

Week Seven: Walk Humbly With God

Sunday, May 13, 2018

by: Rev. Roger Lenander

One evening at conversation at work with my assistant manager he shared he was once active in a congregation. He was deeply satisfied in serving God through the work in his church. Until he was not satisfied. It had nothing to do with the work. It was the amount of demands as a volunteer that had led to burnout. The only solution he knew was to quit. Quit volunteering. Quit worship. Quit the church.

I have remembered that conversation through my walk with God. As a pastor I have kept that conversation as a guideline with the people I serve. What I have learned is that the greatness of serving Christ in the world is balanced with our walking in humility with God. When the apostle Paul tells us, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me," it was with the humility that even as God expands our openness to God's power in and through me, I must also walk in the humble understanding that I am not called to do all things.

As Jesus commanded his disciples to serve others as he had served them it was the attitude that preceded activity. To serve with the power of Christ is serving humbly, on our knees, not for fame and acclaim, but for the need of the people in the present. Second, it was to serve with the freedom that God would take our effort and integrate it into the mission of God to restore all people into a relationship with God.

At First Lutheran I have made it a practice for people who volunteer to understand the "escape clause" we have for the volunteer. First, you can opt in or out at any time. Second, consider the place of your passion, spiritual gift, and personality in the manner you involve yourself as a volunteer. Third, understand that God needs you as a participant as a member of the Body of Christ. When a stroke victim shares what part of their body is not involved with the rest of their body it makes a difference. When I use burnout as a rationalization for disengaging from the Body of Christ in worship and fellowship I have an impact on the rest of the Body. So, I ask God for power and strength to remain present in the life of the congregation as we serve Christ together. Brothers and sisters, walk humbly WITH God. Let God guide you in your life and service that directs your gifts and skills in a way that offers glory to God and builds up the body of Christ.

Jesus, allow us to be open to your serving power in our lives that it will strengthen and restore us for service to God and one another. Amen.

Monday, May 14, 2018

by: Misty Coyle

¹⁶You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you.

John 15:16 (NIV)

The other day, I read a devotion about Rabbi training, the Jewish custom of discipleship. After four rounds of education, the absolute best in class would be chosen to be a Rabbi's disciple. The disciple followed the Rabbi everywhere, not just learning but becoming his teachings and ways. The Rabbi would say a blessing to the disciple: "May you be covered in the dust of your Rabbi." The blessing would set a picture of their practical and spiritual journey. The disciple closely followed the Rabbi

everywhere and would be covered in his dust and his anointing. This image is of the disciple not only learning the ways of the Rabbi but becoming the way of the Rabbi with the literal dust and oil on his being.

However, through Jesus, ANYONE can follow God without the education and ceremony. There is no set of rules stating someone must be well educated to become elite and worthy to follow Christ. As stated in the above bible verse: *"You didn't choose me, I chose you..."* ALL are invited to be disciples of God. Anyone can walk in his ways.

When we follow God, that's what we're doing, following. We're not leaping out in front of God declaring we know better and can see more clearly. That kind of pride will make us blind and trip us up every time. It reminds me of when my mom and dad would always say, "If you want to make God laugh, make plans or tell him what **you** want." We do not lose our individuality or initiative by following God. God leads us and guides us to and through our purposes. Following him does not diminish us, it enhances us. In turn, his light within us grows. A divine relationship between creator and created.

But do not mistake humility as a loss of strength. Humility is a type of strength to make room for wisdom to grow. Humility helps us stand boldly and confidently after we have fallen and asked for a hand up. Humility opens us up to others, heightening our awareness of those around us. It is okay to need and to be needed - God created us for relationship. These relationships then build a community to help us stay strong with each other and closer to God.

Instead of a prayer, I would like to give a blessing: Walk humbly with God. Walk close enough so his dust, his ways, truth, love and grace cover you from head to toe. Let us together do justly, love mercy, walk humbly with our God.

Tuesday, May 15, 2018

by: Juel Pierce

All of you must clothe yourselves with humility in your dealings with one another, for

***"God opposes the proud,
but gives grace to the humble."***

Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, so that he may exalt you in due time.

Cast all your anxiety on him, because he cares for you. 1 Peter 5:5b-7

I remember when I started work as a chaplain at the hospital, I was, on the one hand, sure I knew what I was doing; and on the other hand, terrified that I would do things wrong. The result was that I often did not know what I was doing, but in a way I didn't understand, God worked through me in ways that I actually helped people.

It took me a long time to get over my focus on myself. I had a lot to learn! It was a slow process, but by the grace of God and my colleagues and all the people I worked with, I learned that learning is not an achievement, but it's a lifelong journey. When I was able to stop thinking so much about myself (which is really a prideful thing, isn't it?) and focus instead on the people God and my work were calling me to help, I slowly became a skilled chaplain. I also had a lot more fun doing what I was doing, because I was a lot less anxious about how I would appear and trusted a lot more that God was with me and cared for me as well as the people I was working with.

There are a lot of ways of acting proud. I think for me, in my anxiety, pride was not thinking that I was better than everyone else, but instead was lacking trust that God would use me and who I am and instead worrying about how I was doing. Others are certain, without any real evidence, that they are the best at what they do and should not have to listen to anyone else or take anyone else's opinions into their judgment.

God calls us instead to let go of our pride, whatever form it takes, and live in the grace that God gives us, and walk humbly with God, following in Jesus' footsteps.

Loving and gracious God, may we learn true humility and let your grace alone exalt us. AMEN.

Wednesday, May 16, 2018

by: Jim Pierce

*One of the scribes came near . . . and asked [Jesus], 'Which commandment is the first of all? Jesus answered, The first is, 'Hear O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.' **The second is this, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'** There is no other commandment greater than these."* (Mark 12: 28—30, NRSV, emphasis added)

*God has told you, O mortal, what is good; and **what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?*** (Micah 6: 8, NRSV, emphasis added)

"Walk humbly with your God." Where else could Micah end after instructing us that the Lord requires—not hopes, not suggests, but requires—that we do justice and love kindness! Nowhere else I can think of, not when I reflect on how often I fail at these things and cry out with the apostle Paul:

"I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very things I hate. . . . I can will what is right but I cannot do it. . . . [I am] captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. Wretched being that I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?" (Romans 7: 15,18b, 23b, 24, NRSV)

I am humbled, over and over again, when I consider my failings and confess to God the ways in which I do not treat others fairly and work for their good; the ways in which I do not at all walk in kindness toward others. Sometimes I do what God requires, but sometimes I don't.

My failure humbles me. But something else humbles me as well, the fact that where I fail, God succeeds over and over again. God forgives. God heals. God's justice makes me whole. Why? Because of God's loving kindness toward me. I am humbled knowing this is God's gift not just to me but to all those to whom I fail to bear God's grace.

To walk humbly with God is to walk knowing we do not deserve to walk with God at all, but that undeserving as we are, still God invites us. Still God holds out a hand and says "Come, join me, walk with me today." Today. Giving thanks for God's grace, walk humbly with God today.

Gracious God, I am humbled over and over when I experience your steadfast love. Help a little of that love spill over and out through me today as I walk humbly where you lead me. Amen.

Thursday, May 17, 2018

by: Phil Hornbostel

Now as an elder myself and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as one who shares in the glory to be revealed, I exhort the elders among you to tend the flock of God that is in your charge, exercising the oversight, not under compulsion but willingly, as God would have you do it--not for sordid gain but eagerly. Do not lord it over those in your charge, but be examples to the flock. And when the chief shepherd appears, you will win the crown of glory that never fades away. In the same way, you who are younger must accept the authority of the elders. And all of you must clothe yourselves with humility in your dealings with one another, for

“God opposes the proud
But gives grace to the humble”.

Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, so that he may exalt you in due time.

I Peter 5: 1-6.

I must confess in this meditation, that this is one of my most favorite images: walking humbly with God. With no sense of pride or devotion, I simply have always been comfortable in the role of the small child walking with my small hand in the hand of God. And far from “lording it over” anyone in my family, my congregation, my community or my country, I still look at my life through the eyes of childhood.

I’m not sure why that should be so. I certainly grew up with little resources other than a stable family (which I have since learned was truly a great and perhaps too rare a gift!), and therefore I never had much practice in this “lording” business. In college and professional schools, I was never among the top students in the class and had nothing there to hold over my classmates. During medical school I worked as one of the lowest of the low in a hospital, transporting patients to and from x-ray department as an orderly.

Furthermore, I was far from being the nicest kid in the family, or the nicest boy in the church, or in the neighborhood. I was pretty rough, and ditched church every chance I got. After high school, it would be over nine years before I set foot in a church building again. And for those who might say, “but I’m sure your parents were proudest of you”, well, my oldest brother is a pastor, so I was considered the “lapsed” member of the family. But it never upset or bothered me. I found early on that I truly relished that role of holding the hand of God and walking on this long journey through my life and relationship with God. Sometimes I strayed from His side, but He was always there to tighten that grip and pull me out of the gutters of life and back onto the path once again. It is extremely reassuring to read the words of the apostle in this Easter season: “God . . . gives grace to the humble”. Indeed.

After I have suffered for a little while, God of grace, who has called me to your eternal glory in Christ, please restore, support, strengthen and establish me, and to You be the power forever and ever.

Amen (with credit for the prayer to I Peter 5: 10-11)

Friday, May 18, 2018

by: Jeff Langdon

Walking is something I have always enjoyed. When I was in high school in Omaha, we literally lived on the other side of the railroad tracks from the largest and more wealthy part of our school district (ok, not railroad tracks but Dodge Street). We were about 4 miles from school...and I was way too proud and thought myself way too cool to get a school bus pass. So while my father dropped me off at school, it was up to my own ingenuity to get home, asking for rides, waiting for others... but often

walking home, be it warm, cold, rainy or dark. I really did enjoy the walk. It was a time of quite, before iPods or Sony Walkmans. A time to walk and talk.....

Micah was a prophet during the reign of King Ahaz. Worship of idols was widespread and widely practiced in the Southern Kingdom. Ahaz even required the priests of Yahweh to also offer sacrifices to those false gods. Micah proclaimed deliverance to the people who would go into captivity in Babylon. Micah proclaimed that the one true God did not require rivers of oil, burnt offerings or the sacrifices of their first born for the sins they had committed... what God desired was a people who did justice and who loved kindness and who walked humbly with their God. (Micah 6:8).

Micah was telling them what Moses had spoken to the people of Israel as they walked to the Promised Land. In Deuteronomy 10:12, Moses tells the people that God's wants people to live in a manner that represents God, to love God, to serve God, and to treat God with reverence and awe.

When Micah spoke for God during his time, the people of God had forgotten what Moses spoke of. They had walked away from God. Micah called them back and reminded them what God desires from God's own.

By walking with God, following closely in love and awe of God, and because we are called to be God's own, I believe that God is desiring that some of the characteristics of God's own self would become part of our own lives. God is righteous and just... Micah reminds us that God desires us to be righteous and just.

Micah reminded the people and reminds us today... to walk humbly with God... living lives of humility to God and worshiping God as our Lord. One step in that walk is to acknowledge that God is God of all of your life. Not just the Sunday worshiping you, but the working you, the playing you, the "I'm too tired" you, the selfish you, the giving you...you get the picture... all of you!

Walking implies movement. You are either moving away or moving towards something. My relationship with God is a journey. It is on those walks home from school that I began to have real conversations with God.... remember your own teenage years of angst. My journey is not done yet. My walk continues. I am confident though that as I continue my journey, God walks with me. That is the promise I was given in baptism, and that is a promise you have been given, I simply need to remember to walk humbly with the one who first chose to walk with me.

Lord you chose me to be your own. Remind me of the joy I have in the walk we take together. Keep me close to your side. Protect me from all harm. Remind me to be humble in my walk, seeking ways to do justice and show mercy and kindness to all. Remind me daily that I live and walk in grace, not because of what I do or don't do, but because of Jesus. Amen.

Saturday, May 19, 2018

by: Rev. Roger Lenander

I am in the lookout in my bible reading for the people God used in ways that brought perhaps a one-time mention by name, or no name at all. In Genesis 2, Abel is murdered by his brother Cain. That is mostly what we know about Abel. Except that Abel loved God freely with joy, and he loved his life and work. That was also the reason given on why Cain killed Abel. Jealousy and resentment killed that which God had created to offer joy to God and the world.

I think of all who walk humbly with God and the temptation for some to make little of their faith and life. The voice and actions of the destroyer is often remembered more than the humble and faithful

walk of the believer in the mercy and grace of God. But you know the truth? God loves the one who lives in the joy of the Creator. Abel is noticed by those who walk humbly with God because we are his brother and sister. So, I want to ask you this one question, "Are you Abel?"

God, we thank you for the life we have in you. Lift us each day to live in the joy of the Lord. Amen.