

Text: [Luke 6:39-42](#)

Date: November 10, 2019

Title: “The Perils of Pride”

Theme: Humility requires us to judge ourselves more strictly than we do, and others with more grace than we do.

Intro

Today we start a short series on humility – just 3 weeks

My thinking about this began with a question submitted by someone in the congregation

I’m not sure who to thank for it, because it just showed up in my mailbox

But it went like this: “Why is it so easy to see other people's faults & failures but so difficult to look inside at our own?”

I thought that was a great question

And I thought the answer was really all about humility

Today, we’re talking about pride

Next week, we’ll talk about Success & Failure

And the last week, on Redefining Greatness

Question

Why IS it so easy to see other people’s faults & failures but so difficult to look inside at our own?

1

There is a classic Peanuts cartoon that shows Lucy – the arrogant know-it-all older sister –

It shows Lucy looking at her little brother Linus and saying,

“It’s very strange. It happens just by looking at you.”

“What happens?” Linus says.

“I can feel a criticism coming on”¹

Have you ever had someone where every time you looked at them, you felt a criticism coming on?

That is, you are the Lucy to their Linus every time?

I imagine there may also be a few people you’ve met and you’ve been Linus to their Lucy – not fun, right?

2

John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, said, "We should be rigorous in judging ourselves and gracious in judging others."

Too often, we seem to have things turned the other way around, don't we?

Humility is a primary characteristic of Jesus

It's kind of a part of the package when the Almighty God takes on human form –

even to consider that means taking this huge step down

Jesus' life is the ultimate example of downward mobility

And a study in what it means to be humble

You know that the very word *human* comes from the same root as *humus* – like dirt, right?

And the same thing holds true in ancient Hebrew

It turns out that the name given to the first man – *Adam* – is closely related to 'ground' – so that the first man is literally a *groundling*

Or, as I prefer – dirt-man!

God cannot become a dirt-man without a healthy dose of humility

And if humility is a primary characteristic of Jesus

It should be of his followers too

3

That's why Jesus tells this story

"Why do you see the splinter in your friend's eye but don't notice the log in your own eye?"

"Splinter" is meant to be something small – a bit of dust, maybe a speck of chaff when farmers were beating out wheat to get to kernels of grain

I think translators like to say "splinter" because it contrasts with "log" or "timber" in the second part of the saying

I was thinking on this a little bit yesterday as we were cleaning leaves outside, and I wasn't wearing any glasses

I wear contacts, so any little bit of dust in the air tends to cause trouble with my eyes

Leaf blowers and stuff like that make things very difficult

When I get just a little bit of dirt in there, I need to stop until either:

1) It works itself out, OR

2) I can get to a mirror to take a look & pop my lens out to clean it

Usually, people see me going like this (blinking, holding hand over eye)

And they say, "Are you ok?"

Now if I were stuck without a mirror, I MIGHT need to resort to asking
someone to help me

But who wants to let someone else take something out of their eye?

Just the thought of it makes me kind of squeamish

And Jesus doesn't even make it sound like this other person's been
ASKED for help

It's more like someone who comes running from across the way,

"Here, I see you've got something in your eye - let me get that for you!"

And you're like, "Nooooo thanks!"

Because even though you're not doing well, you notice that this person has
something much larger sticking out of their own eye

4

Such is the state of our souls, most of the time

Plenty of critique, but very little reflection

That's how we know pride has taken root

Blame it on our times

To complain about the boss, we used to have to step out with colleagues at
lunch or at happy hour

Now with text and social media, we can complain about people or roll our
eyes virtually whenever we want – it's so much more convenient!

Negativity is easier than it's ever been!

Meanwhile, we are so much more invested and busy creating the illusion
that we are perfect in every way and don't make mistakes –
(Don't post it till you use FaceTune!)

So we have it coming at us from both sides – we reinforce our worst tendencies towards puffing ourselves up and take every opportunity to give voice to all our negative thoughts about others
It's the perfect petri dish in which to cultivate pride

But we all know what the scriptures say about pride
Remember Proverbs 16:18 – “Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.”

5

Here's the thing about humility as a spiritual discipline, though
It's almost impossible to give yourself an honest assessment of how you're doing with it
Anyone who says, “I'm the most humble person I know” is quite likely to be the opposite

So let's think for a couple minutes about some ways to cultivate humility

One: Worship

It might be the simplest way to break through our arrogance
Worship is, at its core, acknowledging that we are not the center of the universe, but that God is
There's no truth to our prayer if we can't acknowledge our dependence on God
There's no truth to our worship if we aren't able to de-center ourselves for a while in order to focus on God and all God's done for us in Jesus Christ

Two: Serve

You're never too old, too young, too rich, too poor to do something for someone else
And once you get used to helping other people, it just becomes your way of life
Until it physically bothers you to see someone in need of help and not doing anything to assist
Ephesians 2:10 says “we were CREATED for good works”
We have to be careful, though – because when we are only ever the helpers and never the ones asking for help – that's also a sure sign that pride has taken root

Three: Learn

Learning anything new is about testing the limits of your knowledge
No matter how competent you are at everything in your life right now
When you engage with something new – a sport, an instrument, any type of
skill – you have to admit that you don't know
Otherwise you are utterly unteachable
And if you don't think you need to learn anything?
Then you really are arrogant, aren't you?

Four: Connect

This comes back to a sermon I preached a month or so ago about having
people in your life who will call you on your stuff
We are not very likely to call out pride (or any other sin) in ourselves
We need people close to us whom we can trust to point out where we're
going wrong - and call us back to the right

6

We are born humble – unable to do anything for ourselves
But we don't stay that way
If you want to live a spiritual life, humility is one of the most important
spiritual values you need to cultivate

So when you find yourself looking at people and just feeling criticism
coming on
You know you need to do some work: worship, serve, learn, connect
So that we remove the logs from our own eyes
And recover some of that humility we see in our Savior

Amen.

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¹ Charles Schultz, *Peanuts*, August 8, 1983. https://peanuts.fandom.com/wiki/August_1983_comic_strips