

# Sermon

## Oh Lord, it's Hard to be Humble - When You're Perfect in Every Way!

A Sermon for Cary Presbyterian Church

Sunday, October 23, 2022

20<sup>th</sup> Sunday After Pentecost

*Psa. 65:0 To the leader. A Psalm of David. A Song.*

- 1 Praise is due to you,  
O God, in Zion;  
and to you shall vows be performed,
- 2 O you who answer prayer!  
To you all flesh shall come.
- 3 When deeds of iniquity overwhelm us,  
you forgive our transgressions.
- 4 Happy are those whom you choose and bring near  
to live in your courts.  
We shall be satisfied with the goodness of your house,  
your holy temple.

*Psa. 65:5 By awesome deeds you answer us with deliverance,  
O God of our salvation;  
you are the hope of all the ends of the earth  
and of the farthest seas.*

- 6 By your strength you established the mountains;  
you are girded with might.
- 7 You silence the roaring of the seas,  
the roaring of their waves,  
the tumult of the peoples.
- 8 Those who live at earth's farthest bounds are awed by your signs;  
you make the gateways of the morning and the evening shout for joy.

*Psa. 65:9 You visit the earth and water it,  
you greatly enrich it;  
the river of God is full of water;  
you provide the people with grain,  
for so you have prepared it.*

- 10 You water its furrows abundantly,

- settling its ridges,  
softening it with showers,  
and blessing its growth.*
- 11 *You crown the year with your bounty;  
your wagon tracks overflow with richness.*
- 12 *The pastures of the wilderness overflow,  
the hills gird themselves with joy,*
- 13 *the meadows clothe themselves with flocks,  
the valleys deck themselves with grain,  
they shout and sing together for joy.*

*Luke 18:9 He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and regarded others with contempt: 10 “Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. 11 The Pharisee, standing by himself, was praying thus, ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other people: thieves, rogues, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. 12 I fast twice a week; I give a tenth of all my income.’ 13 But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even look up to heaven, but was beating his breast and saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, a sinner!’ 14 I tell you, this man went down to his home justified rather than the other; for all who exalt themselves will be humbled, but all who humble themselves will be exalted.”*

**I. We might want to get the sermon title out of the way right here at the start**

**I assume you all know the Mac Davis classic . . . feel free to sing along -**

*Oh Lord its hard to be humble — when you’re perfect in every way  
I can’t wait to look in the mirror - cause ZI get better lookin’ each day.  
To know me is to love me - well I’m really one heck of a man! Oh  
Lord, its hard to be humble but I’m doing the best that I can!*

**A. Some of you know that in my prayer life right now I am praying each day about one of the seven deadly sins and the countervailing heavenly virtue.**

- B. Sundays, as it turns out are the day when I pray about the sin of excessive pride (hubris) and the virtue meant to overcome pride — Humility.**
- C. So today’s passage from Luke is well-timed.**
- D. I imagine not just well-timed for me . . . but for our world.**

**II. It is not hard to see the insidious effect of arrogance and hubris in our world now**

- A. At the heart of much of our current ideological division is the assumption that I and those who agree with me are both right and righteous and that those who disagree with me are both wrong and sinful.**
- B. Let me be clear — I am *not* suggesting that all opinions are equally worthy of merit and all perceptions of reality comport equally with the facts.**

*F-3.0104 Truth and Goodness*

*That truth is in order to goodness; and the great touchstone of truth, its tendency to promote holiness, according to our Savior’s rule, “By their fruits ye shall know them.” And that no opinion can either be more pernicious or more absurd than that which brings truth and falsehood upon a level, and represents it as of no consequence what a man’s opinions are. On the contrary, we are persuaded that there is an inseparable connection between faith and practice, truth and duty. Otherwise it would be of no consequence ei- ther to discover truth or to embrace it.*

*F-3.0105 Mutual Forbearance*

*That, while under the conviction of the above principle we think .... that there are truths and forms with respect to which [people] of good characters and principles may differ. And in all these we think it the duty both of private Christians and societies to exercise mutual forbearance toward each other.*

**C. What is lacking in our current world is not a commitment to know and follow in truth — what is lacking is having enough humility to acknowledge that there are truths about which good people of good moral character may differ — which would lead us to practice “mutual forbearance.”**

### **III. Thinking about the Desert Mothers and Fathers 4<sup>th</sup> C.**

**A. I was stunned by a description given of the early devout Christians who made their homes in the isolation and hardships of the deserts of North Africa.**

“...the monks, while living on earth, are true servants of God and citizens of heaven . . . the people depend on the prayers of these monks as if on God himself . . . and it is clear to all that it is through these monks that the world is kept in being, and that through them (the monks) human life too is preserved and honored by God.”

*Historia Monachorum*

**B. That is a stunning amount of confidence and reverence which those who visited lay upon these early pillars of our faith!**

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**C. But there is something else which impressed me even more! When you ask, “Well, how did these**

**early saints of the church think of themselves?”**

They would have said they were small, unimportant, sinful women and men.

They would have said they had all they could manage to keep their own life before God in order.

1. **St. Anthony (The father of monks) even declares that “it belongs to the great work of a person to struggle with temptations to their last hour.”**
- D. **You see the enormous disparity — others who encountered them saw in them pillars of faith whose**
  1. **devotion to God and to the**
  2. **work of praying for a world which could not or would not pray for itself**
  3. **Keeps the world knit together....**
- E. **Their very humble and simple self-understanding.**
  1. **Just simple sinners trying to learn to trust in God and live in obedience — *and trusting that their life and salvation depend not on their righteousness - but on God’s grace.***

**IV. Jesus gives us a powerful example of the opposite of those abbas and ammas from the early church.**

- A. **Two men of prayer — so far so good — BUT**
  1. **One “trusted in himself that they were righteous,”**

- 2. The other, so aware of his sin that he cannot even look to heaven, but rather prays while pounding his chest and begin forgiveness.**
- B. The first consumed with the practice of comparison**
- C. The other preoccupied with his own need of grace**

*"How can you be humble if you are always paying attention to yourself? . . . if you were truly humble you would not bother about yourself at all. Why should you? ... A humble man can do great things with an uncommon perfection because he is no longer concerned about incidentals, like his own interests and his own reputation, and thereafter he no longer needs to waste his efforts defending them". p.189-190 New Seeds of Contemplation*

- D. The first judges others giving thanks he is not like them...**
- E. The second seems oblivious to the relative goodness or badness of others...**

*A brother asked an elder: "How does reverence before God get into a person?" The elder said: "When a person lives in humility and simplicity, and refuses to judge others - that is how reverence of God gets into them."*

**V. In a few minutes we will receive new members by transfer of letter.**

**A. They have been faithful members of churches before coming to CPC and now wish to serve faithfully here.**

**B. Though we receive them by transfer I will ask all of the baptized present today to reaffirm the vows taken at our baptism.**

**C. “Will you be Christ faithful disciple - obeying his word and showing his love?” I will with God’s help.”**

**D. Friends, let us in humility aspire to be “perfect” disciples — not trusting in our own righteousness — but *with God’s help*.**