

Classic Christian Writings:

"Let him that is chief among you be as he that doth serve" (Luke 22:26).

Let us look for humility in the circle of the chosen companions of Jesus--the twelve apostles. In their lack of humility we find the contrast between Christ and men. This will help us to appreciate the mighty change which Pentecost wrought in them. It will prove how real our participation can be in the perfect triumph of Christ's humility over the pride Satan had breathed into man.

The disciples had proved how entirely wanting they were in the grace of humility. Once they had been disputing by the way which of them should be the greatest. Another time the sons of Zebedee with their mother had asked for the first places--the seat on the right hand and the left. Later on, at the Supper table on the last night, there was again a contention which should be accounted the greatest.

It was not that there were not moments when they humbled themselves before their Lord. It was so with Peter when he cried out, "Depart from me, O Lord, for I am a sinful man!" So, too, with the disciples when they fell down and worshipped Him who had stilled the storm. But such occasional expressions of humility only bring out into stronger relief what was the habitual tone of their mind, as shown in the natural and spontaneous revelation given at other times of the place and the power of self. The study of the meaning of all this will teach us most important lessons.

Lessons On Humility

First, how much there may be of earnest and active religion while humility is still sadly wanting. See it in the disciples. There was in them fervent attachment to Jesus. They had forsaken all for Him. The Father had revealed to them that He was the Christ of God. They believed in Him, they loved Him, they obeyed His commandments. They had forsaken all to follow Him. When others went back, they clove to Him. They were ready to die with Him.

But deeper down than all this there was a dark power of the existence and the hideousness of which they were hardly conscious. This had to be slain and cast out before they could be the witnesses of the power of Jesus to save.

It is still so. We may find professors and ministers, evangelists and workers, missionaries and teachers, in whom the gifts of the Spirit are many and manifest. They are the channels of blessing to multitudes, but when the testing time comes, or closer relationship gives fuller knowledge, it is only too painfully manifest that the grace of humility, as an abiding characteristic, is scarcely seen.

This tends to confirm the lesson that humility is one of the chief and the highest graces, and it is one of the most difficult of attainment. It is one to which our first and chiefest efforts ought to be directed, one that only comes in power when the fullness of the Spirit makes us partakers of the indwelling Christ, and He lives within us.

Second, how impotent all external teaching and all personal effort is to conquer pride or give the meek and lowly heart. For three years the disciples had been in the training school of Jesus. He had told them what the chief lesson was He wished to teach them: "Learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart" (Matt. 11:29). Time after time He had spoken to them, to the Pharisees and to the multitude, of humility as the only path to the glory of God. He had lived before them as the Lamb of God in His divine humility. He had more than once unfolded to them the inmost secret of His life: "The Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve" (Mark 10:45). "I am among you as one that serveth" (Luke 22:27). He had washed their feet and told them they were to follow His example.

Yet all had availed but little. At the Holy Supper there was still the contention as to who should be greatest. They had doubtlessly often tried to learn His lessons, and firmly resolved not to grieve Him again. But all in vain. The much-needed lesson for them and for us is: no outward instruction, not even of Christ Himself; no argument, however convincing; no sense of the beauty of humility, however deep; no personal resolve or effort, however sincere and earnest--can cast out the devil of pride.

When Satan casts out Satan, it is only to enter afresh in a mightier, though more hidden power. Nothing can avail but this, that the new nature in its divine humility be revealed in power to take the place of the old, to

become as truly our very nature as that ever was.

Third, it is only by the indwelling of Christ in His divine humility that we become truly humble. We have our pride from another, from Adam; we must have our humility from Another too. Pride is ours, and rules in us with such terrible power because it is ourself, our very nature. Humility must be ours in the same way; it must be our very self, our very nature. As natural and easy as it has been to be proud, it must be, it will be, to be humble.

The promise is, "Where," even in the heart, "sin abounded, grace did abound more exceedingly" (Rom. 5:20). All Christ's teaching of His disciples and all their vain efforts were the needful preparation for His entering into them in divine power, to give and be in them what He had taught them to desire.

In His death He destroyed the power of the devil. He put away sin, and effected an everlasting redemption. In His resurrection He received from the Father an entirely new life, the life of man in the power of God, capable of being communicated to men, and entering and renewing and filling their lives with His divine power. In His ascension He received the Spirit of the Father, through whom He might do what He could not do while upon earth—make Himself one with those He loved, actually live their life for them, so that they could live before the Father in a humility like His. This would be because it was Himself who lived and breathed in them.

On Pentecost He came and took possession. The work of preparation and conviction, the awakening of desire and hope which His teaching had effected, was perfected by the mighty change that Pentecost wrought. The lives and the epistles of James and Peter and John bear witness that all was changed, and that the spirit of the meek and suffering Jesus had possession of them.

What shall we say to these things? Among my readers I am sure there is more than one class. There may be some who have never yet thought especially of the matter, and cannot at once realize its immense importance as a life question for the Church and its every member. There are others who have felt condemned for their shortcomings, and have put forth very earnest efforts, only to fail and be discouraged. Others may be able to give joyful testimony of spiritual blessing and power, and yet there has never been the needed conviction of what those around them still see as wanting. Still others may be able to witness that in regard to this grace too the Lord has given deliverance and victory, while He has taught them how much they still need and may expect out of the fullness of Jesus.

To whichever class we belong, may I urge the pressing need there is for all of us seeking a still deeper conviction of the unique place that humility holds for followers of Christ, and the utter impossibility of the Church or the believer being what Christ would have them be, as long as His humility is not recognized as His chief glory, His first command, and our highest blessedness.

Let us consider deeply how far the disciples were advanced while this grace was still so terribly lacking, and let us pray to God that other gifts may not so satisfy us that we never grasp the fact that the absence of this grace is the secret cause why the power of God cannot do its mighty work. It is only where we, like the Son, truly know and show that we can do nothing of ourselves, that God will do all.

It is when the truth of an indwelling Christ takes the place it claims in the experience of believers, that the Church will put on her beautiful garments, and humility be seen in her teachers and members as the beauty of holiness.

From Humility, The Beauty Of Holiness, by Andrew Murray