

written: Dec. 4, 1948

Text: Luke 18:14b -- "every one who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted."

Theme: Humility.

Proposition: Humility is a necessary characteristic to the Christian which can be practiced only through God's help.

Sources: Revised Standard Version of the New Testament, Thomas Nelson & Sons, N. Y. 1946.

Macartney's Illustrations, Abingdon Cokesbury Pressy, Nashville, 1945, p.114

Pulpit Digest, December, 1948, p. 41.

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Masterpieces of Religious Verse, Ed. by James Dalton Morrison, Harper & Bros., 1948, 602, v. 2 & 3.

Places preached:

Huntington, Ark., Dec. 5, '48

Craster, Wyo., Oct. 23, '49 A.M.

Trummer, " " " " P.M.

Chapel 6, 135 out, Camp Buckner, Ark., 2 August 1945

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Introduction:

1. Our Scripture story is a familiar one, often used in preaching. It is the story of two men, one a religious leader of the Jews of the time of Jesus -- a Pharisee --, and the other a tax collector -- the publican, who went into the temple to pray. The Pharisee stood and prayed loudly with himself, saying, "God, I thank thee 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 would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, "God, be merciful to me a sinner!"

Jesus told this story to illustrate the familiar theme of humility.

2. This theme of humility is our theme here.

I. Christ practiced humility while on earth.

1. John 13:3-16 represents the humility of service. In this passage we have a record of Jesus washing the feet of the various disciples. When they objected that they were not fit to have him wash their feet, he remonstrated to them that he was but giving them an example of service.

2. Mt. 21:5. In this passage we have a record which indicates that Jesus was humble in the presence of worthy tradition. Going into Jerusalem on the Palm Sunday, he is recorded as having ridden an ass, the animal of the poor people. Matthew interprets this incident by saying that this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet, saying,

"Tell the daughter of Zion,
Behold, your king is coming to you,
humble, and mounted on an ass,
and on a colt, the foal of an ass."

Jesus, according to Matthew, recognized the worth of the tradition that the Son of God should assume his role humbly, and humbly he assumed it.

3. Matt. 9:10. In this passage is a record of Jesus eating with despised sinners and tax collectors, an illustration of his love of all classes of people, and of his genuine humility in being with them as one of them.

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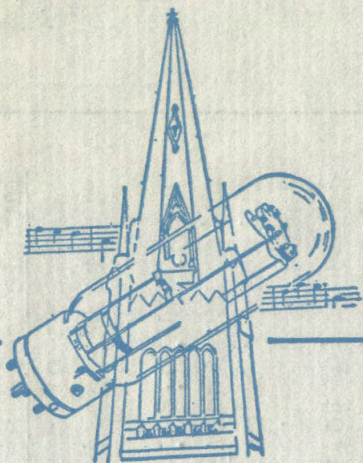
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4. Matt. 20:28 presents Jesus recognizing his humble role as a servant. In this passage he says, "The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

5. Lk. 9:58. While Jesus ministèred, according to this passage, he was humbly homeless and poor. This is a part of a story in which a man came to Jesus and said "I will follow you wherever you go." Jesus said to the man, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man has nowhere to lay his head."

6. Yet, the humility of Jesus was not a spiritless cringing humility. Rather, it was a truly dignified thing. It was something that he practiced by his own personal conviction and choosing. Matt. 27:12-14, speaking of when he was before Pilate, tells that he did not cringe and agree with what was said to him and about him. Neither did he become angry or rebuke his accusers. Rather, he gave Pilate "no answer, not even to a single charge." His trial became not a mock thing, as his accusers wished, but an occasion of beauty, dignity, and sweet humility to God's path for him.

II. Christ taught humility to his followers.

1. At a Pennsylvania bankers' convention one of the bankers related an incident in the life of a judge whom he knew well. In his college days the judge had been addicted to drink. Now he had a fine and promising son coming along, whom he had recently sent to college. Complaints soon reached him of his son's misbehavior, his drinking and general dissipation. The father called the son before him and remonstrated with him, telling him that he was ruining his prospects and that his conduct would break his mother's heart. Imagine his surprise when his son replied, "Why, Father, they tell me you did just the same thing when you were at college." Thus did this father have come back to him the importance of the example that he set. This experience was the cause of a radical change to the good in the life of that father.



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Jesus did not have to wait till late in his life with his apostles to set a good example for them. Rather, his example was constantly one of a humble way of life, as already illustrated. By the most powerful medium at his command, that of example, he taught humility to his followers.

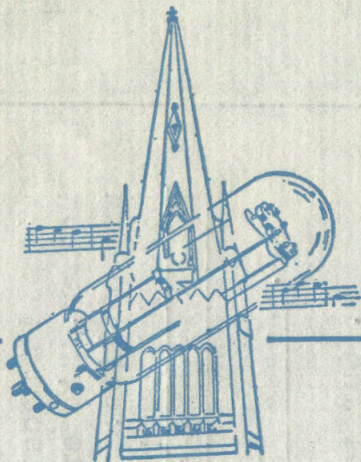
2. Jesus also taught humility in his sayings.

a. Our text, Lk.18:14, is one record of such direct, verbal teaching. It is "every one who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself ~~will~~ be exalted."

b. Mt. 18:2-4, relates an incident in the life of Jesus in which he called a little child to him. "At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, "Who is the greatest in the Kingdom of heaven?" And calling to him a child, he put him in the midst of them, and said, "Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever humbles himself like this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven."

c. Again, in the incident recorded in Matt. 20:20-28, is a record of Jesus teaching humility. The mother of the sons of Zebedee, that is, the mother of James and John, came to Jesus and asked that her sons might sit with him in heaven, one on the right hand and one on the left. Jesus told her that they would be with him, but that he did not have the right to say who should sit in those positions around him but was that of God the Father. The other disciples, hearing of the request, were indignant. Jesus said to them that there was no reason to be indignant, because in the Kingdom of Heaven there should be no ruling.

"whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be your slave; even as the Son of man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." Thus, here, too, he taught the necessity of humility to Christian life.



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III. Christ's followers practice humility.

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1. A minister tells this experience of his:
"Some time ago, in the disruption of routine incident to moving from one charge to another, I omitted my bed-time prayers. The first omission was followed the next night by the second, and I am ashamed to say that what began as "just this once" soon became habitual before I was even aware of it. By the time my existence had once more become settled, I was hopping into bed each night without a thought of prayer.

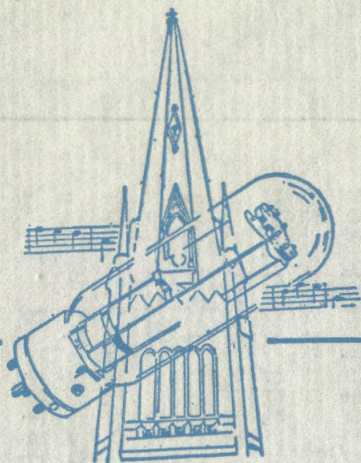
"At the same time I found I was troubled by insomnia. My difficulty in getting to sleep seemed to be caused by an increasing tension and pain in the knee joints, which became so irritating that I would lie awake for hours. Sedatives were of little help.

"I thought that the trouble might be lack of exercise. I thought it might be the excitement of a new location. Then, at last, the true reason came to me-- it was nothing but the lack of the proper knee-bending exercises at bed-time. Immediately I fell to my knees beside the bed, overwhelmed by the awareness of my unworthiness, and found once again the peace that comes no other way.

"From that day to this the rule has never been broken, and sleep has no longer been a problem. Perhaps there is some psychological element in this practice of prayer, perhaps some psychosomatic factors involved, but whatever the men of science might attribute it to, it works!"

So it is that Christians through the ages and today have found it necessary to practice the humility of prayer or lose their contact with God. The custom of praying on our knees is symbolic of our humility and unworthiness before God.

2. Bernard of Clairvaux (1091-1153) was the son of a knight who was killed in the Crusades. Bernard, a natural leader, entered the monastery at Citeaux in France, with 29 of his friends, hoping to find a balanced life of meditation, prayer, and study in monastic retirement. But his life there was so exemplary of piety that he was sent to Clairvaux to organize a monastery. Here he remained as abbot the rest of his days, traveling widely, organizing 68 monasteries with 500 branches, and exercising much influence on the affairs of his day.



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Bernard wrote about this matter of humility: "It is not enough to be subject to God unless you are also subject to every human creature for God's sake; whether to the abbot as ruler or to the priors appointed to him. I say more: Be subject to your equals and even to you inferiors. For thus it becomes us to fulfill all righteousness. If you wish to be perfect make advances to him that is less than you; defer to your inferior, bow down to your junior ... (Humility is) the mother of salvation."

3. An American girl tourist visited the museum in Vienna where there is exhibited a piano once used by Beethoven. She walked casually toward it and struck off some "boogey-woogey." Turning to the attendant she asked whether there had not been great pianists to inspect the instrument. She was informed that a short time before the great Paderewski had seen it.

"Paderewski," she exclaimed. "Surely he must have played something beautiful on this old instrument." "On the contrary," the attendant replied, "he did not feel worthy of touching it."

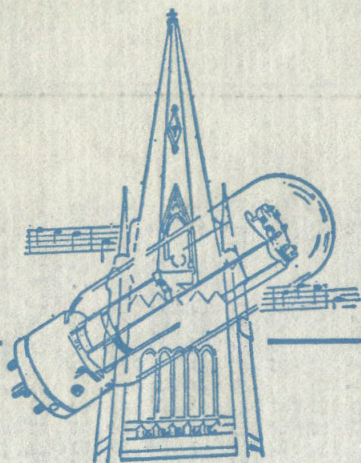
In that, Paderewski exhibited a true Christian spirit in the presence of all that is true and good. We are not worthy of touching the things of God; yet, by his grace we are enabled to share with his son the blessing of eternity.

IV. Christian humility is possible only with God's help.

1. Christ, prayed in Gethsemane so that he might face the suffering of the cross bravely. Yet, the reason he prayed was because he humbly realized that without God he could not bear the cross, ^{without} ~~without~~ ^{help} ~~help~~

2. Bernard of Clairvaux said, in the quotation we have already read, that "humility is the mother of salvation." A personal assurance of eternal salvation is based on a personal knowledge of God. The very belief in salvation implies humility; the recognition of our inability to save ourselves.

3. Humility, however, is a tricky thing. Alone, even if our intention is to remain humble, it is



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hard not to divert that humility to spiritual pride, to become proud that we are humble!

A woman who frequent said that she wasn't any better than anyone else to do the menial jobs that must be done in any household, worked as a domestic helper for others. Yet, she constantly called attention to each task done in the performance of her duty. So it is, that often when we think we're being humble, we're being obnoxiously pious. It's something we can maintain with God's help only; and ~~xxxx~~ though it is paradoxical, it is true that when we think we are humble we are not!

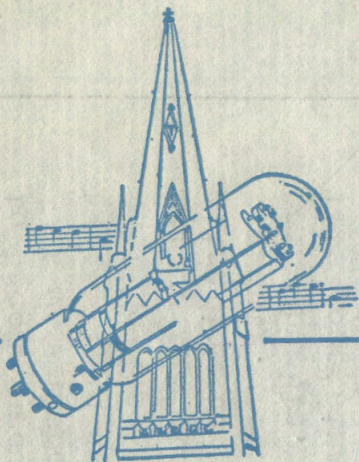
Concl. It takes a constant comparison of ourselves with Jesus, ~~and~~ the constant realization of our shortcomings that such a comparison brings, to be able to maintain the proper perspective of humility.

A traveler tells of traveling on the European continent. He had been told of a little chapel up among the Spanish hills with rare paintings and marvelous acoustics. He left the beaten path of travel that he might visit the place. His first view was most disappointing. The pictures seemed to be masses of daub, and the sounds were discordant. The guide led him on until he had reached a certain point, then bade him look; and, lo, every painting was a masterpiece, and when he spoke it seemed as though the angelic choirs had come down to sing. Then the guide pointed to the floor, and he discovered that he was standing on a crimson image of the Cross.

We cannot see the beauty of life as God planned it, as this traveler could not see the beauty of that chapel; we shall not hear the voices of peace and power until we stand in humble and reverent trust before the cross of Christ.

Conclusion:

1. ~~xxxx~~ By example and by words Christ urged humility upon his followers. Truly, humility is a necessary characteristic to the Christian which can be practiced only through God's help.



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Upon the Cross of Jesus,
 Mine eyes at times can see
 The very dying form of One
 Who suffered there for me.
 And from my smitten heart, with tears,
 Two wonders I confess, --
 The wonder of His glorious love,
 And my own worthlessness.

I take, O Cross, thy Shadow
 For my abiding place;
 I ask no other sunshine than
 The sunshine of his face;
 Content to let the world go by,
 To know no gain nor loss,
 My sinful self my only shame,
 My gloryx all, the Cross.

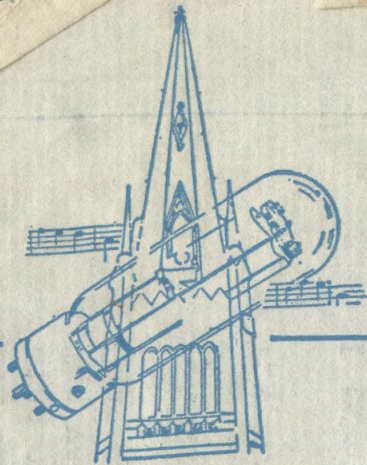
Elizabeth C. Clephane, 1830-1869.

3. Challenge. Denounce self-pride. Personally we are nothing. Ask God for help to be humble. Put faith in Jesus Christ, and therein find the power of God for sustained and humble Christian service.

Sermons
 New Testament
 Luke
 18:9-14

Handwritten: Sermon 18:9-14

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