

Sermon on 1 Peter 5:6-11; John 17:1-11 – June 4/5, 2011

Grace and peace to you all from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

This week I've had a few humbling experiences. Someone pointed out to me a grammatical error in my last newsletter. I wrote a sentence where I put myself, an "I," before "others." Now you might wonder why this is humbling. Well for me it was because, and my wife will be the first one to say this and perhaps this is true for some of you out there, I'm always right! I'll never forget this principle now, "JOY," Jesus – Others – You. Another humbling experience I had this week was when we had our dog get a haircut. Even though he's a toy poodle, before he got a haircut he looked like a little lion...flowing apricot mane and all. Well, after this haircut he looks more like a lamb than a little lion (or if you ask my wife he looks like a rat). Also, when I was doing some preparation for this sermon I stumbled across this Eastern proverbial story, sort of like one of Aesop's fables. The story goes like this: - Tell the story about the two cranes and the frog -

Humbleness. Humility. That's what we'll focus on today. Two weeks ago when we began this short trip through the first letter of Peter we began with discipleship. Last week we focused on suffering; something that all people endure in many ways, but also how we, as Christians, are called to struggle with it, realize that it is a cross to bear, and that we have a God who suffered too. We have a God who already took on the suffering of the world, and how we have a God who continues to take on the suffering in the world by calling us, his people, to also bear one another's cross. Since suffering is a part of discipleship, we also know that the call to be humble is also a part of discipleship. For some it comes easy...almost too easy to where they become too passive and let others walk all over them. For others, humility is a foreign word, a foreign concept, a foreign idea. They would have everyone do things their way instead of listening to and incorporating other view points.

Here in today's reading from First Peter we are called to be humble...to become humbled under the mighty hand of God. For it is God who we serve day in and day out, not our own special interests. And it is God who is almighty, not us. For God created the heavens and the earth...not you. For it is God who redeemed us wretched sinners by sending his Son to die the death that we deserved. For it is God and him alone who brings us and keeps us in the Faith. And it is to God that we pray, day after day, week in and week out, "thy will be done."

One passage that was left out of today's reading from First Peter was this verse: "All of you must clothe yourselves with humility in your dealings with one another, for, 'God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble'." The last part of the verse is a quote from Proverbs 3 which reads: "Toward the scornful he is scornful but to the humble he shows favor. The wise will inherit honor but stubborn fools, disgrace." So when we read or hear that we should be humble we always need to remember a couple things: That we are to be humble in the sight of God almighty and that we are to be humble in regards to one another. For if one is humble in the sight of God, it inevitably follows that we'll be humble in regards to one another.

We are to be humble in the sight of the Lord God almighty so that in due time, God will exalt us, God will lift us up from any and all misery that may come our way. That's why Peter then tells us to throw and cast all of our anxiety on him, because he cares for us. For people in general, and for us American's in particular, this is a difficult pill to swallow because we are supposed to be like Heman, masters of our universe. I'm sure you remember these sayings that are pretty popular: Pick yourself up by your own boot straps – and – God only helps those who help themselves. Those kind of slogans fly in the face of God who wants, who commands us to rely on Him and Him alone. God wants, God commands that we put things in proper perspective; all that we are, all that we have, all that we do – it all has its source in Him. He created us, He saves us, He brings us and keeps us faithful. We belong to

God, to Jesus Christ His Son, or as Jesus says it in John, “All mine are yours, and yours mine.” We do belong not to our own hopes, dreams, ambitions, and illusions. God is master of the universe, and Lord over us, not us over Him.

When we are put in our place, humble *coram Deo*, humble in the face of God, this then leads to us being humble in the presence of others. Like I said before, to be humble does not mean that you let everyone walk over like a welcome mat. And to be humble in the sight of others also does not mean that you put on this front, this false mask of religiousness, like you have everything together and know everything. To be humble in the presence of others does mean that we admit our failures and shortcomings to one another and not only that we need God to care for us, but we also need God's church and brothers and sisters in Christ to support us physically, emotionally, and spiritually. When I was in the midst of interviewing here, one thing in particular stuck out to me. On some bulletins that were sent I read this: “Welcome to Christ the King, where all are welcome!” Now what if we changed that to say this: “Welcome to Christ the King, where we don't have it all together, where we admit that we are sinners in need of God's mercy and forgiveness, where we admit that we aren't perfect but broken, where we cast all our anxiety on God because he cares for us”? Now that's a bit longer and might not fit on the bulletin, but you see where I'm going. If this causes you to be a bit anxious, cast it on God because he cares for you.

To be humble under the hand of our Almighty God is one thing...to be humble in sight of one another, that might even be tougher. However, both of those go together, like peanut butter and jelly. I think you all know what you can do to be humble in both respects. That's part of the journey of being disciples of Christ; put to death in him by our baptism, and raised to walk a new life in Christ Jesus.

In closing, I'll read you these words from Luther's Small Catechism. These words always strike me, but they are important for us to remember as Christ's holy people, as people humble to God and to one another. And they are important to remember because the central argument in 1 Peter is that you have been baptized. May these words keep you humble for God's sake for the sake of one another:

Question: What does baptism mean for daily living? Why is baptism practical?

Answer: It means that our sinful self, with all its evil deeds and desires should be drowned through daily repentance; and that day after day a new self should arise to live with God in righteousness and purity forever.

May the Lord God almighty give you the strength to be humble in your life and in your faith because the adversary, the devil is prowling about looking for someone to devour. And may the Lord God almighty exalt you all in due time as you cast all your anxiety on Him because he cares for you. Amen.