

Text: Proverbs 25:6,7

Theme: Do Not Exalt Yourself In The King's Presence

Date: September 9, 2007 (Pentecost 15)

In the Name of Jesus, Dear Christian Friends,

When was the last time you heard somebody address a group concerning the virtues of humility? Or when was the last time you saw somebody act in humility without having to be humiliated first? Humility is not always a popular topic because it goes against our sinful nature.

It is reported that years ago whenever Mickey Mantle hit a home run, he would round the bases with his head down and his mouth shut because he never wanted to show up the opposing pitcher. Today things seem to be a little different. Today, football players will walk the last few yards into the end zone holding the ball backwards to embarrass the opponents who are still chasing him. All too often arrogance whether it be in athletics or business or just in life is viewed as strength, while humility is considered as a sign of weakness.

Scripture reminds us that arrogance is not the same thing as confidence and humility is not a sign of low self-esteem. Rather, humility is merely acknowledging our place in God's creation. Humility is giving God the glory. We live in a world over which God is ruling. He is the King of the Universe. We are his creation. We are his servants. In the words of our text, Solomon's proverb reminds us not to think more highly of ourselves than we ought. Our sermon theme today is a quote from Solomon's proverb **"DO NOT EXALT YOURSELF IN THE KING'S PRESENCE,"** Solomon reminds us. "Do not exalt yourself" 1) because you have every reason to be humble, and 2) because you will be exalted by the King.

1. You Have Every Reason To Be Humble.

In the words of our text Solomon writes: **DO NOT EXALT YOURSELF IN THE KING'S PRESENCE, AND DO NOT CLAIM A PLACE AMONG GREAT MEN; IT IS BETTER FOR HIM TO SAY TO YOU, 'COME UP HERE,' THAN FOR HIM TO HUMILIATE YOU BEFORE A NOBLEMAN. (PROV 25:6,7)**

While Solomon's words sound like nothing more than good fatherly advice, they do teach us a spiritual truth. It's the same spiritual truth that Jesus taught us in the gospel lesson for today. Jesus said, *"When someone invites you to a wedding feast, do not take the place of honor, for a person more distinguished than you may have been invited. If so, the host who invited both of you will come and say to you, 'Give this man your seat.' Then, humiliated, you will have to take the least important place. But when you are invited, take the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he will say to you, 'Friend, move up to a better place.' Then you will be honored in the presence of all your fellow guests. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."*

Scripture encourages us to be humble; and we have every reason to be humble. But that is not what we feel like doing. Our sinful nature would rather boast about the quality and the quantity of our possessions, overrate our talents, and embellish our accomplishments. And why do we boast? Why do we embellish? Because our sinful heart is convinced that whoever has the most to boast about, whoever has the best to brag about is better than others.

But what a waste of time to boast and to brag! What could we possibly boast about that is not first and foremost a gift from God? What could we boast about that is not from God? God has blessed us all with different gifts and levels of ability; some have academic gifts, some have musical gifts, some have athletic gifts, some have the gift of good sound business sense, some have the gift of a being a true friend to some else, some have the gift of being compassionate and giving care to others. God is the one who blesses our efforts with success. God blesses all people with possessions and families as he sees fit. And yet our sinful nature boast about all this as if we did it ourselves! *I worked hard for what I have. I made good business and investment decisions.* What arrogance! God's Word needs to echo in our hearts everyday: **DO NOT EXALT YOURSELF IN THE PRESENCE OF THE KING.**

You and I have every reason to be humble before the King. The only thing that we can boast about before him that he has not given us is our sin. That is something that we can truly call our own. But would we dare boast of our sins before the Lord? Not likely! Sometimes, we may actually find ourselves boasting about our possessions, our talents or our accomplishments when we are in the company of our friends or family. But we would never want our boasting to make its way into the Sunday bulletin because then we would look bad for our boastfulness. Ironic, isn't it? We find delight in sinful boasting, but we don't want everyone to know we do those things because then people would think that we are evil. And yet the Lord, knows our every boastful thought, he hears every arrogant word, and he sees every action motivated by self-pride. Nothing is hidden from the Lord.

Today God's Word calls each of us to repentance in regard to our sinful pride and greater faith in regard to his holiness. God says: **DO NOT EXALT YOURSELF IN THE KING'S PRESENCE, AND DO NOT CLAIM A PLACE AMONG GREAT MEN.** Our sinful nature would have us believe that there is a peace that we could find among the many earth things we possess; house, car, property, earthly accomplishments. But on the great day of Judgment none of these earthly things will bring peace to our consciences trouble by the guilt of sin. Boasting in earthly things brings no peace to a troubled heart. For that reason we need to hear God's call to repentance

over our sinful arrogance day after day. **DO NOT EXALT YOURSELF IN THE KING'S PRESENCE.** By humbling ourselves before him, we acknowledge that we have sinned against him and deserve punishment. By repenting of our sins, we do not just say that we are sorry. We commit ourselves to fleeing from our boasting and our arrogance. We strive to remove ourselves from sinful thoughts, words, and actions. We confess that we have nothing to boast about. We must humble ourselves before the King. We must humble ourselves before others too, because we are no better than anyone else. We all must repent. We all must be humble. We all need God's mercy.

When we see our sinfulness in the light of God's Word we have every reason to be humble. But we also have a reason to be confident about what God has done for us in Christ Jesus our Lord. The second truth from God's Word today teaches us, Do not exalt yourself in the King's presence because you will be exalted by the King.

2. You Will Be Exalted By The King.

Once when Jesus was preaching to his disciples, he talked about the grace of God which is poured out on those who have humble and penitent hearts. He said, *"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn (that is, who sorrow over their sins), for they will be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they will be filled."* *Matthew 5:3-6*) In these words Jesus is teaching about true spiritual humility before God and the blessings that come to the life of a believer in Jesus. God wants us to live in spiritual humility as we are continually blessed by his grace. The greatest evidence of God's grace touching the lives of sinners is seen in his Son humbling himself to be our Substitute and Savior. The Bible says, *"The Son of Man did not come into the world to be served but to serve and give his life as a ransom for many"* (*Mk. 10:45*). Jesus became our substitute so that we could be exalted by our heavenly Father. Jesus took our place and endured God's anger for all the times we have boasted about the quality and the quantity of our possessions, the times we have overrated our talents or those of our children, or embellished our accomplishments. Jesus, as God's own Son, had every reason to boast, but he never gave into such a sinful temptation. He always gave glory to his heavenly Father but submitting to his perfect will. He never grumbled or complained about being forsaken by his own people, his own family or even his heavenly Father. He truly came to be our substitute and our Savior from sin's condemnation.

As a result of what Christ did, his life, his death and his resurrection, our Heavenly Father has promised that all who believe in his Son, Jesus Christ, and trust him as their Savior from sin will be forgiven and receive eternal life. The blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from every stain of sin so that nothing is left in us about which God is displeased. Thanks to our Savior, Jesus, we will not face death and punishment as we have deserved. We will not suffer eternal humiliation and torment as we deserve. We will be exalted by the King on the great day of judgment. Do not exalt yourself in the King's presence. On the contrary, the King will exalt you who have humbled yourselves before him--who have confessed your sin, and who have trusted in his forgiveness.

Our Heavenly King has exalted us already! He has given us a new status as members of his kingdom. He has declared each and every one of us to be **saints**. We often think of saints as those who have died in the faith. But that is not completely true. It is true that everyone who has died and gone to heaven is a saint. A saint is a person who is holy, who has been cleansed of every sin and has been set apart for God. That is exactly what we are by faith in Jesus Christ. God has declared us to be holy. Jesus has cleansed us from every sin. The Holy Spirit has called us by the gospel and has set us apart as God's own people. Even though we are not yet in heaven, we are citizens of God's kingdom. We are a part of God's Holy Christian Church, the communion of saints. The King has exalted us from sinners to saints. And he will finally exalt us from this world of tears to the joys of heaven forever. Do not exalt yourself in the King's presence. Rather, humble yourself and you will be exalted by the King who will glorify you for Jesus' sake.

How, then, shall we respond to all that we have been given through Jesus? Now that we have been declared to be saints, shall we boast? No, we cannot. Instead let us hear the Word of God which says, *"Let him who boasts, boast in the Lord"* (*I Cor. 1:31*). We were not the ones who earned this title, and it is not by our power that we keep it. It is God who acted alone in grace to exalt us to be saints in his kingdom. It is God who keeps us faithful to him, sending his Holy Spirit through the gospel to keep us as his own. If it were all left up to us, we would still fall away. We would lose in our struggles against sin. But that is why God does not leave it all up to us. God continues to supply grace through his gospel message. That is why we continue to come back to church week after week--because we are humbly mindful of our need for God's grace, and we are joyfully confident that he supplies his grace abundantly through his Word and Sacraments. It is through these means of grace that our Heavenly King converts sinners and exalts them and keeps them as saints.

Do not exalt yourself in the king's presence. You have every reason to be humble. Even though you and I have been forgiven of all our sins, and even though we can all be assured of our place in God's eternal kingdom, we must always remember our constant need for our Savior so that we will never forsake him. But just because we remain humble before our Lord does not mean that we lack confidence or assurance. We are confident in God's promises of eternal life to all who repent and believe in him. We are sure that we will be exalted by the King of Kings when he comes again in glory. And until he comes again, we will serve him in humility; we will worship him in joy; and we will look forward with confidence to the day when the King of Kings will summon us saying, "Come up here," and raise us up to heavenly glory. Amen.