

Finding your place

Through *Humility*

This is a lesson about

- Finding your place in God's world
- More specifically, using *humility* to find your place
- Humility is holding an *accurate* view of your standing before God

Thesis of the lesson

- **James 4** ⁴ ... Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. ⁵ Or do you suppose it is to no purpose that the Scripture says, “He yearns jealously over the spirit that he has made to dwell in us”? ⁶ But he gives more grace. Therefore it says, “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.” ⁷ Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. ... ⁹ Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. ¹⁰ Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.
- **1Peter 5** ⁵ ... Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.” ⁶ Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, ⁷ casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.

What an accurate view means

1. Every one of us has divinely supplied abilities and standing

Matthew 25 ¹⁴ “For it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted to them his property. ¹⁵ To one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability.

What an accurate view means

2. Every one of us is an *unworthy servant*

Romans 3 ¹⁹ Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. ²⁰ For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.

Luke 17 ⁷ “Will any one of you who has a servant plowing or keeping sheep say to him when he has come in from the field, ‘Come at once and recline at table’? ⁸ Will he not rather say to him, ‘Prepare supper for me, and dress properly, and serve me while I eat and drink, and afterward you will eat and drink’? ⁹ Does he thank the servant because he did what was commanded? ¹⁰ So you also, when you have done all that you were commanded, say, ‘We are unworthy servants; we have only done what was our duty.’”

What an accurate view means

3. We cannot stay in this world forever

Genesis 3 ¹⁷cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; ¹⁸thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. ¹⁹By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return.”

- The word humility is etymologically related to “humus” — the organic component of *dirt*

Actions and attitudes that are not humble

- Shrinking from the challenge that Jesus gives us
Hebrews 10 ³⁵ Therefore do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. ³⁶ For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised. ³⁷ For, “Yet a little while, and the coming one will come and will not delay; ³⁸ but my righteous one shall live by faith, and if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him.”

Actions and attitudes that are not humble

- Refusing God's blessings, or Jesus's service

John 13 ⁶ He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, do you wash my feet?" ⁷ Jesus answered him, "What I am doing you do not understand now, but afterward you will understand." ⁸ Peter said to him, "You shall never wash my feet." Jesus answered him, "If I do not wash you, you have no share with me."

Luke 22:27 Jesus: "I am among you as one who serves."

Actions and attitudes that are not humble

- Denying one's own abilities

Exodus 4 ¹⁰ But Moses said to the LORD, “Oh, my Lord, I am not eloquent, either in the past or since you have spoken to your servant, but I am slow of speech and of tongue.” ¹¹ Then the LORD said to him, “Who has made man's mouth? Who makes him mute, or deaf, or seeing, or blind? Is it not I, the LORD? ¹² Now therefore go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall speak.” ¹³ But he said, “Oh, my Lord, please send someone else.” ¹⁴ Then the anger of the LORD was kindled against Moses and he said, “Is there not Aaron, your brother, the Levite? I know that he can speak well. Behold, he is coming out to meet you ...

Actions and attitudes that are not humble

- Insecurity

Hebrews 4 ¹⁴ Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. ¹⁵ For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. ¹⁶ Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

To find your place through humility, you must

- *Become*, not just *act*
 - Humble people act humble because they are humble
 - Humble people are as humble in business, in social settings, in civic duties as they are in the church building
 - *It is not our place* to act humble only in certain circumstances

To find your place through humility, you must

- Treat others the way you want to be treated

Matthew 7 ¹² “So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.

Matthew 22 ³⁷ And he said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. ³⁸ This is the great and first commandment. ³⁹ and a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. ⁴⁰ On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.”

- *It is not our place* to regard others with contempt

To find your place through humility, you must

- Do not be deceived, and do not deceive yourself

Galatians 6 ⁷ Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. ⁸ For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption.

Philippians 2 ³ Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. ⁴ Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but to also to the interests of others.

Deceiving ourselves?

- William Meade (1789 – 1862)
 - Episcopal bishop of Virginia, noted ecclesiastic

“Suppose, for example, that you have been punished for something you did not do. Is it not possible you may have done some other bad thing which was never discovered and that Almighty God, who saw you doing it, would not let you escape without punishment one time or another? And ought you not in such a case to give glory to Him, and be thankful that He would rather punish you in this life for your wickedness than destroy your souls for it in the next life? But suppose that even this was not the case—a case hardly to be imagined—and that you have by no means, known or unknown, deserved the correction you suffered; there is this great comfort in it, that if you bear it patiently, and leave your cause in the hands of God, He will reward you for it in heaven, and the punishment you suffer unjustly here shall turn to your exceeding great glory hereafter.”
 - I must be suspicious of any policy or attitude that benefits me by disadvantaging others

To find your place through humility, you must

- Listen to others, even when you disagree with them

Romans 14 As for the one who is weak in faith, welcome him, but not to quarrel over opinions. ² One person believes he may eat anything, while the weak person eats only vegetables. ³ Let not the one who eats despise the one who abstains, and let not the one who abstains pass judgment on the one who eats, for God has welcomed him. Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another? ⁴ It is before his own master that he stands or falls ... ¹⁰ Why do you pass judgment on your brother? Or why do you despise your brother. For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God ...

- Dudley F. Malone: “I have never in my life learned anything from a man who agreed with me.”

To find your place through humility, you must

- Accept what scripture plainly states

2Peter 3 (“our beloved brother Paul”) ¹⁶ as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures.

- Albert Einstein: “Then I would have felt sorry for the dear Lord; the theory is correct.”
- *It is not our place* to decide before reading a text that it cannot mean what it plainly states, or that a doctrine that is plainly stated in numerous texts cannot be true

To find your place through humility, you must

- Reject short-term gains that detract from long-term results

Hebrews 11: ²⁴ By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, ²⁵ choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. ²⁶ He considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward.

- *It is not our place* to act for selfish short-term gain in a way that steals God's gifts from our children and grandchildren

To find your place through humility, you must

- Embrace the fact that it's about *us*, not about *me*

Romans 12 ³ For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. ⁴ For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, ⁵ so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. ⁶ Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; ⁷ if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; ⁸ the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.

- Percival Lowell, discoverer of Pluto?

To find your place through humility, you must

- Accept the grace of God through faith
- **Romans 10** ³ For, being ignorant of the righteousness of God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness. ⁴ For Christ is the end (goal) of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.
 - Those who take the law of God seriously must either accept salvation as a gift, apart from the law, or invent their own approach
 - *It is not our place* to try to add something to God's grace

The last word

Luke 22

²⁴ A dispute also arose among them, as to which of them was to be regarded as the greatest. ²⁵ And he said to them, “The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those in authority over them are called benefactors. ²⁶ But not so with you. Rather, let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as one who serves. ²⁷ For who is the greater, one who reclines at table or one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at table? But I am among you as the one who serves.