

# Lent- Humility

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A Short Devotional for the Lenten Season

Days 22-28

Lent 2021

# Humility

Lent 2021- Day 22

***29Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. Matthew 11:29 (ESV)***



High fructose corn syrup or (HFCS) is one of the sweetest substances on earth. It does not occur naturally because it is refined from corn sugar and is upwards of three hundred times the sweetness of natural sugar. Patented by Richard Marshall in 1960, HFCS paved the way for sweet cereals such as Corn Pops and Frosted Flakes. Coca-cola uses HFCS, and now, due to social pressure, some foods will advertise they are “HFCS free.”

Since high fructose corn syrup does not exist in nature, it can only be learned by taking on Marshall’s process. Similarly, for our soul, humility does not naturally exist. Though we might seek humility in certain areas, it seems to pop up in other parts of our thought processes or even internal thoughts.

For me, humility is a difficult thing. I want to be right. I want to persuade other people to my point of view. And in personal accomplishments, I would like to think I can apply myself to most things, given enough time and perseverance. However, Christ invites us to a different way.

He invites us to learn his humility. This might arrive in the form of unwelcome news or a job review. It might arrive by way of criticism or something we see on social media. Nevertheless, it arrives.

This season, invite Christ’s humility. Invite times where we see ourselves a little more honestly. Welcome moments of encountering our limitations, lack of strength, or need for perspective. Learn from Him- he is gentle and lowly. And somehow find rest for your soul.

# Humility

Lent - Day 23

*<sup>11</sup>But Moses said to God, “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?” Exodus 3:11 (ESV)*

Tim Keller, a prominent New York pastor, recently penned an essay in *The Atlantic*, detailing his diagnosis of pancreatic cancer. Working on his newest book on Jesus' resurrection, he found himself questioning his belief and his profession of faith.



Humility often finds us at the most inopportune time. It can hit like a backhand or a punch to the gut when we least expect: a diagnosis, an unexpected death, or relational break up.

For Moses, he spent time in the desert running away from his people who questioned his judgment and asked him, “do you think you’re better than us?” I can imagine his guilt and his anguish as he longed to help his people. He probably wondered, “why did they reject me, when I am trying to help?” “And when God calls him to lead His people and talk to Pharaoh, I can sympathize with his question, “who am I?”

Humility calls us into a proper relationship with God, for only in humility do we find forgiveness. Only in humility can we accept grace. Only through humility, our sin shines before us.

Humility leads to grace in a way that sin cannot. Sin leads to more sin or guilt. Sin shames. Sin conceals or even defends self. Humility accepts grace. Humility drives us to question our assumptions.

Tim Keller reveals this beauty in his article. He questions. He doubts. He suffers. I believe he becomes humble. May your humility become your grace for today. Reflect on your harder moments in life. Have you learned humility?

# Humility

Lent Day 24

<sup>2</sup>complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.

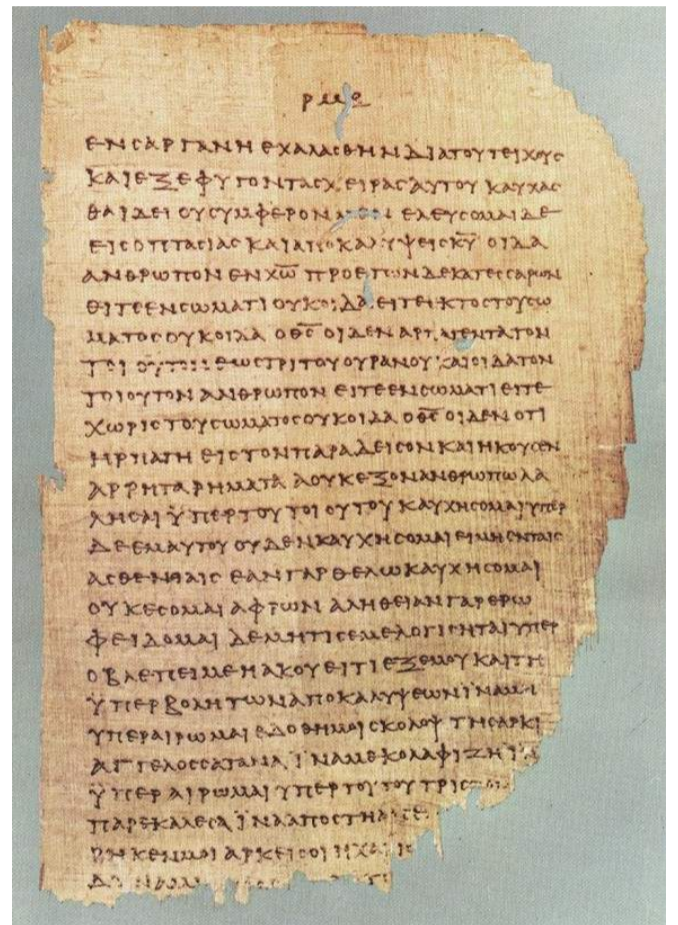
<sup>3</sup>Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. *Philippians 2:2–3 (ESV)*

On my first visit to a church service, I did not know how to participate. I looked around and stood when others stood. I stared when others stared. Singing sounded like a foreign language with the Christian words and unfamiliar tunes. When they passed the basket around for offerings, it felt like hot potato. I simply did not know how to participate in a worship service.

Many might feel the same way when we define participation in Jesus' life. What does it look like? What does it really mean? How do we find it?

Paul tells the Philippian church humility is participation with Christ. In chapter 2, he presents a beautiful essay on living in Christ, and he sums up his thought like this: if you want to be like Christ, be humble. Consider others higher than yourself. Don't complain. Be joyful. Be content. Imitate me. Present everything in prayer to God.

When you agree to walk with Jesus, you agree to this kind of life. What parts of the Philippian letter speaks to you? How might you participate with Jesus? The Christian life is one of conforming to Jesus, not the other way around.



# Humility

Lent - Day 25

***14If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. John 13:14 (ESV)***

When restaurants closed in the pandemic due to COVID-19, many waiters and staff lost their jobs. Grocery clerks, nurses, and delivery persons suddenly became our heroes, and rightfully, they received praise in commercials on television, radio, and print. Those who serve were finally not taken for granted. Online school, too, highlighted our need for in person instruction from professional educators, especially when parents and guardians found themselves helping their children with algebra, the scientific method, or the obscurities of AP English. Our lives are dependent on servers in many facets and in many ways.

For Jesus disciples, they probably thought they were receiving religious education. They may have imagined walking with a radical rabbi might earn them reputation. They could perhaps start their own religious synagogues. Or perhaps overthrow a government. But Jesus tells them, instead, do as I do. Serve one another. Wash each other's feet.

I can only imagine their hearts dropping as their rabbi washes feet. Rabbis were esteemed by society and even wielded power politically. Citizens saw their robes. People asked them questions of life. And many rabbis had circles of young disciples who followed. Jesus' line of rabbis, though, are taught instead to be servants. Why? Their teacher came as a servant and washed his disciples' feet.

This week, consider your master who washed feet. When you argue with others, remember his servant outfit. When you rush to defend yourself, consider, "how might I serve this person?" Our interpersonal relationships often portray our theology. Find ways to serve someone around you, even if subtly.



# Humility

Lent - Day 26

*<sup>2</sup>When pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with the humble is wisdom. Proverbs 11:2 (ESV)*

Less ice. No foam. Extra whipped cream. These are some of the orders I took during my employment at Starbucks. Customers never failed to amaze me with their ability to try and grab more value out of their drink, as they should. Some might consider it a disgrace that a company can charge five dollars for a coffee, but this ability to customize your drink in almost any way is priceless. I once served a drink with fourteen espresso shots and a hint of milk.

One thing, however, that cannot change is the size of the cup. No matter how you configure a drink, it is limited by the ounce capacity of a paper or plastic cup. In the same way, our hearts can only contain so much wisdom. In the Proverbs, the choices are wisdom or folly. Less wisdom is more folly. Less folly is more wisdom. And wisdom, in short, is the fear of God.

In Jesus' time, Greek philosophers considered the way of humility foolish. Slaves occupied the lowest status because enslavement meant the loss of freedom, and the loss of freedom represented the loss of thought, wisdom, and philosophical prowess. Jesus, flips this on its head and says wisdom is found in a cross. And crosses were meant for slaves and outlaws.

Humility often comes when our wisdom cashes out. When we reach the limits of our own wisdom, humility gains a foothold. Why not empty ourselves in advance and make room for the Lord's wisdom. Consider how you might let go of folly and embrace wisdom.



# Humility

Lent - Day 27

***4Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Matthew 18:4 (ESV)***



Since the pandemic, my children have their own devices for online schooling. And since that time, they have learned many shortcuts and tricks for their devices. They have shown me the ins and outs of shortcuts I never knew and seem to possess an intuition with electronic gadgets that I cannot ever gain. They are not fearful of these things and can learn things quicker.

Jesus invites his disciples to share in this humility when he plays with the children. I imagine the disciples felt as I do when I arrive home and hear the children's' noise level at a pitch that hurts my ears. I suppose the disciples wanted to “shoo” away the children to get to the real ministry of preaching, teaching, and healing. Maybe they wanted to showcase Jesus as the new rabbi in town.

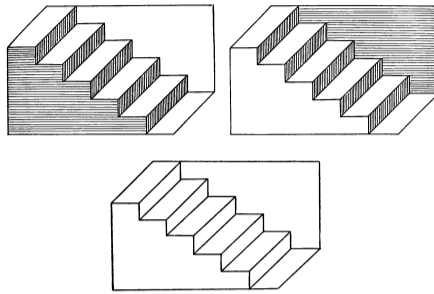
But Jesus has something different in mind. Leave the children. Let them stay. Why? Because they remind us of the humility required for his kingdom. Children in Jesus' times were not important. Infanticide was much higher in the Roman empire than today, and Jesus says let them stay. In fact, imitate their humility.

When you see children today, remember their humility. See how they run. Observe how they laugh and remain curious. As adults, we lose curiosity and awe, and yet, if we believe God is God, and we are not, then we must be in awe of something. Today, find a reason to be in awe of God and His ways. Ponder your circumstances or the beauty of creation. Submit to the wonder of the Lord's universe.

# Humility

Lent -Day 28

*<sup>10</sup>Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you. James 4:10 (ESV)*



Recently, my son invited me to read a book with him. I was expecting a book of jokes or comics, but it was a book of optical illusions. He loved it. We spent forty five minutes looking at mind bending, eye- deceiving images that puzzled, amazed, and amused. Personally, I don't know if he could see all of them. Nevertheless, it blew my mind how two things can seemingly exist in opposition, and yet exist coherently in the same image.

Jesus said often that the last will be first and the first last. The humbled will be exalted and the exalted humbled. Two things being oppositely true. If you repeat anything enough, it becomes part of a person's belief system, an ethic. For His disciples, Jesus' words on the paradox of humility must have stuck with James.

In his letter, James explains the paradox of humility. If you humble yourself before the Lord, you will be exalted. The way to superiority in God's kingdom runs through the road of humility. If you are looking for greatness in the world's eyes, then humility evades, and the kingdom of God passes you like a whisper that disappears.

In our lives, humility invites us to lower ourselves to God that he might elevate us in due time. We may never see it or experience it. In humbling ourselves for God's sake, we may never receive praise, recognition, or reward on this side of heaven for acts done in the name of Jesus. And yet, Jesus says when we do things in secret, we will be exalted.

Search out your heart today. What areas of your life have you done in humility in God's way? What acts of kindness, generosity, and charity have you given without feeling an ounce of need for praise or recognition? What if nobody ever knew your name or your accomplishments? Would that be enough? Ask the Lord for this kind of humility. In this, you will be exalted.