

A Lesson in Humility

Amos 6:1-7 and Luke 18:9-14

Good morning and a very warm welcome to you this morning as we gather once again in worship before the Almighty, the Great and Holy Lord our God. May this morning's time of worship be truly blessed for each of us as we come before the word of the Lord. And our call to worship this morning is taken from

Psalm 111:

Praise the Lord. I will extol the Lord with all my heart in the council of the upright and in the assembly. ²Great are the works of the Lord; they are pondered by all who delight in them. ³Glorious and majestic are his deeds, and his righteousness endures forever. ⁴He has caused his wonders to be remembered; the Lord is gracious and compassionate. ⁵He provides food for those who fear him; he remembers his covenant forever. ⁶He has shown his people the power of his works, giving them the lands of other nations. ⁷The works of his hands are faithful and just; all his precepts are trustworthy. ⁸They are established for ever and ever, enacted in faithfulness and uprightness. ⁹He provided redemption for his people; he ordained his covenant forever - holy and awesome is his name. ¹⁰The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; all who follow his precepts have good understanding. To him belongs eternal praise.

Let us pray:

Opening Song: His Mercy is More -

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I1GiZL60c80&ab_channel=KeithandKristynGetty

This morning, our readings come from Amos 6:1-7 and then from Luke 18:9-14:

Looking at these passages, I am reminded of a very well-known saying: Pride goes before a fall. From Proverbs 16:18 which reads fully as, ***"Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall."*** We've all used this saying at some point or have heard this saying knowing exactly what is meant by it, but what follows if the greatest lesson of all - ***"Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall. It is better to be of a lowly spirit with the poor than to share plunder with the proud."*** What we see in our readings this morning is this very principle without it being followed.

There is an attitude of grandeur, an attitude of comfort in the self by Israel in our reading from Amos, but also, in the leaders of Israel in the first century. In both cases, there is this supreme sense of arrogance thinking that they are untouchable, as if there is nothing that could touch them. The prophet Amos calling on this arrogant people to consider the kings of the surrounding nation being Assyria – he shows that this much stronger, larger, more powerful nation, had fallen from their own preserved glory. But he goes on to say that the Israelites who were living in the lap of luxury, content with their own achievements, were not exempt from falling – in fact, he tells them that they will be the first to go into exile.

Of course, this same attitude is seen in our passage from Luke. Jesus tells this parable about the Pharisee and this sinner as they come before the Lord in prayer – The Pharisee, in his prayer to the Lord, seeks one thing and one thing only – to glorify himself. This Pharisee uses 5 "I's" showing himself to have this unrealistic sense of self-worth and a false sense of confidence in his own achievements and righteousness. Instead of thanking God for what He has done, his pride moves him towards a boastful brag to God about his own sense of purity and piety. He says, ***"God, I thank you that I am not like other people - robbers, evildoers,***

adulterers - or even like this tax collector.” In this opening line of his prayer, we see nothing but pride. He shows his true character and nature, knowingly demeaning and condemning the people that he looks down on. He continues, **“I fast twice a week – way more than is what is necessary under the Law - and give a tenth of all I get – according to the Law.’**

On the opposite side of this parable is the tax collector. Clearly the tax collector has a sense of shame as he refuses to even look up to heaven. More than that, we are told that he beats his chest – a clear sign of sorrow and contrition. From his words, we can clearly see that there is no sense of pride – **“God, have mercy on me, a sinner.”** His focus is not on himself nor on anything he has done. Instead, it is on a heartfelt, sincere, and humble plea for God to show his mercy. The tax collector recognizes his need for the Lord to move in his life. He sees himself for who he truly is, a sinner.

And what is the Lord's response to these two men? Simply put, and from our passage this morning, verse 14b, **“For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted”** and it derives from that very verse from Proverbs. This may be interpreted as a sign of God's judgement. And here, I am reminded of 2 Corinthians 5:10 where Paul says, **“¹⁰ For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.”** To be made lowly, to be humbled means to be stripped of all self-importance and pride. But to be exalted is to be placed in a position of honour. From a biblical perspective, this is undeserving and cannot be earned. What God requires is a humble and contrite heart. A heart that is open to His love and His grace.

And this morning, it is my prayer, that as we focus on the Lord, we would focus on the example set by Christ Jesus, who truly humbled Himself. It is my prayer that we would approach the Lord with a new desire to serve Him faithfully as humble servants. It is my prayer, that as God moves within us, that we would truly humble ourselves, with purpose and intentionality, before Him, and accept fully, the gift that He has promised. Take heart in the truth that God is gracious and compassionate, that He loves us, and that there is a great and glorious future which awaits us.

Let us pray.

Song of praise: The Blessing -

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u9VL7AhXBKY&ab_channel=BethelMusic

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