

March 11, 2018

The Seven Deadly Sins
The Deadly Sin of Pride
Luke 18:9-14

Opening words: Here is a statistic you should never forget! 100% of people have sinned. That statistic did not come from the Barna Research group, or the Gallop Research group. That statistic came from the word of God, the Bible. Romans 3:23 says, "*All have sinned and have fallen short of the glory of God.*" That fact is not open for debate. Sin is real, and we are sinners. Sin is not just reserved for the bad people we see on the evening news. Sin did not just happen in another time or place. Sinners are not just found in the Bible. Sin is real, and sin is as close as your next breath. There is no way around it, you are a sinner! Here is the Good News:

Lent is a time of spiritual renewal. It is a time to rediscover the person God intended you to be from the very beginning. Lent is not just a time to identify your sins, it is a time to take steps to eliminate your sins. Never forget it, we live in the shadow of John Wesley. We are striving toward perfection. On Ash Wednesday, I began my new sermon series, *The Seven Deadly Sins*. On that night, I preached the first sermon in this series, *Taking Sin Seriously*. Since that night I have looked at the first four deadly sins, lust, greed, gluttony, and sloth. On Wednesday evening, I will look at wrath. This morning, I am going to look at pride. I have called this message *The Deadly Sin of Pride*. Our Gospel lesson is Luke 18:9-14.

Luke 18:9-14 To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everyone else, Jesus told this parable: ¹⁰ "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. ¹¹ The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other people—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. ¹² I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.'

¹³ "But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner.'

¹⁴ "I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted."

Pride has been defined as, *a feeling of great pleasure derived from one's own achievements*. Can I say something before I continue? This sermon would be easy to dismiss, but don't do it. This may be the most relevant sermon you have heard lately. The reason is painfully obvious. I believe, we live in the most arrogant time in American history. How many people do you know who have no need for God? How many people do you know who have ruled the church as irrelevant? How many people do you know who are more concerned with their own opinions than they are with God's ways?

Jesus said it best in our scripture lesson for today, *"For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted."* Our pride is killing us, so listen up. If you are ready to begin, say, **"Amen!"**

We find ourselves today in the eighteenth chapter of the Gospel of Luke. Much has already happened. Jesus is in Persia, and his end is near. His enemies are getting organized. The line has been drawn in the sand and everyone has picked a side. However, Jesus refuses to back down. As a good friend of mine often says, sometimes you must take a stand. In our scripture for today, Jesus is taking a stand and challenges the opposition. The scripture says it clearly in verse nine: There were some in the crowd who were very confident of their own righteousness, who looked down on the crowd. All these years later, the righteous still bother us, because we are one of the crowd. Jesus must have been trying to offend them, because he tells a parable with a thin veil over it. Everyone could see through it, including the righteous ones.

The parable went like this (it has a surprise ending): Two men went to the temple to pray. That was the only thing they had in common. They were at opposite ends of that society. One was a Pharisee, who was respected by the community. The other was a tax collector, who was hated by the community. The prayer of the Pharisee, the righteous one, was filled with pride. The prayer of the tax collector, the hated one, was full of humility. Even the dullest person in the crowd got the point. God hates pride, but he loves humility. That is why pride is one of the seven deadly sins. Pride has a way of poisoning the soul. What does pride produce? Pride leads us away from God. Pride damages our relationship with others. Pride alters the way we look at ourselves. In other words, you are not that great. Let me say it clearly:

God hates pride! This is not the only place where we are told God hates pride. That theme can be found throughout the Bible, in both the Old and New Testaments. How many examples do you need? Let's start with our Psalter lesson.

Psalms 10:4 In his pride the wicked man will not seek him; in all his thoughts there is no room for God.

Proverbs 8:13 To fear the Lord is to hate evil; I hate pride and arrogance, evil behavior and perverse speech.

1 Corinthians 13:4 Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud.

James 4:6 God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble.

Philippians 2:3 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or blind conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves.

I could go on, but I won't. The point is clear. God hates pride! If you are not surprised that God hates pride, then say, **"Amen!"** Now that you have accepted that divine truth, let me muddy the waters.

John C. Maxwell (born 1947) is an American author, speaker and pastor. He has written many books. His primary topic is leadership. He once said, *"There are two kinds of pride, both good and bad. 'Good pride' represents our dignity and self-respect. 'Bad pride' is the deadly sin of superiority that reeks of conceit and arrogance."* I think he is right! Let me ask you this question:

How many people do you know who have good pride? Confidence is rooted in good pride. That is not a bad thing; confidence is a good thing. How many examples do you need? If the brakes in my car are being worked on, I am looking for a mechanic who is confident he can repair my brakes. I don't want a mechanic who *hopes* he can fix my brakes. I don't want to get in an accident. When I need a new hot water heater, I want someone who is confident they can replace my hot water heater. I don't want someone who *hopes* he can replace my hot water heater. If he doesn't do a good job, my basement could flood. You do not want a preacher who lacks confidence. You want a preacher who believes he can do the job. You are paying me to prepare you for eternity. It is true of every occupation.

Several years ago, I went to the hospital to visit someone who was having surgery the next day. Before we prayed, I asked about the operation and the recovery period. I asked about the surgeon. The woman told me that the surgeon seemed very confident. Her husband said in a loud voice, "The guy is an arrogant jerk. I wanted to punch him in the nose." The woman who was having the surgery said, "I'm not hiring him to be my best friend. I am paying him to operate on me. He'd better be confident." Good pride produces confidence. How many people do you know who have good pride?

How many people do you know who have bad pride? In other words, how many arrogant people do you know? You must know someone. We have looked at this list in the past. I found it online, so I know it is true 😊. It came from a website called "Top Tens." According to them, these are the five most arrogant celebrities. Let me give them to you in reverse order.

5. Charlie Sheen
4. Alec Baldwin
3. Lindsay Lohan
2. Kim Kardashian
1. Kanye West

I was surprised Justin Bieber wasn't on the list. He came in at number eleven. However, he was number one on the list of annoying celebrities. (It pains me to say it, but John Wayne, "The Duke," is number six.) Then, I asked the internet highway another question:

Which are the most arrogant countries in the world? Once again, I will give them to you in reverse order:

5. Italy
4. China

3. Russia
2. India
1. United States

Ok, I will tell you. Germany was number six, and North Korea is number seven. Just think about that for a moment. Kanye West and the United States of America have this sad thing in common. We are both viewed by the world as the most arrogant. We are the Kanye West of the world. Could it be our national pride has turned into our national arrogance? Webster defines arrogance as "*offensive displays of superiority*". If you are a little uncomfortable with our international ranking, say, "**Amen!**" In the scripture lesson for today, Jesus is warning us to extract our bad pride. The righteous one in the parable was arrogant. In other words, he had bad pride. That thought leads me to a question you must answer.

How arrogant are you? I think you know the answer, but the people at Crosswalk tried to help people answer it in an article they wrote in October of 2017. They say there are seven symptoms of bad pride, or arrogance. This is their list:

1. **Fear** - Pride is at the root of fear and anxiety, when we refuse to humbly rest in God's sovereign care. (Matthew 14:21)
 2. **Entitlement** - Self-sacrifice stems from a humble heart. Entitlement is rooted in a prideful heart. (Romans 3:23)
 3. **Ingratitude** - Our proud hearts say we are good, that we should get what *we* want, and if we don't, we're justified in our ingratitude. (Deuteronomy 2:7)
 4. **People-pleasing** - Pride is self-worship and self-preservation at all costs—and people-pleasing is the direct result of pride. (Galatians 1:10)
 5. **Prayerlessness** - Pride deceives us into thinking we can "do life" on our own—that we're capable, independent, unstoppable, and self-reliant. (Jonah 1)
 6. **Hypocrisy** - When you're proud, you elevate your status, forgetting the mercy God has shown you. You think you're better and holier than everyone else, and you easily find fault with others. Pride produces a hypocritical spirit. (Matthew 23:27)
- Rebellion** - Rebellion against God manifests itself in resistance toward the Word and the spiritual leaders he has placed in our lives. It is the reflex of a prideful heart. (Genesis 3)

So how did you do? I hate that list of seven things, because several things on that list resonate with me. How many of those seven resonate with you? This is the bad news for today: God hates pride, and pride is one of the seven deadly sins. Lent is a time not just to identify your sins, it is a time to take steps to eliminate your sins. If that makes you think, say, "**Amen!**" Let me end with this story:

During the Battle of the Wilderness in the Civil War (May 5-7, 1864), Union General John Sedgwick (1813-1864) was inspecting his troops. At one point, he came to a parapet, over which he gazed out in the direction of the enemy. His officers suggested that this was unwise and perhaps he ought to duck while passing the parapet. "Nonsense," snapped the general. "They couldn't hit an elephant at this distance." A moment later, Sedgwick fell to the ground, fatally wounded. He died two days later, May 9, 1864. He was killed by the enemy's bullet, but he was also killed by his own pride. Let me say this clearly:

Spiritually, our pride is killing us. Pride is running unchecked in our society and it is poisoning our very souls. That explains a great deal that is happening in America, but you are different. Because, you are a disciple of Jesus Christ. The time has come for us to humble ourselves before God, who hates pride. Do you remember the definition of pride? It is, *a feeling of great pleasure derived from one's own achievements*. Jesus said it best, *"For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted."* Pride is one of the seven deadly sins. This is Lent, a time to repent. And, all of God's prideful people said, **"Amen!"**