

HUMBLED AND EXALTED IN CHRIST JESUS

Hear again the Word of God for this seventeenth Sunday after the Feast of the Holy Trinity.

*It is good (for the great man) to say to you, "Come here;"
than you being caused to be lowered before (the) face of (a) nobleman,
which your eyes have seen.¹*

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ

Today, from our texts one theme presents itself above all others. It is:

*God brings down the prideful person;
the humble person He lifts up.*

That theme shines forth from the Psalm, through the Proverbs, into the Epistle and out of the Gospel for today. It was reinforced in the prayer that was given centuries ago to the Church to collect hearts and minds in the truths of today's text, as these words were offered up to God:

We beseech You so to guide and direct us by Your Holy Spirit, that we may not exalt ourselves, but humbly fear You, with our whole hearts hear and keep Your word and hallow the Lord's day, that we might also be hallowed by Your word...²

The Collect Prayer is placed where it is in the Divine Service that the people of God may ask Him to work His Word for the week in those who hear it. This prayer is to be used throughout the week, in the services of the Church, that the Sunday theme may be echoed in the regular pattern of Christ's Church at worship. Its timelessness connects us with the Church of our ancestors; and as it continues to be used, the Collect

¹ Proverbs 25:7.

² Viet Dietrich Collect for Trinity 17, in part.

of the Sunday will hold our descendants firm in the same Word of God which we have heard today. Again, in summary, today we declare:

*God brings down the prideful person;
the humble person He lifts up.*

There are number of examples that illustrate that theme throughout Scripture. This makes the concepts flowing from today's readings important. They are so, not just because they meet the test of human common sense, but, more significantly, because they are the sense of God's revealed wisdom. It is for this reason that God has called you here today: that He might bring down your prideful nature, so that He will rise up His humble nature in you.

That statement should take some spiritual pressure off the Christians among us. That is, we need to hear that it is God who is working in us to tear down our sinful pride, and that He is, at the same time, working in us to raise us up in the image of Christ. In other words, it is God's Law and God's Gospel that does His work in the hearer who is in Christ. Any other interpretation on today's theme could lead one to think that he or she can actually follow the Law and work the Gospel to please God in some way.

That having been said, let's use a couple of biblical examples to illustrate today's major point. To begin with, before the creation of the first man and woman, God created the heavenly messengers – the angels. Sometime before Adam's Fall into sin upon taking the Serpent's tempting offer, the most beautiful of the angels, the highest of

the heavenly beings then attending God, was filled with pride. Lucifer, the Angel of Light, so full of his own glory, lifted himself up in order to be equal with God. Lucifer was not satisfied with his God-given stature as the most beautiful angel in the heavens. He desired to be more than he could be, more than his Maker. Lucifer exalted himself in the sight of the other angels, leading some to follow him in revolt against their Creator. Swollen in himself with his own pride, the glorious Angel Lucifer attacked God. God humiliated him, casting him, and a third of the angels, those who had followed the Angel of Light, out of heaven. That is the first of the examples which illustrates the first part of today's theme: *God brings down the prideful person.*

The second part of the theme is illustrated by God Himself. That is, He who was God from eternity, the One we call the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, humbled himself on behalf of fallen humanity. He emptied Himself of His full Divine attributes, setting them aside, for a human lifetime, so that He might pay for the sins of every human ever conceived. He who was with the Father, who was God the Son in nature and essence, became, in time, the only-begotten Son of the Father through the womb of an human mother. God, from that Virgin, took on our nature, human essence, and became one with us. He who was exalted above all became least of all. He humbled Himself to become the Servant of mankind. That means He lowered Himself in order to buy you back from sin, death and hell itself.

Christ's humiliation came to an end when He was exalted, lifted up on the tree, to die to pay sins' price. His glory, the glory of the Father from all time, was

displayed in His Perfect Son hanging lifeless on the Cross. And so that you would know that this glory is yours, that you have been lifted up from sin, death, and freed from Lucifer, Jesus rose from the dead and ascended to rule over all with the Father from His ultimate position of power, honor, glory, and might. Christ is the perfect example of the second part of today's theme: *the humble person He lifts up*.

Have you grasped the extreme contrasts between the eternally fallen prideful being and the eternally exalted humble Man?

Let us think of another example from Scripture that will illustrate our theme. This time, you are directed to Christ Jesus and His relationship with the earthly kings, the noblemen of what we call the first century AD. The proverb says:

*It is good (for the great man) to say to you, "Come here;"
than you being caused to be lower before (the) face of (a) nobleman,
which your eyes have seen.³*

He who had, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, established human governments to bear the sword to punish evildoers and to reward the just, submitted himself to their rule and authority even when they appeared to be unjust. In his state of humiliation, Christ gave place to the King – Herod – son of the man who would have had Jesus killed in Bethlehem. Christ gave honor to the Roman emperor by obeying his servant, the governor Pilate. Christ Jesus, who was, is, and ever shall be God, set aside the rightful honor of His eternal office – Son of God, Second Person of the Holy Trinity,

³ Proverbs 25:7.

Word of God – humbling himself under the judgment of creatures much lower than Him.

This He did to a perfect end – to seal your salvation.

With regard to earthly noblemen, Jesus embodied the second part of our theme: *the humble person He lifts up*. You have heard of His humility, His meekness, before those who put Him to death for crimes that He did not commit. You have again witnessed through the declaration of the Word His taking off His Divine attributes, so that He might take sin's punishment upon Himself – the punishment your sins deserve – that *God brings down the prideful person*. Your humiliation becomes His, and in Him, His exaltation becomes yours.

Now hear of what is to happen in the Day that I believe is not far off. On that Day, King Herod, Pilate, the unbelieving Roman Caesars, and all noblemen who have lived unto death without the humiliation and exaltation of Christ remaining upon them, all who have rejected Christ Jesus, will be eternally humbled. Those who unrepentantly submitted Jesus the Christ to the laws which unjustly condemned Him to death and brought about His execution will be displayed as humbled before Him - before all creation - forever! In addition, all people who are the governments that have ever failed to perfectly execute God's justice, without repentance and forgiveness for their sins, will find themselves under God's eternal wrath.

*God brings down the prideful person;
the humble person He lifts up.*

There will be a last illustration of this week's theme also placed before Creation. That will be when God calls out to you who have, by His grace, through His Word and Sacraments, held fast to Christ-crucified for the forgiveness of all your sins. It will be the Day when, before all the spiritual and material creatures of God, the fallen and unfallen alike, God will call out to you in Christ, *"Come here!" "Inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world!"*⁴ That will be true even if thousands of years still are to pass before His call brings your renewed, perfect body from the grave and unites it eternally with your blessed soul.

To that end, God continues to call you to come to His Divine Services. In them, He is preparing you to hear that final call to *"Come up to My eternal feast! Take the position of honor."* (In the three-sided table settings of the first century, that would be in the center section, the base of the "U" where one could see all the guests, and all could see those reclining there). Your place has been won for you by the blood of Christ. It was sealed in you when you were put down with Him and lifted up with Him in the Water and Word of Holy Baptism." It is God's will that you would take a place at the head of His table, to recline against His loving breast, to receive His blessings forevermore.

How can you be sure that God has given you the centermost place at His banquet? Is it because you have willfully made yourself less than others, even if your

⁴ Matthew 25:34b; cf. Hebrews 12:28.

station was higher due to age, education, or vocation? The answer to that, for some of our number might be difficult to digest.

That is, on account of the order of human affairs, some people are elevated by birth, education, or vocation. Those who hold honored titles – Doctor, President, Grandparent, Parent, Pastor/teacher, Deacon – receive the honor due those positions on account of God’s order in the Creation. The texts for today are not calling for anyone to artificially humble himself or herself in his or her position, calling and walk of life. Every vocation that is God-pleasing holds its own honor, and this should not be despised by those occupying such offices. That would be artificial humility, or false humbleness, and an offense to God who has given you your calling. When God tells you,

*Do not cause to put yourself before the face of (a) king;
and in (a) place of great men do not stand.⁵*

He is calling you away from self-promotion, from desiring that which He has not given you in terms of calling, position and authority among humans. In other words, it may be summarized, “Do not make of yourself, or your calling in life, more that you are in God’s sight.” Or, as the proverb states:

*As clouds and wind without rain,
(is a) man causing to boast in (a) gift he does not have.⁶*

In today’s texts, God is calling you to humbly perform your life’s work. He will place you in a position of honor where He wills to do His work through you. Rejoice that God has lifted you up from the darkness of eternal humiliation in His Presence.

⁵ Proverbs 25:6.

Find comfort that He humbled Himself to unite you with Him forever. Know the peace that comes from continuing to hear God's Word and its preaching: deem it holy while you gladly hear and learn it. In holding fast to His Word you will be humbled and exalted with Christ Jesus!

All that has been declared today is true. And that begs the question: "How may we get these pure and saving truths before our primary mission field: our neighbors in Catalina, Saddlebrooke, Oracle, San Manuel, Kearney, Sun City, Rancho Vistoso, Marana, and Tucson?"

*God brings down the prideful person;
the humble person He lifts up.*

The peace which passes all understanding guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus

Trinity XVII (LSB One-year series)

Proverbs 25:6-14; Ephesians 4:1-6; Luke 14:1-11

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Pastor Michael A. Morehouse

SOLI DEO GLORIA

TRANSLATION, SECOND DRAFT

*Do not cause to put yourself before the face of (a) king;
and in (a) place of great men do not stand.⁷*

*It is good (for the great man) to say to you, "Come here;"
than you being caused to be lower before (the) face of (a) nobleman,
which your eyes have seen.⁸*

⁶ Proverbs 25:14.

⁷ Proverbs 25:6.

⁸ Proverbs 25:7.

*Do not bring (someone) hastily to court,
lest – what will you do in the end,
in your neighbor putting you to shame?⁹*

*Argue your case to your neighbor,
and another's secret do not disclose.¹⁰*

*Lest you bring shame upon you,
and your ill repute does not end.¹¹*

*Apples of gold in (a) setting of silver,
(is) as word spoken aptly.¹²*

*Like (a) gold ring and (a) golden ornament,
(is) one causing to reprove wisely,
upon (a) listening ear.¹³*

*As cold snow in days of harvest,
(is a) faithful messenger to the ones sending him;
and the spirit of his master he causes to refresh.¹⁴*

*As clouds and wind without rain,
(is a) man causing to boast in (a) gift he does not have.¹⁵*

⁹ Proverbs 25:8.

¹⁰ Proverbs 25:9.

¹¹ Proverbs 25:10.

¹² Proverbs 25:11.

¹³ Proverbs 25:12.

¹⁴ Proverbs 25:13.

¹⁵ Proverbs 25:14.