

15th Sunday after Pentecost – Year C – September 5, 2010 – Faith Lutheran, Radcliff, KY

Based on Proverbs 25:6,7 – written by Pastor Paul Horn

“Practice humility before the King, and he will exalt you.”

Have you ever wondered about the origin of certain idioms? Take “The whole nine yards” for example. There is debate about this idiom. Some say it is the length of an ammunition belt used in anti-aircraft guns. Others say that the origin of this phrase comes from tailors who use nine yards of material for top quality suits. Still others say that the idiom was coined in 1961 when Ralph Boston broke the world record for long jump, with 27feet and ½ inch. The newspaper headlines that next morning read, “Boston goes the whole nine yards.” How about “by the skin of your teeth”? Did you know that this idiom actually comes from Job 19:20? Or “pride comes before the fall” is from Proverbs 16:18. Our lesson is from the book of Proverbs. If you read the book, you might get the impression that this is nothing more than a book of wise sayings. As believers, we understand that Proverbs is more than a book of limericks. It is the Word of God himself, recorded by godly men, preserved for us today 3,000 years later. The majority of these axioms were written by King Solomon, the son of King David.

When we read the opening lines of the book of Proverbs, Solomon tells us that its purpose is **“for attaining wisdom and discipline, for understanding words of insight; for doing what is right and just and fair; for giving prudence to the simple, knowledge and discretion to the young.”** (1:2-4) Proverbs is a guidebook for godly living. Solomon is careful to remind his readers that the foundation for godly living is **“the fear of the LORD.”** (vs1.7) Fear is not being afraid of God, but fear is a holy reverence for God, showing him awe and respect and great love for what he has done for us through his Son Jesus. That is the foundation of the walk of our life. Solomon talks about life issues in the light of a right relationship with God. To teach his points about godly living, Solomon often contrasts the wise and the foolish. He calls all who ignore God’s Word as a guide for their life *fools*, and those who live according to God’s Word are *wise*. The good king drives home the truth of God’s will to sinners to turn them from their wicked ways and to guide the believer in the way of the LORD. And notice that his audience is primarily young and inexperienced believers.

In today’s proverb, King Solomon uses the illustration of a royal banquet. We could perhaps picture him sitting in one of the rooms of his palace, reclining on a couch. His children, young teenage sons and daughters, are sitting around him. “Let me give you some advice...” Here in 25:6,7 he describes an activity from everyday life that his children would understand; a royal banquet, where guests were typically seated according to their social rank. Solomon advises his children not to take a seat of prominence or to boast about their successes. The king may move you to a seat of lower importance and in front of other princes... how embarrassing! It is better to let the king say to you, “Why are sitting down there? Come up here and sit by me!” God-fearing men will notice your hard work and achievements by your humility and exalt you in their own time. But don’t you dare call attention to it. Be humble!

As I said, Solomon wrote these proverbs to teach young people godly living. To our children and teenagers this morning, pay special attention to this part of the sermon. You might be thinking, “I’m not going to be invited to dine at a king’s royal banquet anytime soon.” That’s very true. But it is true that you live in the presence of kings and queens everyday of your life.

The kings and queens in your life are your parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles, teachers, coaches, and your pastor. Jesus has put these kings and queens in your life to protect you, to provide clothes, food and a home for you, and to teach you the Word of God. These kings and queens are very important people in your life, aren't they? So how do you think Jesus wants you to behave toward them? He wants you to be humble. That means to listen to them, to obey them, to respect them and show them love. King Solomon says that when you live that way toward the kings and queens in your life, you are wise.

But sometimes do you act like the giddy goat? (it means to act foolishly). King Solomon says that when you do not listen to what Jesus says then you act like fools. King Solomon says that fools are not humble, but are arrogant. Fools get themselves into trouble when they are arrogant. Do you what it means to be arrogant? It means that you think you know better than other people and you think that you are better than other people.

Have your parents ever given you advice on the friends you hang out with, or advised you not to put yourself in a compromising situation with boyfriends or girlfriends, or gave you advice on how to manage your money, or which movies you should watch or video games you shouldn't be playing, and you didn't listen to them? That's acting arrogantly. Have they ever encouraged you to come to church or Bible study or Sunday school and you complained or wanted to stay in bed instead? That's acting like a fool. King Solomon says that when you play the part of the fool, and act like you know better than the kings and queens in your life, in the end, it will lead to embarrassing situations, it will lead to problems in your life, and worse yet, you will make a mess of your life.

Not only do you disappoint your parents, teachers, pastor and other adults, but ultimately, it shows a lack of respect and humility before the King. Jesus warns you this morning to act with humility so that you do not lose God in your life.

Although Solomon wrote these Proverbs primarily as godly advice for young people, the application extends to adults. Children and teens, just ask any of the adults present here this morning how they behaved as a child or teenager, or how they behave today. They will all admit that they too, act arrogantly.

As adults, we do not need advice for proper etiquette at a royal banquet in a king's court. But we also, just as our young people do, have people who hold positions of authority over us; our employer, the government, our pastor... Jesus tells us to practice humility whatever our position in life. Are you married? Do you act arrogantly toward your partner or children, demonstrating a domineering or demeaning attitude? Are you currently employed? Be humble. Do not exalt yourself in the presence of your employer. Our God is not saying that seeking a promotion, or a Soldier rising in rank, or receiving a raise, or advancing a career is a sign of sinful pride. But, in self-examination we may want to ask, "Did I show humility as I went about this promotion? How do I conduct myself when the boss isn't around? Do I show humility or do I demonstrate a "I-know-better-than-they-do" attitude?" Are you unemployed or retired? Do you submit to the rules of the state? Or do you arrogantly say, "Those laws do not apply to me!" and try to skirt your way around the laws of the state?

Just as with our young people, God has established authority to bless us adults. When we show

disrespect and pride, we are displaying arrogance before the throne of our ultimate authority and King who is God himself, then we act the part of the fool, and that does not usually go so well for us.

God doesn't bless that kind of behavior. He even says, "I hate arrogance." He gives us clear warnings in his Word through Solomon's Proverbs, "Pride comes before the fall." "A man's pride brings him low." "God will bring down their pride." When we try to exalt ourselves through arrogant behavior it will only bring us down to destruction.

King David once commanded the general of his army to take a census of all his fighting men. It was an act of arrogance and pride... so that David might glory in the vastness of his kingdom and the power of his army. He demonstrated a reliance on human power rather than the LORD. An angel of death came and struck down 70,000 people in three days. As shepherd of God's people, David was filled with grief that his arrogance led to the destruction of so many innocent people. David repented of his sinful pride and the LORD, in his great mercy, forgave him. (2Samuel 24)

Today, we also, young and old, and we eat a piece of humble pie. We repent of our pride and arrogance. Because we are fully aware that we have not lived up to God's guidelines. His law has pointed out our error. So we turn to God for forgiveness, he in turn, points us to his Son, Jesus.

In Philippians 2:6-8 the Apostle Paul writes, "**Jesus made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross.**"

There was a television show that aired earlier this year that showed a boss leaving his office for a while to work the least desirable jobs in his company. He got his hands dirty to see how the "little people" were doing, and how he could improve his business. While that boss worked the lower paying jobs, he still possessed the authority and title as CEO of his company.

The King of kings and Lord of lords, the One who gives kings and princes and leaders their authority, fully possessing all power, decides to set aside the use of that power, and humble himself by coming down to earth as a human being so that he might put himself under God's law: to walk humbly before God and men, to obey his parents, to obey his heavenly Father, to show love and respect to all people; men, women and children, no matter what their skin color, ethnicity, language, or social status... and he loves them all equally. He lives a perfect life of love. His life ends with the greatest demonstration of a perfect humble attitude.

Still fully possessing all power and authority, he allows the powers of the state to bind his arms behind his back, the Almighty arms of God himself. He allows them to stretch out his hands, and allows them to nail his body to a tree. The King allows his breath to expire, because that is what his Father demands of those who do not walk before him in humility; death... and so he dies for you and me.

The Son stands before his Father's throne and presents his work, a perfect life of humility and his death... not to brag about his accomplishments, but to ask that the Father not look at our sins of arrogance and pride, but to consider his work in our place. The Father makes a royal decree, that

by his Son's life and death, through faith, you are his sons and daughters. Sons and daughters of the King... there is no higher honor than to be called a child of God, to stand in his court, dressed in the royal robes that have been dipped in Jesus' blood, righteous before him. And that is what you are!

In the TV program where the boss steps down from his job as CEO to work as backbone of the company, it often happens that the employees remind their boss how to be humble. Not so with Jesus and his children. As forgiven children of God, He shows us how to live as humble children of the Heavenly Father. Jesus is the one who washes his disciples' feet, even though he was their Master and Teacher. Jesus is the Good Shepherd who lays down his life for the sheep. Jesus is the holy one who touches the unclean to make them whole again.

And so, no matter where we are in our life, we will walk humbly before the Lord and our fellow mankind. Children and teenagers, you will respect and love the kings and queens that God has placed in your life. As adults, we will respect and love our employer, our employees, our commanding officer, our children and spouse, our state, and as we walk humbly before the Lord, we will allow God the opportunity to raise us up. He may choose to reward us with a raise or promotion, maybe with simple praise from our friends and coworkers for our acts of humility. And if he does, we will give the glory to him for blessing us with a humble heart. Even though we may not receive reward here on earth for our acts of humility, our ultimate exaltation will come on the Last Day, when Jesus will raise us up and praise us before all humankind and bring us to everlasting glory. Walk humbly before the King and he will raise you up. Amen.