

January 31, 2022
The Fourth Sunday after Epiphany
Pastor Matt Duerr

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, Amen. We continue in this season of Epiphany. Epiphany being a word that means to make known, or reveal, or make obvious in a sudden manner. We continue to explore pride and humility. In our first sermon we saw that, well that heartwarming message we are dirt. Literally, God formed us out of dirt. Adam and Eve sinned, and we continue to sin and as a result we will return to dirt. Thankfully we're dirt in the hands of the Creator who can modify us and mold us into what He wants us to be.

That led to the last week; true humility is what we want to see in a church. A church filled with people like King David, or Mary, or Daniel, or Joseph who were focused on God, giving glory to Him, and yet were totally aware that in and of themselves, they were insufficient. We ended that sermon talking a little bit about what would it be like to be in a church filled with humble people like that. I think everyone would agree, it would be awesome.

But where do we begin in our quest to become a church like that? I think the first thing we have to do, is do a little bit of a biblical, and a worldly reality check. In our world right now, society, and within the church, many things are going on and there is a huge call for *action*. We will hear people say, 'We must act, we must act now!' There's an urgency to this plea and we do see a lot of action. The problem is action must be well thought out. Because if the action is not well thought out, it may not help at all. It may actually cause problems. And I think we've seen a fair amount of that both in our country and within the church as a whole.

We must understand the situation. First, we must understand the whys. Why is this happening? And then as we consider actions to take care of whatever problems we see, we have to ask ourselves, 'why is this needed?' And if we have an action plan, why do we think it will work? Because acting for the sake of acting is doomed to failure. And so, we

need to consider a framework for the action needed to become a church filled with humble people, focused on praising God, bringing Him glory, and expanding His Kingdom.

And the ground floor goes right back to the very beginning. We find it again in Psalms 8, verse four where the psalmist writes: “What is man that you are mindful of him? It's that very foundation of who we are and who God is. God is Creator, we are the created who have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. Therefore, we are totally reliant upon God. He gave us our initial breath of life and is only through Him that we will have the breath of eternal life. Without Him we're nothing, we're just dirt, and to dirt we will return.

So, we have God the Creator, us the created and yet God, the Creator gave to us the role of stewardship of His creation. Adam and Eve were set in the garden to work it and take care of it, and we are to work and take care of God's creation as well as his church. Now stewardship requires someone to be a steward. And that would be you and I. That's what God has made us. A good steward understands this basic concept. He is not the owner. He is a caretaker.

And so when we look to Titus 1:8, we see the biblical standards for God's stewards. God stewards must be above reproach. He must not be arrogant, or quick tempered, or a drunkard, or violent, or greedy, or greedy for gain. But hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined. And you might say, ‘that's impossible!’ But thanks be to God, He gave us an example, a model, Jesus Christ.

And so, going back to last week remember what Saint Paul wrote about Jesus Christ? “He humbled Himself, not seeking equality with God as something to be grasped.” So, our first step is again to humble ourselves, like Christ did. And yet at the same time understand, while He could grasp divinity, because He was the son of God. We can't. We are the created. We learn from Him, through whom all things exist. This world was created through Christ. As we hear in John chapter one. So, what does He say about being a good steward? Jesus says, “whoever would be first among you, must be slave of all.’ Remember, I said you have got to have backup, you got to know the why? Jesus gives us the

why. “For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve.” And to give His life as a ransom for many.” And I'd like you to consider this. Those are loaded words. The Son of Man, God's own Son, came not to be served, but to serve and to give His own life as a ransom for many. How does that differ from different religious leaders, kings, presidents, dictators, congresspeople, governors, local authorities, and all too often Christians? Jesus lived His word. He really did become a slave of all. He came to serve, not to be served. He came to be the ransom for us. And all too often in the world, we see people in positions of power loving that power, taking advantage of that power, and using that power for their own personal gain. But Christ said, do you want to be first? Become a slave of all and sacrifice for others. Don't expect to be served but serve. And understand this. It begins with you. But even beyond that, you might not like where the sermon's going to go here.

“Wake up dads!” Because men, you have a huge responsibility in this area. Ephesians 6, verse 4 tells us ‘Fathers do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.’ Provoking your children to anger? This was first century Rome. Under the Roman Empire, Roman fathers had ultimate power, absolute power over their family, over their wife, over their children, and we have seen how power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely. And so you would have fathers thinking only of themselves; and thinking of his children and his wife as servants of him. And of course, that would anger them, because they were at the short end of the stick all the time. Paul says, no! that's wrong. Don't use this God like power for self. Be like God and show restraint, and so love, and mercy, and grace. And bring then, your children up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. Discipline? Absolutely! Like God, apply the law and the gospel with the why. Why is it that we are not supposed to murder? Because mankind is created in the image of God and God values you so much, He sent His Son to die for us. You don't kill that which God loves so much.

And instruction? Like Christ, being a humble servant, a steward of what God has given us. This now is the foundation for our framework. It begins with you, dad, fathers, grandfathers. And humble leadership embraces reality. I'm dirt, I'm a sinner, I'm flawed. And yet like Mary,

God has seen us in our humble estate and he has called us to be stewards. Dads, fathers, grandfathers, and that right there should blow us away. And we should be on our knees, saying 'I need help and I need patience.'

Secondly, humble leadership is understanding. It's knowing your wives and your children because you listen to them, you engage them in talk you become a part of their activities, and you are open to them to hear what they have to say. And at the same time, you do your due diligence in thinking about what needs to be done and being able to explain the why in a clear cohesive manner that is rooted in Scripture.

Again, when we go back to Philippians 2, verse 3, what are we told we are supposed to do? Consider their interests as more important and this is critical, critical! What does Paul tell us? "Men love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her. That's how far we're supposed to go. We're supposed to be like Christ, who became a servant to us, to serve us, to save us, and that is the role of the husband. To serve his wife, to be a slave to his wife and his children; knowing what they want, what they need, and making sure you do everything to meet that. They come first before you. Of course, God is first above all, but that's why we do this. Because this is what God has told us.

But that's not the only critical thing. There's a second critical thing, Wives, understand this and submit to your husband, who is already submitting to you, if he is following in the footsteps of his Lord and Savior. God is a God of order. He is the one who ordered the family dynamics and made it like this. It is our job to follow that. And humble leadership submits to God's authority. Men, you might say, 'I don't want that job.' Too bad! And women, you might say, 'I don't want to submit.' Too bad! Christ submitted to His Father's call. Men you submit to His call to be good stewards of your family. And wives, you submit to that family unit where the husband is the one who makes the call. After of course, listening to you, talking to you, hearing what you need, and why you think something should be done, shall we say, your way.

Humble leadership submits to God's authority. He's number one. And men you need to reflect His design for leadership. This can be done as you read God's word, but let your family see you reading God's word. That it is important to you. And take that a step further. Have personal

time of devotion, Bible study; but also, family time of devotion, Bible study that you lead. Lead your family in worship. Lead your family in prayer. Because all of these show submission to God, and all prepare you and your family for life in a sin marred world. But without you doing it, they are ill prepared. They will go to school, and they will not know what to do.

Finally, humble leadership depends on the Holy Spirit. Jesus said that we would receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on us. And we need to pray. All of us, men, women and children. We need to pray, "Lord fill me with the power of your Spirit, which Christ promised to us, so that I may be your steward and a witness to my family. So that my family, the family that is a gift from you Lord; might be a witness to this world so that others may come to know you as their God, as their Lord, as their Savior." In Jesus name. Amen