

"Pride Hates Jesus"

Text: Luke 14:1, 7-14

My prayer for each of you is simply that God would bless you richly with his grace, for if you have God's grace – the undeserved love of your Creator God – you will lack nothing. Amen.

Dear Fellow Christians:

Of all the sins known to man, arguably one of the most difficult to understand (let alone control) is pride. No one, for example, says, "I've got my adultery." No one says, "I've got my murder." No one says, "I've got my greed, covetousness, or idolatry." Many do, however, routinely say, "I've got my pride" – and they mean that as a *good* thing, more or less. *Is* that a good thing? Depends, doesn't it, and that is exactly what makes this sin so difficult to understand, identify, and then drive from our hearts.

One of the things that makes this sin so challenging is the fact that we use the word "pride" to describe many different human emotions, not all of which are bad. Sometimes we use pride as synonymous with "work ethic" and its image is thereby cleaned up a bit. We all know that a good work ethic is God-pleasing, so pride used in that way must make it acceptable. Yes and no. It's all about motive. A good work ethic can be the result of greed (you work so hard because you love your toys) or vanity (you work so hard on your yard or your figure because you want others to envy and admire you). Sometimes we use pride in the sense of "responsible" or "patriotic" – as in "I take pride in my work" and "I am proud of my country." Again, such sentiments need not involve sin, but they can.

Still another problem with pride is that we find ourselves hoping (in a way) to see it in others – which again can be good or bad. You want your neighbor to take pride in the upkeep of his yard. If he can't do so with the good kind of pride, then a little bit of the bad kind of pride is better than having a dump next door that lowers your property values. Obviously there is a problem when we are willing to become sin's cheerleaders if that's what it takes to get what we want. No matter what the goal in life, sin is never a God-pleasing means to attain that goal.

All of which just serves to emphasize why the sinful kind of pride is arguably the most difficult to identify and eliminate from the human heart. But that is exactly what we need to do – because the bad sort of pride, *sinful pride*, hates Jesus Christ, and Christians by definition want nothing anti-Christian living within us.

The text that will guide us in our study this morning is found in Luke's Gospel, the 14th Chapter:

^{ESV} **Luke 14:1, 7-14** *One Sabbath, when he went to dine at the house of a ruler of the Pharisees, they were watching him carefully. ⁷ ¶ Now he told a parable to those who were invited, when he noticed how they chose the places of honor, saying to them, ⁸ "When you are invited by someone to a wedding feast, do not sit down in a place of honor, lest someone more distinguished than you be invited by him, ⁹ and he who invited you both will come and say to you, 'Give your place to this person,' and then you will begin with shame to take the lowest place. ¹⁰ But when you are invited, go and sit in the lowest place, so that when your host comes he may say to you, 'Friend, move up higher.' Then you will be honored in the presence of all who sit at table with you. ¹¹ For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted." ¹² ¶ He said also to the man who had invited him, "When you give a dinner or a banquet, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, lest they also invite you in return and you be repaid. ¹³ But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, ¹⁴ and you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you. For you will be repaid at the resurrection of the just."*

These are God's Words. To the Author of these words we address this simple prayer: "**Sanctify us by your truth, O Lord. Your word is truth.**" Amen.

First, let's establish the need to do something here. Is pride really something we need to address. Doesn't it do as much or more good than evil? Though there are dozens of passages that do so, we can establish the need with just two: 1 Peter 5:5 "**Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for 'God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.'**" In Proverbs 6:16-17 God the Holy Spirit identifies "**six things that the LORD hates, seven that are an abomination to him.**" The very first thing he identifies is "**haughty (prideful) eyes.**" As Christians we would certainly all agree that just hearing that God *hates* and *opposes* sinful human pride establishes for us the need to deal with it.

What then is sinful pride? What is it *exactly* that God does not want to see in us? Is it an attitude, an action, or both? The danger here is that we define the thing too broadly or too narrowly – condemning what is not wrong or justifying what is. The *sin* of pride always involves elevation of self. It starts with a feeling, a belief, that you are better or

superior, and that's an attitude that no human being can ever truly hide, at least not for very long. It always reveals itself in words and actions, sometimes subtly, sometimes obviously. The fact that you, in your own mind, believe yourself better makes it right that you be noticed and praised. If others do not do so, you must do the elevating yourself. The fact that you are better means that you deserve special privileges. It means that rules don't apply to you, that you shouldn't have to wait for others or do what others have to do. Sinful pride shows itself when others are receiving praise, for it always seeks to step from the shadows and share in that spotlight, even to the point of crowding the other out. Sinful pride says, "*Look at me. Notice me. Praise me. I'm special. I'm better.*" It is, in the end, a manifestation of man's natural idolatry. It is worship of self.

Sometimes it's easier to really come to understand one thing by defining its opposite, thereby defining what it is not. The opposite of sinful pride is humility. Humility is that heart attitude that seeks to elevate others, beginning with God himself. It recognizes gifts in self, but it praises the Giver of those gifts, not the recipient, and it seeks to deflect all glory and praise accordingly. Because it recognizes the true Source of all good things, humility always acknowledges the need to be filled, protected, and preserved by God alone.

Understand then that humility is not an *optional* character trait. Humility absolutely has to be the basic condition of the heart. If it is lacking, something else – something very bad – will take its place. The alternative is almost always sinful pride, which will always move into any and every space that is devoid of humility. Know too that sinful pride and godly humility are opposites, and as such they just don't get along. At all. Ever. Pride cannot tolerate humility and humility cannot tolerate pride. That's why humility is not a luxury for the child of God. It is an absolute necessity, for if your heart is not humble, it will most certainly be steeped in sinful pride – and we were just reminded that God *hates* sinful pride. More to the point this morning – and worse still – pride hates Jesus Christ.

But how do I go about exchanging sinful pride for God-pleasing humility? What is the process that I have to go through to lose the one and have the other? We turn to our text for answers.

Maybe you've been in a situation like the one described here by Jesus, or some other instance of public humiliation. While the shame in being publicly asked to move to a lower position is rather acute, the point we need to establish is that *humility isn't just practiced to avoid being shamed before man*. The avoidance of shame is just a happy byproduct. Humility is a heart condition that comes with simple honesty.

Using Jesus' parable/picture, a man who would choose the lower seat (all the while intending to be called up to the higher) knows nothing of true humility. He is a conniver and schemer – a fake who pridefully manipulates others for his own self-glorification.

Jesus demonstrates this general truth in the second part of our text where he talks about inviting those who could never repay your invitation. Note that there is nothing in it for the man who invites "***the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind.***" The man who invites those folks doesn't do so to be paid back. Again, the point is that true humility does not act with ulterior motives. A humble human being acts in accord with his convictions, never with a view toward "*what's in it for me.*" So also in Jesus' parable he isn't talking about subtle manipulation. He is, again, talking about the heart.

A note might be in order here concerning Jewish festivals and seating arrangements. Most of us here today know little of such things because we have few real parallels in our society. Eastern cultures routinely arrange seating according to social standing. The higher the standing, the better the seat. The parable in our text was prompted by the mad scramble of the Pharisees to seat themselves in the highest positions – an indication of the pride that filled their hearts.

Again here we find evidence as to just why this whole topic can be so difficult to master. Is it, for example, wrong for us to seek out good seats at a banquet or reception? The question misses the point. The key truth here is to recognize that humility is a condition of the heart, and that condition constantly gives rise to this attitude: "*I deserve no more and no better.*" Pride is the thing that tells you that you deserve just the opposite – ever more and ever better. Humility expects little or nothing.

How does this show up in life? We see it in ourselves whenever we are too proud to ask for or accept help, even when we are in dire need of such help. We see it in the sinful attitude that continually seeks out any way that I might have been slighted or disrespected, based on the simple premise that, of all the people in the world, I deserve better. It bristles and rebels at every correction, from the pastor on up.

Obviously as Christians we loathe all sin, and pride is no exception. Yet the biggest mistake that we make in fully understanding the words from our Savior in our text is that we read them superficially. In fact all of this could well seem a bit trivial in the broader scheme of things unless and until these truths are plugged into the area of faith and salvation. Then it all becomes much more than just a case of good or

bad manners and suddenly becomes a critical matter of eternal life and death. Jesus wasn't giving lessons on social etiquette; he was teaching us something about eternal life – and here is where we gain the clearest picture of just how dangerous sinful pride truly is.

The banquet in our text represents heaven, and the Banquet Master (the **"one who invited you"**) is God himself. While it would certainly be awkward and embarrassing to be assigned a lower seat in a public setting here in time, how infinitely, unimaginably worse it would be to be tapped on the shoulder by God himself on Judgment Day and told, *"You don't belong here."*

What role does sinful pride play in that worst of all scenarios? The prideful heart has two reactions to Jesus and the salvation that he offers. Both are damning. The first reaction of the proud heart is that I don't need Jesus and the perfection that he supplies *since I'm good enough all on my own*. The only other reaction from a pride-filled heart is to acknowledge the need for Jesus, but to imagine that I am somehow *deserving* of what Jesus has done, or that I will take care of the problem myself. More than that, pride tells me that I am not only *worthy* of Jesus' great sacrifice, he *owed* it to me.

Obviously nothing could be further from the truth – and true humility recognizes and eagerly accepts that fact. The truly humble heart freely admits that it does not deserve anything from God but justice, and justice calls for condemnation because of my sin. The humble heart rightly assumes its place in hell, and then is absolutely thrilled – *shocked* - when the Master walks up to you, points to you and says, *"Friend, you are at the wrong table. Your sins have been forgiven. You are therefore my child and my heir – an important, treasured guest. Move up to the table of Life."*

While sinful pride tells me I don't need Christ, Godly humility thrills instead to the forgiveness that has been given to me because of what he has done for me. It freely acknowledges that I am altogether unworthy; that I deserve nothing good from my God except to be condemned eternally because of my rebellion and sin. How amazed then is that same humble heart when God the Father calls us higher – all because Jesus Christ has washed us clean by paying the penalty for our sins.

Add this then to your daily prayer list – that God the Holy Spirit would first *identify* to you, and then drive from your heart all sinful pride. Ask him daily to fill you instead with the Godly humility that recognizes your natural need and helplessness, how that need has been supplied by Jesus Christ, and therefore how good, right, and obvious it is to give all credit, praise and glory to him alone. Amen.

Scripture Readings

^{ESV} **Proverbs 25:2-10** It is the glory of God to conceal things, but the glory of kings is to search things out. ³ As the heavens for height, and the earth for depth, so the heart of kings is unsearchable. ⁴ Take away the dross from the silver, and the smith has material for a vessel; ⁵ take away the wicked from the presence of the king, and his throne will be established in righteousness. ⁶ Do not put yourself forward in the king's presence or stand in the place of the great, ⁷ for it is better to be told, "Come up here," than to be put lower in the presence of a noble. What your eyes have seen ⁸ do not hastily bring into court, for what will you do in the end, when your neighbor puts you to shame? ⁹ Argue your case with your neighbor himself, and do not reveal another's secret, ¹⁰ lest he who hears you bring shame upon you, and your ill repute have no end.

^{ESV} **Hebrews 13:1-8** Let brotherly love continue. ² Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares. ³ Remember those who are in prison, as though in prison with them, and those who are mistreated, since you also are in the body. ⁴ Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous. ⁵ Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." ⁶ So we can confidently say, "The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?" ⁷ ¶ Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith. ⁸ Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.

ST. PAUL EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

2510 E. Divide Ave. Bismarck, ND 58501

Parsonage and Office: (701) 223-4885 Cell: (701) 425-5483

Website: www.bismarcklutheran.org

Michael McEnroe, President Eileen McEnroe, Head Organist

Michael Roehl, Pastor Today's Organist: Eileen McEnroe

The 15th Sunday after Pentecost – August 28, 2016

The Opening Prayer by the Pastor

The Opening Hymn – 393 (1-4) (Red Hymnal)

"From God Shall Naught Divide Me"

The Order of Service – Hymnal page 15ff. (Red Hymnal)

The Scripture Lessons: (Printed on the back page of this bulletin)

The First Lesson: (Proverbs 25:2-10) Our first lesson from the Book of Proverbs stresses humility. It is more than just an embarrassment to be "put in one's place" by someone else. It is often (but not always) an indication of a proud spirit. We pray God to deliver each one of us from all sinful pride. The sermon this morning will remind us why this is so important.

The Second Lesson: (Hebrews 13:1-8) Our second lesson stresses the consistency of our God. Surely this consistency – seen also in Jesus, the Second Person of the Trinity – is exemplified in part by his consistent humility. Never once did Jesus commit a sin of pride or arrogance. Always and only he was concerned with doing his Father's will and serving mankind – which means you and me.

The Confession of Faith -

The Nicene Creed – (Hymnal page 22)

The Pre-Sermon Hymn – 175 (Red Hymnal)

"When I Survey the Wondrous Cross"

The Sermon – Text: Luke 14:1, 7-14 (Printed on the back page of this bulletin)

"Pride Hates Jesus"

The Offertory – (Hymnal page 22)

The Offering followed by the Prayers

The Pre-Communion Hymn – 394 (Verses 1-2) (Red Hymnal)

"My Faith Looks Up to Thee"

The Preparation for Holy Communion (Red Hymnal page 24ff)

The Distribution

The Nunc Dimittis (Red Hymnal page 30)

The Benediction

The Closing Hymn – 393 (5-6) (Red Hymnal)

"From God Shall Naught Divide Me"

Silent Prayer

Welcome! - We warmly welcome any visitors worshipping with us this morning and invite you to join us each Sunday at this time. We are glad you are here! **To our Visitors seeking an altar at which to commune** – Since we desire to follow the words of our Savior, we practice "Close Communion" – a practice that is not new to confessional Lutherans. This practice stresses both our concern for others, not wanting them to receive the sacrament to their harm (1 Cor. 11:27-30) and the importance of unity in confession and faith (1 Cor. 10:16-17). For this reason we ask that anyone who has not established this unity through membership in a CLC congregation please first meet with the pastor to discuss this Scriptural doctrine before communing. This is a practice that we follow out of love and concern for you, and out of obedience to God's Word.

Attendance - Sunday (33) Ave (48)

This Week at St. Paul:

Today	-10:00 a.m.	– Worship Service w/ Holy Communion
	-11:15 a.m.	– Fellowship/coffee time
	-11:45 a.m.	– Church Council Meeting
Next Sunday	-10:00 a.m.	– Worship Service
	-11:00 a.m.	– Fellowship/coffee time

CLC News – Pastor Terrel Kesterson has accepted the call to Ascension Lutheran of Batavia (Chicago area). Pastor Luke Bernthal has returned the call to Faith of Markesan. Pastor Timothy Daub was installed as Pastor of Prince of Peace of Hecla last Sunday.

Sunday School Teachers – We are still in need of teachers for our Sunday School for the 2016-2017 school year. We have our upper grade teacher but need teachers for the middle and lower grades. This is vital kingdom work as the future of the Church is directly impacted by the instruction of our youth. Please prayerfully consider if you could serve in this way, and speak to the Pastor if you are able to so serve.

Looking Ahead – We are scheduled to resume our regular schedule after Labor Day, which means that the first Confirmation class and mid-week Bible study would be September 7, and Sunday school and Bible Class would begin on September 11.

Assisted Hearing Devices – Please don't hesitate to reserve one of our new hearing assist devices if you are having any trouble hearing the Pastor during our worship services.

Church Council Meeting – The Church Council is scheduled to meet this morning following the fellowship/coffee time.