

“WISDOM FOR KILLING PRIDE.”

Rev. Robert T. Woodyard

First Christian Reformed Church

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Text for Sermon: Proverbs 11:2; 16:5, 18-19; 18:12; 27:2; 29:23

Introduction.

We are on a journey through the book of Proverbs to gain wisdom. We are seeking to put away folly, being foolish, and learning to live wisely and well in a foolish culture. Our prayer is to increasingly become mature believers.

This morning we will tackle the greatest hindrance to being wise, and living wisely and well.

Pride. This is a most challenging subject. My challenge is to convince you that you are proud, and then convince you to kill your pride that you love so much.

But pride is tricky. We see it in others very quickly, but it is notoriously difficult to see in ourselves. Pride makes us blind to our pride. It is a very deceptive. It is the master of disguises.

If I asked you are you proud, you would probably say you are because you know that's the right answer and you know that everyone is. But if I asked you how you are proud, where does it show up in your life, you might have trouble giving an honest answer.

Everyone thinks others are proud and they can spot it a mile away, the braggard, the trash talker, the arrogant boss, the know-it-all, the one who thinks he's always right, who is full of himself, a self-promoter, the person who dominates the conversation.

But we aren't like that, right. Our pride disguises itself as: confidence, independence, taking responsibility, strong convictions, perfectionism, competence, concern for excellence, having high standards, protecting our rights, concern for the truth.

And there is the challenge because some of those things can be good things. Why is it a sin to feel proud of something you have accomplished, something you are right about? Why does the Bible warn against pride so strongly and teach that pride is sin?

Before we tackle that let me very quickly and briefly say there is “good” pride.” There is a way to be proud of accomplishments or proud of our kids and grandkids or others without sin. There is a place for praise and admiration, for kudos and a much deserved well done. But that is not the greatest need of the moment. There is an elephant in the room.

Pride is the deadliest of all the deadly serious sins.

Pride is the very first sin. Pride is the sin that made Satan Satan. Pride led to Satan’s fall and Satan appealed to our pride to make us fall. Pride is our native condition, our default mode.

Pride is considered the principal or primary or ultimate sin, it is the taproot from which all other sins grow, like greed, lust, envy, wrath and deceit. It is the sin behind all our other sins. All sin is selfish and self-centered.

Gregory the Great said pride is the root sin, the poisonous root from which all the rest grow.

Jonathan Edwards called it “the most hidden, secret and deceitful of all sins.”

C.S. Lewis called it the great sin and said all the other sins are fleabites in comparison.

John Calvin, “there is no more deadly disease than pride,” it’s so deeply rooted in us that it’s almost impossible to root out.

Of the seven things God hates listed in Proverbs 6 pride is the first sin. In Proverbs 16 God reserves the very strongest Hebrew word for it, it is an **abomination** to God. It is a stench in His nostrils.

James 4:6 says God opposes the proud. James doesn’t say God doesn’t just ignore the proud or avoid them or keep His distance from them. He works in open opposition to them. He wages war against them. Pride provokes God to wrath and indignation; it displeases Him beyond words.

Proverbs does not treat pride as merely an unpleasant personality trait. *Pride is a spiritual disease of the heart.* It comes from hell.

Pride is fundamentally the sin of putting yourself above God. Satan is the first example.

Despite the fact that God had created Satan, and gave Satan the power and beauty he possessed, Satan wanted the glory and credit for himself. Satan did not want to worship God in response to the gifts God had given him. Instead, Satan wanted to be worshipped. Satan viewed himself as glorious instead of what he actually was: a reflection of God's glory (Michael Houdmann).

Satan's sin was cosmic plagiarism to the highest degree.

Pride is a kind of cosmic plagiarism. Everything we have is a gift from God, and yet pride has us claiming we're self-made, taking credit for something God did. Pride is that ugly part of our heart that causes us to be more concerned about ourself and our own reputation and what we want than we are about God and His glory. It is the anti-God sin.

It is a must unseemly sin. It fails to see ourselves as creatures dependent on God, and it fails to see ourselves as sinfully guilty before God. How can a sinful creature be proud before a holy Creator?

The folly of pride is in forgetting who we are.

Pride forgets that God is God and that God has created us and made us in His image.

Pride forgets that we are creatures, that we share our creatureliness with all other humans.

Pride forgets that we are all utterly dependent on God for His grace, goodness and provision.

Pride forgets that all that we are and have come from God, we have nothing that we have not first received from Him.

Pride forgets who we are and where we come from and how we got here. In other words, pride is pagan behavior, the behavior of an atheist.

How can a creature made from dust boast before his Creator? How can the clay say to the maker, what are you doing?

Pride is a rejection of our creatureliness, a declaration of independence from God and a declaration of war against God.

The path of pride is folly and it will lead to destruction. Scripture is filled with examples

Pharaoh, Samson, Haman, King Saul, King Solomon, King Nebuchadnezzar, Herod Agrippa.

Proverbs 11:2 When pride comes, then comes disgrace.

Proverbs 27:2 Let another praise you, and not your own mouth; a stranger, and not your own lips.

Praise is a nice garment, but we must never put it on ourselves, it is only to be put on by someone else. Praise is a sweet song, but it must never be sung with our own lips.

Praise is a rich treasure, but it will only make you rich coming from another. From yourself it will make you poor.

John the Baptist said of himself he was unworthy to even untie Jesus' sandals. But Jesus said of him "among those who have been born of woman, there is none greater than John the Baptist."

Remember when Paul was backed into a corner to have to defend himself and speak about himself in II Corinthians.

II Corinthians 11:16-17 Let no one think me foolish. But even if you do, accept me as a fool, so that I too may boast a little. 17 What I am saying with this boastful confidence, I say not as the Lord would but as a fool. 21 Whatever anyone else dares to boast of—I am speaking as a fool—I also dare to boast of that. ... 23 Are they servants of Christ? I am a better one—I am talking like a madman—with far greater labors.... 30 If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness.

Boasting, flaunting, bragging, name dropping, smugness, patting ourselves on the back, exaggerating, taking credit for ourselves, basically raising a toast to ourselves. Self-praise is unseemly. The issue isn't that it is wrong to receive praise. The issue is our need to produce it ourselves.

Pride says you are the source of your own excellence, that your talents, traits, or successes originate entirely from yourself rather than from God. Pride assumes you deserve praise through your own hard work or merit.

Pride looks down on other people as inferior while boasting that your qualities belong to you alone. Pride overestimates our abilities or worth or value or importance, while being blind to our own weaknesses or flaws.

Pride is the competitive sin. Pride needs to win, to be better than, to outshine, to one up, to have first or last word, to let you know how important you are. Pride wants to have more, be better, than the other person. Richer, smarter, more successful, better looking, more like or approved of. More power, control. Pride takes pleasure in being on top, in feeling superior.

Do you want a simple test of how proud you are? How do you feel if someone snubs you, ignores you, or shows off and one ups you, or overshadows you?

Consider just a few ways to recognize pride in our own hearts.

Do I look down on those who are not as competent or capable as me, who can't do as well what I think is easy? Do I find ourselves looking down on the sins of others? Do I look down on others for how they raise their kids or discipline, or dress, or take care of themselves or their stuff?

Am I easily offended or hurt? React defensively? Irritated when someone corrects me? Find it hard to receive counsel?

When I am praised do I take the credit or do I acknowledge God's grace? Do I quickly justify myself or make excuses and find it hard to say I was wrong?

Have I lost friendships over wrongs or offenses or petty grievances or competition?

Do I find myself angry or bitter over how I am treated compared to others, or unable to enter into other people's joy or success? Am I hungry for attention?

Do I measure my worth by others around me?

Have I convinced you that you and I are proud? Are you willing to be wise and kill sin?

Wisdom for killing pride.

Proverbs 26:12 Do you see a man who is wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him.

What hope is there? Is there any hope?

If pride is the taproot of all sin, how can we uproot this sin?

The only hope is found in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The Gospel is meant to kill pride.

Start with how you were saved. How did God save you? What part did you play in your salvation? While you were still a sinner, while you were still a rebel at heart, while you had no love for God, God saved you. How God saved you is designed to humble you and destroy your pride.

God appointed faith as the only way of salvation. What is faith but looking to God in total dependence.

“For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast” (Ephesians 2:8–9).

Antidotes to pride is humility.

Humility is the chemo that kills the cancer of pride.

1 Corinthians 4:7 What do you have that you did not receive? If then you received it, why do you boast as if you did not receive it?

Biblical humility recognizes: "I am dependent upon God for everything." That is not weakness. It is reality. We depend upon God for: life, breath, strength, provision, relationships, forgiveness, salvation, perseverance, for tomorrow.

Biblical humility recognizes:

We are created in the image of God.

We are redeemed by the blood of the Lamb.

We are robed in the righteousness of Christ.

We are filled with the Spirit of God.

We are all part of the plan of God.

It is all the gift of God, by the grace God for the glory of God. His glory and our good.

Humility is a great gift, a great kindness of God to those who have it. It spares them from destruction and folly. But how many desire to be humble? So few. Take seriously and to heart the example of Jesus.

The source of humility is self-knowledge, knowledge of who you are, what you are, where you came from, what you have received.

Humility isn't thinking less of yourself. It is thinking of yourself rightly.

I am a creature, not the Creator.

I am a sinner saved by grace.

I have gifts, but they were given to me.

I have wisdom, but it is limited.

I have responsibilities, but God is sovereign.

I am valuable, but I am not the center of the universe.

Finally, humility runs toward confession, pride delays or avoids confession.

Humility says "I was wrong, you are right." It says, "I don't have all the answers, will you help me."

Humility listens more than it talks.

It readily admits mistakes and receives correction.

It gives credit to others rather than seeking it themselves.

It serves without needing recognition.

It rejoices in others' success rather than feeling threatened by it.

When others go first, you go last. When others go high, you go low, for in lowliness there is great wisdom and honor.

Philippians 2:3-5 Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. 4 Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. 5 Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus.

Prayer: Holy Father, have mercy on us all. We are so proud we don't even see our pride or think we are proud. Others are but we aren't. Show us the pride we cannot see, the pride we excuse, and the pride we have learned to disguise. We know it is a deadly sin and we harbor it to our own destruction, so expose it, root it out. Make us quick to confess, willing to listen, ready to serve, glad to give others honor. Make us increasingly like our Savior, who humbled Himself for us. Kill our pride by giving us a greater sight of Christ and a deeper dependence upon your grace. Grant us the grace and humility to welcome this painful work in our soul.