

Love & Pride

Melville Junction Church, Sermon – 04 January 2009

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- Rachel and I have been having some financial difficulty recently, and have had to cut back in many areas. We needed to make a decision on how to address this problem as we had a financial commitment this month which we just could not afford. A good friend of ours then offered to pay for this commitment which is a substantial amount of money. As **generous and freely given** as this offer was, it was **really hard for me to accept**. I knew that we needed the help but when it came, I found it difficult to accept. I would say that **9 times out of 10** I would have turned the offer down.
- I then tried to process **why it is so hard** for me to accept such a **gift (charity)**, when I would be perfectly happy to do the same for him if the situation **was reversed**.
- **I did not really like the answer** to this and have realised that we all have this problem to a **greater or a lesser** degree.
- I found that **on the surface**, my pride (which we have learnt is a good thing) prevents me from freely receiving.
- People say things like, **have you no pride man**. We have come to see that kind of **pride to be a good thing**. It shows character etc.
- But when I look at **what is actually behind** this thing that I call my pride, I find something on a **subconscious level** that is not so lekker.
- **Why is it easier to give charity than to receive it?**
- Because at the **root of our pride** is a **competitive** nature.
- In **giving**, on some level is the feeling that I am **better** off than you in this area and can thus help you.
- In **receiving**, we have to **acknowledge** that the giver has done better than us, and in this area he is better than me.
- I know that this is **not the right way to look** at it **but** if we search what it is we call our pride, you will find this **competitive thing there**.
- (C.S Lewis has shaped a lot of my thinking in this again)

- I was looking for a **specific scripture** for this sermon when I stumbled upon a familiar parable. **The sheep and the goats.**
- I was going to **go past it** because I know it and I have read a bit around it, how in Israel sheep and goats look very much alike. I saw this in **India...**
- But something **encouraged me to read it again.** This time I read **something different** in the passage. Let's read it.
- **Matt 25:31-40**

The Sheep and the Goats

³¹ "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. ³² All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. ³³ He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. ³⁴ "Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. ³⁵ For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, ³⁶ I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.' ³⁷ "Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? ³⁸ When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? ³⁹ When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?' ⁴⁰ "The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'

- What Jesus is saying is that those who **feed the hungry**, give **drink to the thirsty**, give **friendship** to the friendless, look after the **sick** and comfort the **oppressed** will receive eternal life.
- At this point a **red flag** is going up in my head, does this not contradict something that Jesus said early in Matthew.
- **Matt 7:21-23**

²¹ "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only those who do the will of my Father who is in heaven. ²² Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?' ²³ Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'

- I always took that to mean that **works of service are not enough** but **Matthew 25** is saying that it is about works.
- The issue here is in **our hearts** which is what I want to explore and have thus titled this sermon **love & pride**.
- **If we turn to Psalms 10**
- In his **pride** the wicked does not seek him; in all his thoughts there is no room for God. (vs 4)
- Proverbs 11:2 NIV
When **pride** (arrogance, pomp, swelling) comes, then comes disgrace, but with humility comes wisdom.
- Proverbs 13:10 NIV
Pride only breeds quarrels, but wisdom is found in those who take advice.
- Proverbs 16:18 NIV
Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall.
- C.S. Lewis would say that **pride is the worst of all sins**.
- Whilst all the **other sins are manipulations** on God given human instincts/nature.
- **Pride is spiritual** and comes straight from Satan.
- **Satan fell** because of his pride.
- **Pride** is the complete **anti-God state of mind**.
- **Pride** is by its very **nature competitive**, we are not proud because we have a lot of money or are good at something. We are proud because we are richer than others, better than others etc.
- **As long as someone** is richer or better than us, our pride will be in **competition** with them.

- The truth is, when we say that someone is proud today, we don't really mean it in the sense that the person has no room for God.
- I think we have been tricked into a false sense of acceptance.
- Pride has become something that we use to overcome more obvious but lesser evils like lust or ill temper as those things are beneath the person.
- But that makes Satan happy.
- C. S. Lewis says it's like being cured of a minor ailment by replacing it with cancer.
- If we look at religious, philosophical and psychological definitions of pride we see an interesting picture.
- Wikipedia
- **Judaism**, using pride in the sense of hubris or arrogance, denounces it
- **Christianity**, pride is seen as the excessive love of one's own worth usually by attempting to remove oneself from subjection to God or valid authorities.
- In **Islam**, pride is forbidden as well.
- In **Buddhism**, pride is seen as illogical as no one person or thing can be better or worse than something or someone else.
- However...
- **Aristotle** identified pride as the crown of the virtues, distinguishing it from vanity, temperance, and humility
- **Nietzsche** saw pride as an example of a previous, master set of morals that had been replaced with slave moralities. In this, pride was good, because it acknowledges the good and the noble, rejecting the weak and insipid. Without pride, Nietzsche argued, we will remain subservient.
- **Psychology**: Pride is "a pleasant, sometimes exhilarating, emotion that results from a positive self-evaluation" . The standard view of pride was that it results from satisfaction with meeting the personal goals set by oneself. Pride involves exhilarated pleasure and a feeling of accomplishment. Pride is generally associated with positive social behaviours such as helping others and outward promotion.
- It is interesting, and I believe that it has shaped the way we see pride, probably closer to being a virtue than a sin.

- What I found interesting is in my **search** of the word pride in the **bible**. The Old Testament word for pride meant **pride, arrogance or pomp**.
- But in my **NIV in the New Testament**, I found that it was not quite the same word.
- Let's look at a few examples;
- 2 Corinthians 5:12 NIV
We are not trying to commend ourselves to you again, but are giving you an opportunity to take **pride** in us, so that you can answer those who take **pride (to glory)** in what is seen rather than in what is in the heart.
- 2 Corinthians 7:4 NIV
I have great confidence in you; I take great **pride (glorying)** in you. I am greatly encouraged; in all our troubles my joy knows no bounds.
- Galatians 6:4 NIV
Each one should test his own actions. Then he can take **pride (rejoice)** in himself, without comparing himself to somebody else,
- James 1:9 NIV
The brother in humble circumstances ought to take **pride (rejoice)** in his high position.
- It seems as though something has been **lost in the translation...**
- If my **pride stops me** from **receiving charity**, then **what does it do to God** when He gives the gift of His Son freely to me. I don't deserve it, does my pride tell me that I need to work for it or earn it?
- **I think that we need to re-evaluate our pride.**
- **Realise** that it is like **cancer in our relationship to God** no matter how the **world has adopted it as a virtue**.
- If you sit here **thinking that you are not proud**, you are probably more proud than the rest of us.
- **A good test of our pride** is whether we feel in some way superior to those who don't know God.

- We say that **humility is the opposite** of pride, and **it is by definition** but I don't think that it is the **spiritual opposite**.
- **Humility is a frame of mind.**
- We often put on this **mask of humility**, to show others and God how good we are.
- But this is **actually another form of pride**.
- We **compete to be more humble** than the next person.
- It is a **front** we put on to **gain Gods favour, not a true condition of the heart**.
- **In Matt 7: 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?'**
- It seems to be the problem, people doing things in His **name not out of love** for God and man but as a **way of gaining stature and favour**.
- I believe that if we are to **counter this spiritual influence** of Satan, we need to seek the spiritual opposite.
- **I my mind that would be love.**
- Now I am not talking about **romantic love**(eros), or **affectionate love** (storge) or **friendship love** (philia)
- **I am talking about agape, charity.**
- With the other 3 loves (natural loves) **come weakness or flaws**. They are based on our **emotions** but when the emotions die, negative factors creep in. (C.S. Lewis – 4 Loves)
- **Agape is not natural**, it is a **spiritual gift** and it **requires work**.
- **Our favourite marriage verse** talks about this kind of love but **I think we mistaken it for an emotional love**. Let's read it.
- **1 Corinthians 13:4-8**

⁴Love (agape/charity) is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. ⁵It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. ⁶Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. ⁷It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. ⁸Love never fails.

- I know that I have read that passage **many times** as well.
- But the interesting thing is that I have always looked at it the **wrong way round**.
- **It would be nice** to be able to love or be loved like that.
- **But nothing about that kind of love is emotion**.

- It is about **choice, sacrifice** and **work**.
- **I used to think that if we loved, we would see these qualities**
 - **patients**
 - **kindness**
 - **humility (not proud or boasting)**
 - **hope**
 - **trust**
 - **protection**
 - **forgiveness**
 - **perseverance**
- **I don't think** that these are a **by-product of love**, I think that they are the **ingredients**.
- Our **natural emotional love** is **difficult to understand**.
- **How can we begin** to understand this God given love?
- **We can't** so I think that we **pay it lip service** but continue **to live our lives** all the same.
- **But at the same time** we have this **cancer** inside of us called pride which remains **unchecked**.
- **It has free reign** and it is the **anti-God** state of mind.
- However, **we all understand; patients, kindness, humility, hope, trust, protection, forgiveness** and **perseverance**.
- If we **look back at the parable of the goats**.
- **The sheep** (people at the right hand) said to Jesus but when did we feed you or give you a drink, when did we take you in or visit you in hospital?
- **Jesus replied**, "When you did these things to the least of my brothers and sisters.
- In John, Jesus asks Peter, **do you love me?**
- **Peter answers** of course I love you.
- Jesus says **care for my sheep, feed my sheep**.
- In another passage in John, Jesus says that whoever **obeys my commands loves me**.
- He does **not say that whoever loves me obeys** my commands.
- Jesus also says **love others as you love yourself**.

- We are **not called to fall in love with others** because we should not be in love with ourselves.
- **But we do love ourselves.** It is the **very drive** that allows us to **survive**, strive for better etc.
- **So how do we kick this year of well.**
- **We don't** look at this **overwhelming concept called love** and decide that it's **too complex or too passive** for us. No
- We **start to do this love** to the **least of** Jesus' brothers and sisters.
- So when you are stopped at a traffic light and someone asks you for money, be **patient** with them.
- When you see people who are lost in anyway (they might be the most obnoxious anti-Christian), **be kind** to them.
- When you read another shocking headline or you feel panic about our economy, continue to **have hope** for those around you. **Don't be that negative voice of doom that we love to be because it is unloving.**
- **Trust**, we have so little trust between ourselves. How much do we trust people outside of this room? We need to start trusting people even if it means that we might be seen as a fool. **Trusting comes at a cost, so we need to decide individually if we are prepared to accept that price.**
- We need to **let go of our hurts, forgive** those who have wronged us. You might say that it's easy for me to say that but I don't understand what people have done to you. The thing about **un-forgiveness** is that it **stems from pride**. We can't do it because we have pride, but **pride is a cancer**. It **will kill you**, let go of it.
- **Protect** those who can't protect themselves. **The other day I drove past a kid beating up another kid. I should have stopped and intervened but all sorts of things about "my busy life" and "my character" helped me turn a blind eye and drive on past. How loving is that?**
- **Persevere** with those who you want to give up on. We often take a chance on someone but when they let us down once we give up on them. That's not love, love is a choice, and it takes work. Choose **against your "better judgement"** to persevere with that person/s next time.

- I saved this one for last, **humility (not boasting or proud or self seeking)**. When you are confronted by the **homeless**, the **drunk**, the **obnoxious** or the **sick**. Do not assume that your **life, status or calling** is somehow **better**, more **important** or more **valuable** than theirs.
- If we find ourselves thinking like that, that **cancer called pride is eating away at us**.
- If you **learn to love**, you will become **truly humble**.
- **Not this fake humility** that we put on for others and God to see.
- **Love (agape) is the best way to counter pride**.
- **Gods best spiritual gift**.
- **We are able to change the world!**
- Every time we show love to one another, we bring **a little bit of heaven to earth**.
- **and we change it**.
- Let's pray.