

Humility from Wisdom

Scripture: Proverbs 16: 17-20

Date: January 24, 2021

HUBRIS

LOOKING GOOD

When I was growing up - wearing a tie was expected to church, to funerals or weddings and to many significant celebrations. It was a reminder of the importance of the event you were attending, and you were in fact called to “dress to impress”

Over the years of my life I’ve owned a wide variety of ties to “dress to impress”. I’ve owned funny – funky ties / Christmas ties some of which were fashionable and some of which weren’t. I still own one of my father’s funky 1990’s ties because he was the one who taught me how to tie them. Eventually you find a favourite – perhaps a blue one that goes with just about everything.

The text today reminds us of doing the right thing for the right reasons. Verse 17 speaks of walking the highway of life – the road of life and it calls us to focus on how we live our lives. To do the right thing for the right reason which is an important lesson for wisdom.

LOOKING BAD

But sometimes life has a way of not cooperating. Sometimes even when you try the right thing - life disappoints. One of my favourite ties was one I often used in serving communion. One particular Sunday as I was drinking the juice and it dribbled out of the cup and down onto my tie. I knew it wasn’t much but apparently others did too !! After the service a few people commented on my dinner manners!

I was mortified – embarrassed – that during the Lord’s Supper – I was a pig slurping my meal and NOW had juice on my favourite tie !!! I had the tie dry cleaned – and from certain angles – it looks clean. But from others – you can tell EXACTLY where I’d spilled

Vs. 18 of the text today reminds us of the difficulties in life. Difficulties that are created upon us and difficulties that are created by us. There’s a saying in culture - *pride goes before a fall*. BUT the text actually says - *pride leads to destruction and a haughty spirit leads to a fall*. A haughty spirit is an attitude of conceit and a spirit of pride is an arrogance. A haughty spirit of conceit can lead to a fall – like spilling juice on a tie is a fall. It’s embarrassing but it’s not life threatening.

But an ongoing spirit of conceit leads to pride / arrogance and that leads to greater things than just a fall. We live in a time and a culture where much is given to us and where much is needed from us but many times it just doesn’t happen the way we want. We get angry, we get frustrated, we get embarrassed or worse.

Sometimes the circumstances are so heinous – so embarrassing – that we get humiliated. There's a fall, there's a crash, there's a crushing because when a fall is compounded into destruction then life becomes complicated.

Now being humiliated is a very personal subjective thing. We feel our own demons, our own failures, our own weaknesses and for one person it's a minor event – easy to shrug off – but for another person it's a major event. Life altering and life shattering.

The word humiliation comes from the latin word – humus – which simply means ground. In other words our life has become grounded or perhaps our life has been ground down – to nothing and there's nothing left.

HOLINESS

HUMILIATION

But into this world God still is and God still works. God knows us when we're doing well and He knows when we are weak. He speaks into that space because He lived into that space. Jesus Christ lived amongst us - literally – in the midst of the broken world.

Through our lens Jesus as the Son of God – Son of Man – suffered humiliations galore. During His earthly life He served and taught many and most people didn't get it. In His last week of His earthly life He was triumphantly welcomed into Jerusalem yet within the same week was betrayed, arrested, rejected and killed. Isaiah 53: 3 reminds us of the prophecy where Jesus would be despised and rejected.

HEALING

But Isaiah 53 continues in verses 4-6 where it describes Jesus as moving past those responses to a place where creation would be reconciled and redeemed and restored. Jesus can identify with our pain because He spoke to all, He served all and He suffered for all.

HUMILITY

LIFE BEYOND US

Philippians 2 reminds us that Jesus endured all this – for us. That his life – His death – His resurrection can bring us from humiliation into hope. This model of Jesus in Philippians 2 invites us into a life of imitation of Him. In imitation of His humility before God and before each other.

Humility is also from the root of being grounded but rather than being grounded BY circumstances of life we can become grounded BY the Christ over life. Vs. 20 of our text today speaks of the blessings that come from living with God. A blessing that is found in a life of humility before God. Proverbs 22: 4 speaks of how humility is the fear of the Lord. Proverbs 3: 5-6 speaks of how we are to trust the Lord with all our heart and lean not on our own understanding but submit to God in ALL ways.

LIFE AROUND US

Colossians 3: 12 reminds us that we are to clothe ourselves with humility. A garment that dresses us for success in Jesus Christ. Because while we have been elevated from humiliation to healing we are still called to live in this bruised and broken world. To become an invitation to others for this healing by modelling the life and the humility of Jesus in all we are and in all we do.

The text today in vs. 19 - speaks of the wisdom of living a lowly life amongst the poor rather than dividing the spoil amongst the proud. To have a spirit of piety rather than a spirit of pride. A spirit that doesn't demean those around us but to serve them as Jesus would have. C.S. Lewis speaks of a life of humility as - *not seeing less of ourselves but rather seeing more of others*

Yet humility can become a trap – a snare - in how we live our lives of humility. The first is that we see those we are helping as less than ourselves. Our humility stoops us down to 'them' rather than seeing us as part of 'them'. The second is that when we become focussed on our humility – then we're no longer humble. Humility isn't something that you focus on. When people interact with us – serving us and being served by us - they shouldn't see our humility. They should simply see Jesus

APPLICATION / CONCLUSION

I was wondering how to end this sermon and thought about singing the old hymn - Blessed Be The Tie That Binds. But maybe too corny – even for me! But if the goal is to strive for humility over hubris and to strive for piety over pride - then we must ask ourselves what are we clothing ourselves with. Are we dressing for the importance of the event that is not dressing not to impress but rather a dressing for success of God's kingdom. In us and through us now and forever more.

AMEN