

IT Matters – Humility

5/31/26

2 Samuel 19:31-40

Sunday AM

There's an old joke about a church that gave a man a medal for his humility – then took it away the next week b/c he wore it to church.

This captures the problem perfectly. The moment we start admiring our humility, we've probably lost it. Humility is that one virtue that's almost impossible to celebrate in ourselves w/out damaging it. It's like saying – *I've finally conquered pride* – which of course proves we haven't.

If your child asks what humility is and your answer is – you're looking at it – then you don't have it.

If you think *it's hard to be humble when you're as good as I am* – then you don't have humility.

C.S. Lewis penned – *Humility isn't thinking less of yourself, but thinking of yourself less.*

For by the grace given me I say to you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself w/ sober judgment, in accordance w/ the faith God has distributed to each of you. 12:3

IOW – humility isn't humiliation, low self-esteem, insecurity, or weakness – or thinking – I'm nothing. Instead, it's thinking – I'm not everything.

For our purposes today – **humility** is seeing ourselves accurately before God – neither exaggerating our importance nor denying our value – and living w/ a correct awareness of our gifts, strengths, limitations, and abilities, so that we can serve, submit, and relate to others freely, w/out arrogance, insecurity, or the need for recognition or control.

This brings us to a man named Barzillai the Gileadite. Barzillai was an elderly, wealthy, generous supporter of King David during Absalom's rebellion. When David and his followers were hungry, weary, and thirsty in the wilderness, Barzillai helped sustain them w/ supplies. Yet this was no small act. David's future was uncertain, and Absalom appeared to have the upper hand. So Barzillai's generosity wasn't self-advancement; it was loyalty and faith done in humility.

Then, after Absalom's defeat, David invited Barzillai to come live at the royal court in Jerusalem, but Barzillai humbly declined. He recognized his age, limitations, and contentment. So, instead of going, he asked if Chimham his servant could go in his place and receive the king's favor.

Point – Barzillai didn't step into the story to announce his humility. He acted humbly. He gave. He served. He released. He blessed Chimham – then went home.

Teaching us that humility isn't something we announce; it's something others experience thru us.

This is the kind of humility we see in Barzillai. He isn't one of the famous names of Scripture. He didn't lead armies, write psalms, or sit on a throne. He appears quietly in the story of David, serves faithfully in a crisis, refuses the spotlight when offered honor, and then returns home.

Barzillai teaches us that humility isn't thinking lowly of ourselves but thinking rightly of ourselves before God. It's being secure enough in God's love that we don't have to strive, promote, grasp, or prove.

So, today, from Barzillai's life, I want us to learn (5) lessons about humility.

I Humility SERVES w/out Needing Recognition

TBS – King David was in one of the lowest – moments of his life. His son Absalom had betrayed him, stolen the hearts of the people, and forced him to flee Jerusalem. The king who once defeated Goliath was now barefoot, grieving, humiliated, and on the run.

Then, in 2 Samuel 17, (3) men, including Barzillai, came to David bringing much needed food and supplies. Yet they didn't come w/ speeches, or conditions, or to be seen and recognized. They came b/c the king and his people were in need.

Simply put – Barzillai saw a need and met it – and this is where humility begins. *Putting others before self.*
SEE – humility doesn't wait for a stage or applause before it serves. Instead, it sees the weary, the wounded, and the vulnerable, and says – *I can help!*

This confronts us b/c we live in an age where almost everything is measured by visibility. If it's not posted, shared, liked, noticed, or applauded, we begin to wonder if it mattered. But in the kingdom of God, the unseen place is often the holiest place.

Think about Matthew 6:3 – *When you give, don't let your left hand know what your right hand is doing.*

This doesn't mean we should never be recognized. It means recognition must never be the reason we serve.

Barzillai reminds us that some of the most Christlike things we will ever do may happen quietly – *a meal delivered, a check written, a visit made, a prayer offered, a burden carried, a kindness shared, a person strengthened.* No spotlight. No announcement. No applause. Just humility. And heaven sees.

II Humility doesn't GRASP for Privilege

This is to say that a humble person receives honor graciously and releases it freely.

John Wooden once said – *Talent is God-given; be humble. Fame is man-given; be grateful. Conceit is self-given; be careful.*

After Absalom's rebellion was defeated, David began his journey back to Jerusalem and Barzillai came down to escort him across the Jordan. David, moved by his loyalty, said in essence – *Come w/ me to Jerusalem, and I will care for you at my table.*

This was no small offer. To eat at the king's table was a place of favor, security, honor, and privilege. Since Barzillai had served David well, David wanted to bless him in return. But he declined. Instead, he said:

How many years do I still have to live that I should go up w/ the king to Jerusalem? I am today 80 yrs old. Can I discern what's pleasant and what is not? Can your servant taste what he eats or what he drinks? Can I still listen to the voice of singing men and women? Why then should your servant be an added burden to my lord the king? 2 Samuel 19:34–35

This shouldn't be construed as false humility that says – *Oh no, not me* – while secretly hoping someone says – *Yes, you* – False humility is when a person appears humble outwardly but is wanting attention inwardly.

False humility is nothing more than pride wearing humble clothing.

Barzillai wasn't playing that game. He was settled. He knew the difference b/w blessing and burden, b/w honor and entitlement. He knew that just b/c something was available didn't mean it was assigned.

This is humility and spiritual maturity all in one b/c true humility can receive honor w/out being corrupted by it – and it can release honor w/out being resentful.

Sometimes we're willing to serve sacrificially, but we struggle when the reward comes. We begin to think – *I've earned this. I deserve this. This belongs to me.*

Barzillai teaches us another way. He didn't turn his service into leverage, or use his generosity as a ladder to status. He didn't say – *After all I've done for David, it's about time I got my place at the table.*

Instead, he held honor w/ open hands b/c true humility holds open hands. It gives w/out grasping, releases w/out regret, and trusts God to measure out the reward.

There are times when God gives us titles, influence, opportunity, and recognition. And when He does – receive it w/ gratitude. There are also seasons when God asks us to release those same things. Release them w/ humility saying – *God is enough. I don't have to hold tightly to what He hasn't asked me to carry.*

III Humility ACCEPTS Personal Limitations

Barzillai was 80 yrs old. He knew his season. He knew his body. He knew his limitations. So, he told David – thanks but no thanks – *I can't enjoy the pleasures of the palace the way a younger man could. Why should I become a burden to you?*

This is a rare kind of honesty. Yet, Barzillai wasn't bitter about his age or pretending to be in a season he'd already passed. B/c he wasn't clinging to yesterday's role or trying to prove that he still belonged in the room. **He was content.**

DYK – contentment is the soil where settled humility grows. A discontented heart can't stay humble for long b/c discontentment keeps whispering – you need more. You deserve more. You're being forgotten, overlooked, and outpaced.

Contentment says – God has been faithful. He knows my name. He knows my season. He knows my place.

TBS – Barzillai wasn't insecure or diminished by his limitations. He was free b/c he knew who he was before God. Reminding us that humility doesn't deny reality. It tells the truth peacefully.

Can I be honest – some of us need the humility to say – I can't do everything. Or – I can't do this any longer. My season has changed. This is no longer my calling.

This isn't failure – it's wisdom. Maturity. Humility.

Story of when I dove for a ball at Camden's practice and bounced – my days of playing baseball were over.

Listen – pride refuses limitations. Humility receives them as part of God's care.

Barzillai didn't finish poorly b/c he accepted his limitations. He finished well b/c he accepted them w/out becoming bitterness.

IV Humility ADVANCES the Next Generation

Barzillai didn't merely decline David's offer. He redirected it. He said, "Here is your servant Chimham. Let him go over w/ my lord the king, and do for him whatever seems good to you."

This may be the most beautiful moment in Barzillai's story. He could've taken the honor for himself. He could've enjoyed one final moment in the royal court. Instead, he used his opportunity to bless someone else.

Humility makes room. Pride asks – *how can I preserve my place?* Humility asks – *whom can I help prepare next?* Pride resents successors. Humility says – *look what God has done.* Pride says – *look what I've done.*

Listen – you know you're walking in humility when you can cheer for the person who replaces you. This isn't easy, but it's kingdom leadership.

This is generational humility. We're not owners of the mission. We're stewards of it. And the job is to pass the baton on so that the Gospel advances.

Parents must make room for children to follow Jesus beyond them. Pastors must make room for younger leaders. Teachers must make room for students to surpass them. Churches must make room for the next generation to carry the gospel forward. Older saints must not only hold the faith; they must hand it off.

Barzillai understood something we must recover: legacy is greater than limelight. He wasn't trying to be the final name in the story. He was trying to help the story continue. And isn't this the heart of humility?

V Humility **LEAVES** a Legacy of Faithfulness

After Barzillai blessed David and sent Chimham w/ him, Scripture says – *then the king kissed Barzillai and blessed him, and he returned to his own home.* v. 19

That's it. No grand exit. No speech. No monument. No final chapter devoted to his greatness. He went home.

But his story didn't end there. Years later, when David was preparing Solomon to reign, David remembered Barzillai. In 1 Kings 2:7, he told Solomon – *Deal loyally w/ the sons of Barzillai the Gileadite, and let them be among those who eat at your table, for w/ such loyalty they met me when I fled from Absalom.*

Point – Barzillai didn't seek a legacy, yet he left one. This is how humility works. Humility doesn't chase remembrance. It trusts God w/ remembrance.

The world may forget the humble, but God never will not. The applause of people might fade quickly, but the approval of heaven endures forever.

Jesus said, "The greatest among you shall be your servant. Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted."

Barzillai was exalted not b/c he pushed himself forward, but b/c he bowed low in faithfulness. ***And this is the way of Jesus.***

Philippians 2:6 says Jesus, *though He was in the form of God, didn't count equality w/ God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant. He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. And then God highly exalted Him.*

But notice verse 5 – *have this same attitude in you which was also in Christ Jesus.*

The path of Jesus is downward before it is upward. The towel comes before the throne. The cross comes before the crown. And service comes before exaltation.

Point – when we choose humility, we’re not choosing obscurity. We’re choosing Christlikeness – and being Jesus to others is never wasted. Teaching us that we may not be remembered by history, but we will be remembered by heaven – and that should be enough.

As I was writing this chapter, I stumbled across what I thought was an interesting story about the La Sagrada Família in Barcelona, Spain. The La Sagrada is a massive Catholic basilica that began construction in 1882 and is still moving toward completion 140 yrs later. Generations of workers have given themselves to a cathedral they would never see completed. Many of the workers names have long been forgotten. Yet their labor is part of something beautiful, enduring, and worshipful. This is humility made visible.

May the same be said of us. Not that we were seen, or celebrated. Not that we were impressive or imbued w/ power or influence – but that we’re humbly faithful.

Most of us won’t see the full impact of our trust in God. We won’t know every person whose lives have been helped by our generosity, prayers, and sacrifice for Jesus. But God does. He sees and He knows.

Humility isn’t weakness – its strength surrendered.

Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.
Philippians 2:3