

Proper 17 Year C

Sirach 10:12-18

Psalm 112

Hebrews 13:1-8, 15-16

Luke 14:1, 7-14

Pride. Hubris. Humility

Proud of someone else's achievement. Selfless.

Proud flesh, raised above. Granulation tissue: looks ok but functionally useless. Like proud people!

A teacher told the children about the Pharisee and the tax-gatherer praying in the temple, when the Pharisee prayed, 'God, I thank you that I'm not like other people,' while the tax-gatherer said, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner.' The teacher explained how the pious, self-righteous attitude of the Pharisee caused him to look down on the tax-gatherer. At the end of class, she asked one little boy to close in prayer. He prayed, 'God, I thank you that I'm not like that Pharisee.'

When the Titanic set sail, someone said 'Even God couldn't sink this ship.'

Pride test (thanks to Mark Driscoll, Mars Hill, Seattle)

1. Do you long for attention? Do you make a scene? Are you needy and clingy? Have you learnt to look pathetic? Are you pushy or demanding attention? Does it bother you if you're not the centre of attention?
2. Are you a begruder? Are you jealous or critical of people who succeed? 'They didn't deserve that! That's not fair!' Are you negative? 'I could do better than them.' Maybe you could, but you don't!
3. Do you always have to win? Some people even cheat at board games.
4. Do you tell porkies? Lying is pride: you tell people something to make yourself look bigger than you are, or to belittle someone else. It's all pride.
5. Do you admit it when you're wrong? Even when you are caught you try and wriggle out of it. You blame something else, you get emotional, you manipulate.
6. Do you pick fights with other people? Is this because you, like Jesus, are standing up to bullies? Or is it because you're a bully and want to come out on top?
7. Do you push in when you're in a queue: shopping, driving, airport. Why? 'I'm very important, I have important things to do. The rest of you can just wait.' Look at people de-planing after landing. You're right at the back of the plane. The seat-belt light goes off. Everybody jumps up, fighting to get luggage from the lockers, pushing to get off. And there's nowhere to go. Are you impatient at traffic lights?
8. Do you get upset when people don't recognize your achievements? 'They didn't even say thank you. They didn't even send a card.' Thank you letters when I was a child: why should I say thank you for something I don't like and didn't ask for – just to keep Auntie Mary happy.
9. Do you think you're entitled to things? 'Because I'm worth it.' There is nothing in Holy Scripture that says we should not be responsible for ourselves and not work for our living.
10. Do you feel you're basically a good person but others are not?

One point for each yes. I scored 2 zillion.

Humility

- He who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.
- Humility leads to honour, pride leads to dishonour.
- Jesus says you either start with humility and then God raises you up, or you start with pride and God knocks you down. I suspect He'd rather you be humble and lifted up when you're ready for more challenges and influence and service to others.
- Proud people make terrible spouses, terrible parents, terrible friends, terrible colleagues,

terrible church members. Humble people, by the grace of God, can be a good spouse, a good parent, a good friend, a good colleague, a good church member. Are you going to start high and end low, or are you going to start low and end high, with the resurrection of the dead and the ascension into the kingdom of God?

- Jesus' brother James, and Peter, both say 'Clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for God opposes the proud but he gives grace to the humble.'
- Humility: forget you you you. Take stock of your gifts and skills and faults. Accept them, be earthed (humus), then focus on Jesus. Never mind competing with others. Make the best of what comes your way and pass it on.

The Christian message is: Jesus was in glory, came in humility, suffered as a servant, died to self and rose as selfless saviour, now exalted. This is what we call glory. *At the name of Jesus, every knee shall bow.* I'm sorry that we don't kneel much. This is a position of humility and worship.

When's the last time you were on your knees? Some of you say, 'I never get on my knees.' That's the problem. When was the last time you talked to God about your pride? 'I would, but what will other people think?' It does not matter what other people think. Evagrios: the worst demon of all is that which incites us to seek approval from others.

Pride versus humility

- Pride is natural. Humility is truly supernatural.
- Pride covets others' success. Humility says 'I'm delighted for you' and actually means it.
- Pride is about being selfish. Humility's about being selfless, and being a servant.
- Pride is about getting glory. Humility's about giving glory.
- Pride is independent. Humility is about dependence.
- Pride says to itself, 'My will be done.' Humility says to God, 'Thy will be done.'

Pride is sin.

Look at the news. Syria. Egypt. People who gouge out a child's eyes in China. People who abuse children. However much we may be horrified at the behaviour of those in the news at the moment, it hurts to acknowledge that their behaviour is but an extreme version of our own, an extreme version of thinking that what 'I' want is more important than what 'you' or 'they' want. It all comes down to supposing that my wishes are more important than anyone else's. Sure, my wishes are as important as anyone else's: love your neighbour as, not better than, yourself. But the neighbour's wants are as important as ours. Maybe I need to remember that when I'm sitting traffic lights and cursing some old trout in the car in front who seems to be waiting for a particular shade of green.

This is the sin of the world. This is the sin of the world that living according to Our Lord's command can take away if we ditch self.

The difference between dogs and cats. You pet a dog, the dog wags its tail and thinks you must be a god. You pet a cat, and the cat purrs, shuts its eyes and thinks it must be a god. There is a perverse human tendency to think like the cat.