

25. Pride that hinders our walk with Christ

December 30, 2007

Proverbs 6:16-19 These six things the Lord hates, Yes, seven are an abomination to Him: 17 A proud look, A lying tongue, Hands that shed innocent blood, 18 A heart that devises wicked plans, Feet that are swift in running to evil, 19 A false witness who speaks lies, And one who sows discord among brethren.

God hates a proud look. I would expect God to start the list of things He hates with “hands that shed innocent blood” or adultery, maybe. But NO. Number one on His list is a proud look.

Why is this such a big deal? After all, in our culture today, pride is seen as a virtue. Be proud of your heritage, we’re told. Be proud of who you are.

But the Bible says that God hates a proud look. What does this mean? Well, a proud look speaks of a person who would want his or her will above the will of God and the will of others. It speaks of people who are arrogant and full of themselves.

The Pharisees set up another trap to get Jesus even though each time they did this, they found themselves in hot water and became a laughing stock of the people. They were legalists and they had proud looks and smirks on their faces. Come to think of it, I’ve never seen any legalist who is humble.

The Lord Jesus is going to teach us about how not to be prideful through the examples of these Pharisees.

A. PRIDE THAT IGNORES GOD’S LAW

Luke 14:1-6 Now it happened, as He went into the house of one of the rulers of the Pharisees to eat bread on the Sabbath, that they watched Him closely. 2 And behold, there was a certain man before Him who had dropsy. 3 And Jesus, answering, spoke to the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, “Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?” 4 But they kept silent. And He took him and healed him, and let him go. 5 Then He answered them, saying, “Which of you, having a donkey or an ox that has fallen into a pit, will not immediately pull him out on the Sabbath day?” 6 And they could not answer Him regarding these things.

Foreshadowing the last week of Jesus’ life, these Pharisees are already standing in judgement over Jesus. Normally these Pharisees would keep themselves away from anyone who had a sickness so that they wouldn’t be defiled by their sickness, but they chose to invite this man with dropsy.

In my ignorance, I thought a person with dropsy is a clumsy person like me dropping things or loses his balance and bumps into walls or door frames. But when I did a research for this disease, I was surprised at the symptom. Dropsy is an “abnormal accumulation of serous fluid in the tissues of the body.” The word for ‘dropsy’ here comes from the Greek words for ‘water’ and ‘face,’ because the disease often made a person look bloated in their faces and abdomens.

If Jesus heals this person on Sabbath, He is going against their tradition again. By now He already had violated their Sabbath traditions on at least seven different occasions. But if He chooses not to heal this poor sick man, they would say that He has no compassion.

However, in His wisdom Jesus used their trap right back at them by asking them a question. If the Pharisees said that nobody should be delivered from sickness on the Sabbath, they become heartless. But if they agree with Jesus, they would be outcast by their peers. So what do they do? Taking the fifth – saying nothing.

The Pharisees claimed that they were defending the Sabbath law of God, but in reality they were only protecting their own tradition and benefits. In other words, they were putting their own tradition over God's Word.

We, too, have these kinds of people today. They are so bogged down to their own traditions, denomination rules and regulations that they simply ignore God's Word.

Legalism is an expression of a person's pride – thinking that others should follow his or her example, not necessarily God's Word, otherwise they would categorize anyone who disagree with them as unspiritual. Humility is not one of the virtues of legalists. They all walk around with their noses stuck up high in the air.

B. PRIDE THAT CAUSES HIS OWN SHAME

Luke 14:7-14 So He told a parable to those who were invited, when He noted how they chose the best places, saying to them: 8 "When you are invited by anyone to a wedding feast, do not sit down in the best place, lest one more honorable than you be invited by him; 9 and he who invited you and him come and say to you, 'Give place to this man,' and then you begin with shame to take the lowest place. 10 But when you are invited, go and sit down in the lowest place, so that when he who invited you comes he may say to you, 'Friend, go up higher.' Then you will have glory in the presence of those who sit at the table with you. 11 For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted." 12 Then He also said to him who invited Him, "When you give a dinner or a supper, do not ask your friends, your brothers, your relatives, nor rich neighbors, lest they also invite you back, and you be repaid. 13 But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind. 14 And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you; for you shall be repaid at the resurrection of the just."

Let's be honest: we all want to be noticed and accepted. Some of us are more eager than others. The guests who were invited by this host should understand Jesus' parable clearly, because He is talking about them. That is what I like about Jesus' style of teaching – He deals with them directly in front of them, not talking about them behind their backs.

In their custom the seating was a large U shaped banquet table. The bottom-center of the U is the seat of highest honor, with the seats on its right and left the next highest, and so on in descending order to the ends.

As the guests come in, they all run for the best seats. It's a grown-up version of musical chairs, and Jesus notices it. He sees the haughty glow in those who manage to grab the seats next to Pharisee So-and-So, as well as the sulky look on those who get bumped to the end, next to the kitchen.

Today's career counselors say that getting ahead depends on how well we sell ourselves and we should do it whatever it takes. Christ's teaching throws out this self-promotion theory from our hearts. His advice is, "Be content with the back seat. Be happy with who you are and where you are. If God wants you in the front row, He'll move you there."

Proverbs 29:23 A man's pride will bring him low, but the humble in spirit will retain honor.

Psalms 75:6-7 For exaltation comes neither from the east nor from the west nor from the south. 7 But God is the Judge: He puts down one, and exalts another.

James 4:6 But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: "God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble."

One thing I must bring to your attention is false humility. The false humility that takes the lowest place is just as hateful to God as the pride that takes the highest place. God is not impressed by our status in society or in the church. He is not a Respector of person's intelligence or wealth. He is not influenced by what people say or think about us, because He sees the thoughts and motives of the heart.

Jesus lost nothing by giving all to the Father God. He honored His Son's trust and did all for Him, and then exalted Him to His own right hand in glory. Christ humbled Himself before God, and God was ever before Him. He found it possible to humble Himself before men, too and to be the Servant of all. His humility was simply the surrender of Himself to God, to allow the Father to do in Him what He pleased, regardless of what men might say of Him or do to Him.

If any of you think that you are better than the rest of us, because you have more money or smarter or know more about the Bible, guess what, God thinks otherwise.

Galatians 6:3 For if anyone thinks himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself.

C. PRIDE THAT REFUSES GOD'S INVITATION

Luke 14:15-24 Now when one of those who sat at the table with Him heard these things, he said to Him, "Blessed is he who shall eat bread in the kingdom of God!" 16 Then He said to him, "A certain man gave a great supper and invited many, 17 and sent his servant at supper time to say to those who were invited, 'Come, for all things are now ready.' 18 But they all with one accord began to make excuses. The first said to him, 'I have bought a piece of ground, and I must go and see it. I ask you to have me excused.' 19 And another said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to test them. I ask you to have me excused.' 20 Still another said, 'I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.' 21 So that servant came and reported these things to his master. Then the master of the house, being angry, said to his servant, 'Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in here the poor and the maimed and the lame and the blind.' 22 And the servant said, 'Master, it is done as you commanded, and still there is room.' 23 Then the master said to the servant, 'Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. 24 For I say to you that none of those men who were invited shall taste my supper.'"

One of the guests at the table was confident that he would be at the kingdom feast in heaven because of his Jewish heritage. But Jesus is giving him a stern warning against the false sense of security.

The ones who came up with the lame excuses knew the host's invitation for long time and they even made their R.S.V.P. Now when everything is prepared and it is the time to have a meal, they all come up with feeble excuses to defend their change in plans. Their excuses are only a thin veil hiding the fact that they do not want to come. Back of an excuse is a lack of desire.

This parable applies to all lost sinners today. The Lord says, "All you have to do is just accept My invitation to get saved. Nothing more need be done for the salvation of your soul, because Jesus Christ finished the work of redemption when He died for you on the cross and arose from the dead. The feast has been spread, the invitation is free, and you are invited to come."

Guess what the majority of people around the world do. Some say, "I will do it later," or "No thanks, I can make my way to heaven just fine without Your help," or "I don't believe that You exist."

The excuse-makers might be successful and intelligent people in the eyes of their friends, but they are failures in the eyes of God.

D. PRIDE THAT HINDERS TO FOLLOW JESUS TRULY

Luke 14:25-35 Now great multitudes went with Him. And He turned and said to them, 26 "If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. 27 And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple. 28 For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has enough to finish it-- 29 lest, after he has laid the foundation, and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, 30 saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish.' 31 Or what king, going to make war against another king, does not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? 32 Or else, while the other is still a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks conditions of peace. 33 So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple. 34 "Salt is good; but if the salt has lost its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? 35 It is neither fit for the land nor for the dunghill, but men throw it out. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!"

Jesus knew that most of those in the crowd were not the least bit interested in spiritual things. Some wanted only to see miracles, others heard that He fed the hungry and a few hoped He would overthrow Rome and establish David's promised kingdom. They were expecting the wrong things. So Jesus turned to the multitude and preached a sermon that deliberately thinned out the ranks.

This is something the majority of pastors and other Christians in America think totally absurd. Because somehow they think that the bigger congregation means the better church and the better pastor. God doesn't think so.

Even after we become born-again Christians, many of us have difficulties in following the Lord as the disciples of Him due to our own pride and selfish motives. We must be willing to give up everything that includes our careers, relationship with our families or friendship, especially our own pride, to follow and obey Jesus.

Jesus seems to make a distinction between salvation and discipleship. Salvation is open to all who will come by faith, while discipleship is for believers willing to pay a price. Salvation means coming to the cross and trusting Jesus Christ, while discipleship means carrying the cross and following Jesus Christ.

I am not saying that to be a disciple of Jesus Christ we must give up everything and own nothing and desert our families. Our love for Christ must be so strong that all other love is like hatred in comparison.

In fact, we must hate our own lives and be willing to bear the cross after Him. What does it mean to “carry the cross”? It means daily identification with Christ in shame, suffering and surrender to God’s will. It means death to self, to our own plans and ambitions and a willingness to serve Him as He directs.

Salt was a valued item in that day. In fact, part of a soldier’s pay was given in salt. Actually, the words ‘salt’ and ‘salary’ are related.

Salt is a preservative, and God’s people in this world are helping to reduce the growth of evil and decay. Salt is also a purifying agent, an antiseptic that makes things cleaner. When I was growing up as a little child in South Korea, we didn’t have tooth paste, I used to use salt when I brushed my teeth.

Our modern salt is pure and does not lose its flavor, but the salt in Jesus’ day was impure and could lose its flavor, especially if it came in contact with earth. Once the saltiness was gone, there was no way to restore it, and the salt was thrown out into the street to be walked on. When a disciple loses his Christian character, he is “good for nothing” and will eventually be “walked on” by others and bring disgrace to Christ.

As the last sermon of the Year 2007, I will ask this to all of you: Are you one of those luke warm Christians who just has salvation from Jesus but not doing anything for the Kingdom of God because of your own selfishness, pride and inconvenience to yourself? If you are, you need to repent and be a sold out Christian in Year 2008.

E. APPLICATIONS

1) We must strive to maintain the unselfish attitude that Jesus had and share what we have with others.

Our modern world is very competitive, and it is easy for God’s people to become more concerned about profit and loss than they are about sacrifice and service for Jesus and others.

2) We must remember that pride is at the root of every single one of the problems in our culture today, because it is at the root of all of our sins.