. They just wanted to listen to two people who were trained, who were going to talk about theology.

And so here this Pharisee has this meal and Jesus comes and a prostitute shows up. She wants to hear. Somehow she gets in there I guess early enough that she gets inside the house. Jesus, it says that he's reclining at the table and so his feet are a little bit back and suddenly she's overwhelmed so much by the portrait of love in front of her that she begins crying, but she didn't plan to cry so she didn't bring a towel. She doesn't have a towel. And so, "What am I going to do?" And so she takes her hair down, and I want you to think about this.

within the story, it says that Simon the Pharisee did not give Jesus the customary water to wash his feet. And so Jesus has been walking on dirt floors all day long, dusty. And all of a sudden there's a little bit of liquid that's fallen on those feet. They're dirty feet, they're nasty feet. And so what did she do? It says that she takes her hair down and begins to wipe up his feet with her hair. So just imagine somebody who already is so self-conscious about herself. And now all of a sudden she takes her hair down, she begins kissing those feet, she begins anointing those feet with oil. And Simon looks over and Simon knows who's around. He's already sized everybody up. He can't believe that she would even duck into his own door.

And he says, and it says that he says to himself, he doesn't say this to Jesus. He says it to himself. And he says, "Man, if Jesus knew, because there's proof that he's not a prophet, because if he knew where those hands have been, if he knew where that hair had been and where those lips had been, that he's letting that nasty woman touch him, it's clear he's not a prophet." So Jesus looks at Simon and says, "Simon, do you see this woman?" Of course, he sees this woman. He says, "Let me tell you a story." He says, "A lender of money had two debtors. One owed 500 days of wage, and the other owed 50. When they couldn't pay, he canceled the debt of both of them."

He looks over at Simon and he says, "Simon, let me ask you something. Which one do you think is going to love him more?" Simon says, "Well, obviously the one who had a bigger debt." Jesus says, "You're right and let me tell you something. I walked into your house and you didn't give me customary water to wash my feet, and yet her tears landed on my feet. And you didn't give me a customary kiss as a guest, and yet she's not stopped kissing my feet, and you have not given me what was customary..." And that was a little oil to anoint, it was a little gift, "To say, 'You're special, you're valuable. I'm glad you're my guest,' and yet she has taken her greatest treasure and she's poured it over my feet."

He says, "Don't you see Simon? She's just giving you a worship seminar, but you're so full of yourself, you've missed the whole thing. Simon, you can't love me and you cannot love her because you're simply trying to fill up your tank because you're so empty. And yet she, her tank is so full, which allows her to love her, allows her to love you. She's not being rude to you and allows her to love me." So what do we do with these things? The reality is that pride is the deepest expression of spiritual confusion. Humility is the deepest expression of spiritual confidence.

A couple of things, if we were to take this supper. First is this is less trust in Jesus record for validation. Paul had to learn it. We all have to learn it. When we trust in our record, it leads to a life of contempt, either for others or for ourself. And yet when we trust in the record of Jesus Christ, it leads to confidence. Jesus says, "You bring your story, you bring your history, you bring your sin, you bring your pride, and I'll bring the bread and I'll bring the cup and we'll have a meal together."

You see, the grace of God is stunning to me in that it humbles without degrading, and it exalts without inflating. It humbles us and yet he says, "You're still valuable to me," and yet he exalts us by saying, "The only reason that you're exalted and blessed is because you bear the righteousness of my son." So my question is this, have you trusted in Jesus Christ? For those of you in the room right now, who have yet to trust Christ, we beg you today. I implore you today, would you trust him today? Right now. Would you just pray to him? You say, "God, I trust you. I trust your son. I can't save myself. I'm looking to you," and let me tell you something.

For those of you who are in the room, who are believers in Jesus Christ, and yet you find pride in your heart, let me encourage you to trust in Jesus' record for validation again. Not that you'll be saved again. You're saved, you're forgiven, and yet for a right standing, Jesus has already made that available, but for a current relationship where you're living with him and he's feeling you, we have to keep trusting him. We have to keep believing in him. We have to keep being filled by him and his spirit. We do that by simply looking to Jesus day in and day out. Would you trust in Jesus' record for your own validation?

Second is this, is let's make a strike on pride. See, it is only natural for us to scour the Pharisee and the reason that it's natural for us to scour the Pharisee is because we're so much like him. We all have that seed within us. Let me tell you something.

I don't know anybody who needed to preach the sermon more because no one needed to hear it three times like me. These sins of pride that manifests itself in impatience and being irritable towards my family, I have to confess every day. You see, this side of heaven, we're not going to be free from pride and selfishness. It's a tree that we must cut down as quickly as we see it growing. So when you see it, when you hear, when you're thinking of yourself, you're boasting, when you're rude, when you're irritable, when you're demanding of other people, what we do is say, "Wait a minute. That's not the life of Christ. Let me repent and confess that as sin."

But then there's some also some things that we can do that we can actually pursue humility. You see James chapter 4 verse 6 says that God opposes the proud, but he gives grace to the humble. What that means is this. There's actually something you can do that invites the opposition of God into your life and something you do that invites the gracious assistance of God into your life. We want to pursue humility. So there's some things that I just naturally try to do. Let me just tell you what I try to do.

One is every day I try to spend just a little bit of time thinking about the cross because when I think about the cross of Jesus Christ, I'm reminded that I'm not the hero of my life. Second thing I try to do is to say thank you for something that comes my way regularly. If somebody's encouraged, "Thank you for that. You didn't have to do that. That's a gift." In the morning, I would encourage you to say a prayer of dependence, "God, I need you today." And then at night when you get in bed and you've said your last word to everyone, and you're laying there, transfer glory of that day to the Lord at the end of the day; "God, what I deserve today is death. And yet these are the things that I've been able to enjoy and experience and I know that's all because of you."

And what this does is it makes preemptive strikes upon our pride. And then the last thing is this is let's look to Jesus' love as a way of life. It's interesting that in the Roman world humility was a word that was seen as weakness. And Jesus came into this confused world and he says, "If you guys want to be great, you have to be the servant of all and you have to become like a child." And isn't that just what Jesus did? He took on the form of a servant and a baby; the greatest of all. 2,000 years ago, there was a stable on this earth. It was filled with something that was bigger than the whole world. And if we trust in that savior, then he fills our very heart.

And that allows us, you see, is that when we encounter the gracious love of Jesus Christ, the stunning love of Jesus Christ, he gives us the ability to live in stunning ways. And so I encourage you, trust God's ability to lift you up. God has given us the Lord's supper to help us to remember and to proclaim these things. So for those that will be serving us, if you want to go ahead and stand up and head to the back. As they prepare these elements, let me encourage you with what the New Testament says we're supposed to do in this time.

One is as we hold these elements, we are supposed to say, "God, I remember what you've done." Second, as we hold these things, we are supposed to say, "God, I am proclaiming, I gladly proclaim that I believe in what you've done." And third, as we hold these elements, we're supposed to say, "God, would you search my heart, help me to confess all known sin so that I can take this with a clear conscience." So as they're being passed, let me encourage you to do just that. For those of you who have never trusted Christ, we welcome you to do just what the new testament says, and that is to let it pass. We would love to talk with you after the service about trusting Christ, but if you know him, we welcome you to the table. Let me pray for us.

Father in heaven, we thank you for your kindness to us and pray now God, that you would search our hearts. Give us an understanding, remove the confusion from our heart. Forgive us of pride and boasting and arrogance, rudeness, being demanding of others. We thank you, Father, that although our sins are so many, we thank you, Father, that your mercy is clearly more. So as we consider these things and as we hold these amazing symbols, we pray, Father, that you would be glorified. We pray all of this in Christ's name. Amen.



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