



THE PARABLE OF THE WEDDING FEAST

Part 61 of Luke's Gospel: Investigating the Man Who Is God

Pastor Mark Driscoll | Luke 14:7–11 | February 06, 2011

Luke 14:7–11

⁷ Now he told a parable to those who were invited, when he noticed how they chose the places of honor, saying to them, ⁸ “When you are invited by someone to a wedding feast, do not sit down in a place of honor, lest someone more distinguished than you be invited by him, ⁹ and he who invited you both will come and say to you, ‘Give your place to this person,’ and then you will begin with shame to take the lowest place. ¹⁰ But when you are invited, go and sit in the lowest place, so that when your host comes he may say to you, ‘Friend, move up higher.’ Then you will be honored in the presence of all who sit at table with you. ¹¹ For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”

THIS IS MARS HILL (ANNUAL REPORT)

All righty, Mars Hill. We’re going to have a lengthy announcement before we jump into the Bible. You should have obtained on the way in this booklet titled, *This Is Mars Hill*. And what we like to do every year is give you an annual report. And so the last few weeks the staff has been culminating all of the financial totals and the ministry totals and now I have the great pleasure of giving you a bit of a state of the union and where we are at and what was achieved by God’s grace and your generosity this year.

We know that many of you will have questions and so we would encourage you to take this home and give a bit of time to read it. It’ll actually take you a little while. There’s quite a bit in here. And it’s been our policy since the beginning to do a disclosing document that really tells you where we’re at, where we’re going, and what God has done. And I’ll give you some of the highlights from this past year as we examine the evidences of God’s grace.

I’ll start by telling you that Mars Hill Church is all about Jesus. By God’s grace we always will be only about Jesus and our goal is to plant churches and make disciples. We want non-Christians to meet Jesus, Christians to come to know Jesus more deeply and by grace become more like him, and for more campuses and churches to get planted so that communities of Christians can gather together to continue the forward progress of the mission of Jesus until he returns. That’s our goal, that’s our hope, that’s our joy.

And here are some of the things that we have enjoyed thus far. The timeline is that in 1996 a community group was started in a rental home that Grace and I had. In the fall of 1996, actually October of 1996, Mars Hill Church was launched, so we’re fourteen years old. In the year 2000, the Acts 29 Church Planting Network was started. In the year 2001, we opened our first morning service. The church was a few hundred people at the time and we were given a very small building in north Ballard and it had one parking place and sat maybe 150. And in, I don’t know, maybe six months it exploded to like eight hundred people. It was absolutely insane what God did.

And then in 2006 we outgrew the larger facility we’d obtained in Ballard and so we tried a video campus experiment up in Shoreline. And so we officially went multi-site as we know it in 2006. At that same time we also started The Resurgence to train leaders and publish books and host conferences and classes around the world.

Well, here are the evidences of God’s grace in this past year: 133 new Acts 29 churches planted just in the United States of America. Church planting is also occurring in thirteen other nations. This year we’re on pace to be planting a church roughly every other day if God would continue to be so gracious.

Community Groups as well, under the leadership of Pastor Brad and his book on this is actually forthcoming, 434 total Community Groups and those are growing constantly. If you’re not in one please get in one. We’ll sign you up today.

Last year 774 people at Mars Hill made professions of faith in Christ and obeyed him in baptism. We had— Yes, you can clap if you like. We had 1,352 Sunday services. This year we are slated for more than 1,600 Sunday services. Total Mars Hill members is over four thousand. The Doctrine class will allow you to join us as a member of the church. They run each quarter at every campus based upon the book.

Twelve of you should have brought a friend on Easter last year and then we would have cracked 13,000 for Easter. We were just under 13,000 and we have a really ambitious goal this year. All of our campuses grew this year. Every single campus, all nine campuses of Mars Hill Church, all grew this year and most have outgrown their facilities and we cannot house Easter. And so in the grace of God we are pressing forward to pull the whole church together for one service for the first time since 1996. We hope to have the contract finalized tomorrow. If so, details will be forthcoming shortly; please

pray. We are asking God for 20,000 people and five hundred conversions in one service on Easter. That's the hope for this year.

And our total combined attendance was right around 455,000 people if you total up all of the Sunday services. That's a great rejoicing in the grace of God. We had the best year we've ever had. More money given, more Community Groups launched, more Redemption Groups started for those who are addicted and abused, more church services, more baptisms, more money given away, and higher attendance than we've ever enjoyed in the history of the church. Thank you for being generous. It's the best year we ever had.

And there's more. There is more. Here's how much we were able to give away last year. We know it was a hard year for many. We like to give away 10 percent of all dollars to church planting through Acts 29. Also we give to The Resurgence, which helps to train pastors and leaders, produce conferences and books and training, and also Resurgence, which is hosting Re:Train, our master's level theological education and pastoral preparation. Now we also have the Mars Hill Leadership Program. You guys gave about three-quarters of a million dollars to ongoing projects in Haiti with Churches Helping Churches. With MicroMissions a few hundred thousand dollars was set aside so that Community Group leaders could apply to get grant money to help the poor, struggling, and needy in their neighborhood, particularly those who are not Christians that we want to love and serve. And also we give away books, resources, and videos to those in the military and chaplains around the world. As they're away from home we want to do all we can to help and serve those who serve and protect us. And so you can see on the right, we gave away a lot this year, more than double the amount of money that we gave outside of the church last year. By God's grace it was almost \$3 million we gave away this year. And we're really excited about that.

And the web guys wanted me to share this with you. Marshillchurch.org is our website and it will be for a little while until we launch marshill.com. We have been trying to get that domain for a really long time and we obtained it. And so they are preparing to launch a new incarnation of the Mars Hill website at the new domain, but this year we saw our web traffic up 62 percent. Any second you log on to the site there are consistently seventy videos being streamed, some of those being downloaded for free to DVD ISO, for use in schools and churches and training centers. Thirty thousand people have downloaded the iPhone app. The Android app is right now in beta testing phase and will also be out shortly for more free content. Forty-five thousand page views a day, 1.4 million unique visitors, and 7 million sermon downloads last year. And so we love to give stuff away. The sermons are available for free in audio, free in video, free in hi-def DVD ISO download video, and also in transcription and translation into Spanish including video subtitles with Spanish. And we give all of that away and we praise God that it's going out.

Additionally, here's what's going on in the Acts 29 Church Planting Network. This past year there were church planting boot camps in Raleigh, Denver, Sydney, Seattle, Phoenix, and London. One hundred thirty-three new churches were planted. That brings us to almost, just under, four hundred churches in the United States of America alone. Right now we are assessing 480 potential church planting candidates who want to start a church. And additionally that means that every Sunday outside of Mars Hill in the Acts 29 churches in the U.S. alone there are more than 100 thousand people. And we praise God for every one of those people and I mean that very sincerely.

Here's also where it breaks down financially. You say, "Well, who gave what?" Twenty-one percent of those who attend Mars Hill gave nothing. If you're not a Christian we love you. We're glad to have you. We're not looking for your money. We'd love you to meet Jesus and him to give you a gift called salvation. If you are a Christian, however, starting today you could give \$1 and move into the next category of donors. That also includes my five-year-old son, Gideon. So you can do it. And that is 43 percent of the people last year gave between \$1 and \$500. Fifteen percent of the people gave \$500 to \$1,500. Eleven percent gave \$1,500 to \$4,000, and 10 percent gave \$4,000 or more. And the good news is that includes all of your elders, pastors. We do track the giving of the senior leaders to make sure that they are being generous. And we have no issues with any senior leader whatsoever. All your elders, all your deacons, all your staff members are all being really generous. We're seeing those who give their time also give their treasure. And we rejoice in that. We'd encourage you to join them.

And what this shows you is that there are not a lot of very wealthy, affluent people. You could probably tell that when you pulled up to your campus. You're like, "There are not a lot of brand-new cars and there are not a lot of very affluent people." A lot of people are young. A lot of people are starting their careers. A lot of people are starting their families. That tends to be the lion's share of Mars Hill. So really the most important thing for us is that everyone contribute because we don't have a number of significant donors that carry the load. It's everybody doing a little bit. That's how we get things done here at the church.

Lastly, some of you then will ask, "Oh, well what about accountability?" "Who's going to make sure Mark doesn't have a private jet?" Well, Mark will make sure he doesn't have a private jet, but in addition to that, there are some other people that make sure that we spend our money in a reasonable way and we're good stewards of your money. After all, if you're going to be generous, we also want to be generous. We also want to be prudent. And so internally we have a professional finance department with multiple CPAs and MBAs. We don't allow the children, for example, to count the money during the service over in the kids' ministry. We have CPAs and MBAs who oversee our accounting policies. They bring in the money, account for the money, allocate the money, oversee the policies and procedures to make sure that everything is done well because the last thing I want to do is prison ministry from the inside. So we want to nail this down.

Additionally, this includes regular communication about the budget. And so every month at every campus there's an update, "Here's how our campus is doing." Every six months there's a full financial disclosure and also every year there's an annual report. And to be honest with you, I think we give away more information than any other church that is large in the nation. I don't know of anyone who gives away this much information. We also put it on the website in PDF format. Our belief is if you're going to be generous we need to be above reproach. We'll just let you know what's happening.

This includes the external audit. We have an annual external audit from an outside accounting firm of Christians who every year give us the highest commendation for our financial practices and policies. So we spend tens of thousands of dollars to hire an outside, objective, independent firm to comb

through our books, our receipts, our spending, our salaries, and to give us a full review. And we do that gladly. And thanks to Pastor Jamie Munson and Pastor Tim Beltz who lead this area of the church, every year we literally get the highest possible scores for how we conduct ourselves financially. And I feel that's important to you because if you want to be generous you also want to be a good steward and make sure that your money is getting distributed wisely. And we understand that and we appreciate that.

And so also internally and externally we have an audit committee and board of directors who approve the salaries based upon the national averages. So we do have a pay scale set upon national average. We're very reasonable within that pay scale, right in the median range, and those who help set the salaries of those who are in the church are people who are good business leaders, qualified elders and such, but they are not on the payroll. They are not employees of the organization so they're in an objective capacity. They don't have a conflict of interest.

All of that to say, praise God. It is so wonderful to be at Mars Hill right now. This is the best season we've ever had. We enjoyed more of God's grace than most churches enjoy in a lifetime. We are unified, there is great love and respect and mutual submission across the leadership. I sleep like a Calvinist. Things are fantastic. You guys made budget. You exceeded budget. All the campuses are growing. We're now at this position to continue to move forward and I want you to be cheerful givers and hopeful givers and I want you to pray big prayers because we have a big God. And in the past we set our budget such that if we didn't make it, we were in trouble. We went intentionally lean with the budget this year and then we were asking you to be generous. And if we were able to get beyond the budget then we could do a few additional things.

So now we will be launching this year, by God's grace, Mars Hill Everett. We'll also be launching Mars Hill Portland with Pastor Tim Smith, and we'll be launching Mars Hill Orange County. Those are the next three campuses that are on the horizon. Additionally, some of the campuses that have outgrown their buildings are moving into new space.

And one of the things I would give you in prayer is this year it is on my heart to really put the spotlight, as it were, on children's ministry. Every week on Sunday we have 1,500, one thousand five hundred children. Most of them are under age ten. Additionally, with all the weddings we have and people having larger families, which is highly unusual in our day— Welcome to Mars Hill. Be fruitful, multiply, increase in number. We said dibs, we grabbed that verse. That one's ours. We love kids, we absolutely love kids. And we want to be a church that not only reaches the city and reaches the world but also reaches the next generation so that we leave missionaries in our wake. So that after we're done they continue loving, serving Jesus. And at the rate we're going, we're going to have a lot of resources and opportunities for our kids and grandkids.

And so what that means for us is we're in the process of selecting a key point person to help us develop curriculum for the children's ministry based upon the *Doctrine* book. Additionally, to improve the children's spaces, and pick-up and drop-off for moms and dads, and training of parents. This is going to be something that I personally along with the other executive elders and a few folks are going to be focusing on this year. If we continue to grow at the rate that we are, in a few years we will have upwards of three thousand elementary school students. All right, you see a tsunami of opportunity coming. And so we just want to get our surfboard ready and ride that wave.

What a good day to be at Mars Hill! There have been years in the past that the annual report did not sound like this. All right, it was just like, "You guys. Tssk, tssk." This is a great report! We love you, I'm really happy, and when I'm cheery you know it's real because I always start pretty depressed and I'm really fired up. So praise God for your generosity. Praise God for his grace.

THE PARABLE OF THE WEDDING FEAST

I'll pray and now we'll jump into the Bible. We're going to look at Luke 14:7–11, the parable of the wedding feast.

Father God, thank you for being generous and good. God, it's wonderful to get up and to say, "What a great year!" That God you were gracious and many of your people were generous. And we feel like the little boy who handed his lunch to Jesus and saw it multiplied to do far more than he was ever anticipating. We feel like that, God. We handed you a little bit and with it you did a lot. And so help us this year to be generous and please take what we give and multiply it. And, God, as we study today please help us to grow in humility, that as you're gracious to us that we'd respond with gratitude and not pride. So as we study today we ask for this grace in Jesus' good name, amen.

All right, here's the scene, Luke chapter 14. Jesus is out preaching, teaching, casting out demons, healing people. And the religious people are following him around and the Bible says they're watching him closely. And so these highly conservative religious types, they're wanting him to do anything wrong so they can criticize him and pounce on him and send out a press release and undermine his authority and integrity. Well of course Jesus never does sin. He's perfect, sinless, and God. He does, however, violate some of their rules. Not God's rules, their religious rules.

And one of those occasions is when Jesus is invited to the house of a religious leader, a wealthy, affluent man, for a meal with his enemies. And Jesus is kind enough and bold enough to actually show up for the meal. And so they bring in a man who's sick. They know that Jesus loves people and he can't help but heal them because his heart is so filled with compassion. So they set him up and they bring in a guy who's sick on the Sabbath. And they know that Jesus is going to want to heal him but that violates one of their rules, not one of God's rules. Jesus does heal him and then he rebukes them for not being very loving toward this guy.

And rather than leaving the party, which to be honest is what I'd do. I'd be like, "You guys brought me into a party, I rebuked you, now I'll leave." Instead what Jesus does, he makes it even more awkward. He stays . . . And he starts teaching them how they're all sinful and proud. All of them. And he begins by looking at their seating arrangement for dinner. And he says, "Oh, while we're at it, how come you guys are all arguing for the best seat at the table? Why do you all care about, you know, where your name is at and where your seat is held?" It's like, perhaps, even some of you. You need to be honored. You need to have the best seat. You need everybody to know who you are. You're very important.

You ever seen this at a coffee shop? One person—I've got a lot of kids, so the way it works for me is, I'll walk in at the same time as one guy, he'll walk over to like an eight-seat table and drop a cell phone. He's like, "Dibs." For him! It's like, "There's a lot of us!" "Dibs!" It's like that. That kind of push your way to the front, inconsiderate, "I don't care what happens to anybody else. Who cares if they don't have a seat? Who cares if they have a bad seat? I took care of myself."

And this is exactly the kind of thing that's happening at this religious meal with these religious people who are supposedly very holy. But when you look at how they're treating one another, Jesus says, "This doesn't look very holy to me. This looks very selfish." And so he's going to use them as a negative example. And the point is that life is a classroom and God's always teaching and if your eyes are open there's always something to learn, even if it's a negative lesson.

HUMILITY OR HUMILIATION

So here's the story. And it's about humility or humiliation. Luke 14:7–10, "Now he told a parable to those who were invited, when he noticed how they chose the places of honor," the seating chart, "saying to them, 'When you are invited by someone to a wedding feast, do not sit down in a place of honor, lest someone more distinguished than you be invited by him, and he who invited you both will come by and say to you, 'Give your place to this person,' and then you will begin with shame to take the lowest place. But when you are invited, go and sit in the lowest place, so that when your host comes he may say to you, 'Friend, move up higher.'" Then you will be honored in the presence of all who sit at table with you."

God's plan A for you and me is humility. If we don't go with plan A, God goes with plan B, humiliation. Either way, we're going to learn this lesson. Let me just submit to you, plan A is a lot better than plan B. Humility is better than humiliation and Jesus here is saying if we don't operate with humility we will experience humiliation. And I know immediately some of you say like, "The guy up front with all the lights on him is talking to me about humility." Please humbly overlook the obvious, okay? Back to the story.

Now, he uses the parable, and a parable is a little story that teaches a big idea. And he says, "Guys, think of it this way. There's a wedding." Don't you love a wedding? As a pastor, been to a lot of weddings. What happens in a wedding? All right, there's the groom's side, there's the bride's side; everybody gets a seat. Who's supposed to sit up front? Grandma, grandpa, mom, dad, immediate family. Those are seats of honor.

And Jesus says to religious people who are jockeying over position and power and preference, it's kind of like you guys walked in on a wedding and the house was full and you thought, "Well, there are seats up front." You walk up front and have a seat. Then all of a sudden the usher comes along and says, "That's Nana's seat. Somebody's going to walk her down the aisle in a moment. And she's got a walker, she's very old, and you're in her seat." You're like, "Oh, yeah. I'm very selfish."

Now you got to stand up and everybody's looking at you. It's an awkward moment. And you notice the video camera's going. You're like, "Oh, my gosh." For the rest of their life, every anniversary, they're going to relive this moment. "Oh, there's Hank. There he is, took Nana's seat." You know? You're all flushed and just trying to walk down the aisle. And you're looking for a seat and you can't find a seat and all the seats are taken. The next thing you know you're up in the balcony standing against the wall. And everybody keeps looking back, like . . . just shaking their head at you. Right? You're humiliated.

And what Jesus is saying is, if we're proud and always— And here's what happens. If you're proud you're always pushing yourself, not to where you ought to be, but to where you want to be. And this happens in seating. This happens in homes and families. This happens in businesses. This happens in churches. And some of you don't see this as a problem because it's really worked for you. You're pushy, kind of a bully, a little bit rude, maybe bold. And other people don't like conflict and so they kind of let you get away with it. You say, "Well hey, it works." If you look confident and sort of just take it, most people are kind of scared and they just let you do it. Jesus says, "Yeah, but if you start with exaltation God's going to give you humiliation." So it's better to start with humility and then God can exalt you.

Is this not true? Look back at your own life. Maybe yourself and/or people you know. Was there somebody who was always pushing, shoving, jockeying to be in power? To be in charge? To get a seat at the table? Did it go well for them in the end? No. No, it never does. And sometimes the heart is revealed with simple actions like where we sit.

And Jesus is saying here that pride is really evil. It's pernicious, it's horrendous. And let me say this. We just don't believe that. We just don't believe that, because one of the greatest virtues, not only in our nation but the entirety of the western world, is pride. We use pride as the motivating factor of our lives. And we call it self-esteem. So the answer is, if you want to achieve something, if you want to succeed, if you want to make a difference, you need to have more self-esteem. You know why you're depressed? You don't have enough self-esteem. You know why you're not successful? You don't have enough self-esteem. You need more self-esteem. Am I wrong? This is the continual mantra of culture. Self-esteem, self-esteem, self-esteem. Self-help, self-actualization.

This is not biblical thinking at all. In fact, the Bible says, in Isaiah 14, Ezekiel 28, that it's satanic. Because Satan himself became proud, not humble, and so he fought with God rather than trust in God. And the root of all sin is pride. It's pride. And Satan and evildoers, even if they don't experience humiliation in this life will in the life to come, forever. Augustine, the great church father, said that pride is like a mother who is pregnant with all the other sins. Do you know that under all sins is ultimately the sin of pride? And again, we call it self-esteem, self-help, self-actualization. It's a life without reference to God.

And this comes out of the teaching not of the Bible but of a psychologist named Abraham Maslow. And he created something called a hierarchy of

needs. And if you think of it like a pyramid or a triangle, he says, “Well, we have lower needs, sort of essential needs like food and water and shelter. And then we proceed up to our highest need, our greatest need, which is self-actualization. For me to achieve all that I can achieve, acquire all that I can acquire, do all I can do, and be all I can be. I exist for me to achieve my potential! My full potential! And then I’m self-actualized and I’ve met my greatest need.” And the Bible says, “Satanic.”

We exist for God’s glory, not our own. We exist to love, honor, serve, obey, enjoy God and help others. And if I am at the top of the pyramid of my life, I can’t lovingly help and serve people. And I don’t believe I have any need for God. I’ve become my own god and I expect people to worship me. I don’t expect to worship God by loving and serving people.

And that explains the world we live in. That explains the world that we live in. And I just need to emphasize this to you. It is so deeply engrained in all of our education, it is so deeply engrained in all of our upbringing that this isn’t a lesson that you and I will learn today. This is a lesson we need to learn every day. And this isn’t just a sermon I preach to you. This is a sermon I preach to me as a guilty fool.

And so the problem is pride and the remedy is humility. Humility— Well, first of all, if you want to study it some more, I think the best book I’ve read on the issue is by a man that we love and appreciate and I enjoy very much named C. J. Mahaney. He’s got a little book, you can read it pretty quick, called *Humility*. It’s a good book. And he talks about humility. And humility by definition means to know your place. So that’s what it means to be humble. Some of you say, “I want to be a leader!” Are you a leader? “I want to be in charge!” Are you the best person for the job? Humility is knowing your place, and back to the story, that is gladly accepting, not where you want to be, but where you ought to be. And Jesus says, “Those who are humble, they can be honored and exalted.”

Back to the story, it’d be as if there was a wedding and maybe you were a relative or a close friend of the family and you showed up, you said, “It’s going to be a packed house. I’ll just sit in the balcony.” And the groom looks up and sees you in the balcony and tells one of the ushers, “Go get him! Gosh, we love that person. We’re close to him. Bring him on down. Give him this seat.” And all of a sudden the person comes up and says, “You know, the family has personally requested that you come sit in this seat.” “Really? Okay, thanks.” Now you’re honored. You’re walking down the aisle the right way, not the wrong way. And it’s like, “Oh, well they must be close.”

And see some of you say, “But I want a seat at the table! I want to be in a position of influence!” Jesus would say, “That’s not a problem. The question is, how do you hope to get there?” Is it through pride and pushing or is it through humility and honoring? Jesus doesn’t mind you getting a good seat. The question is, have you taken it or has it been given to you? It’s convicting, isn’t it? Humility is knowing our place and here’s the truth. We’re finite beings. We don’t know everything! We’re created. We’re not equal to God. We’re under God. We’re finite. We’re also fallen. We’re sinful, proud, selfish. And we’re foolish. Sometimes we say, do, think ridiculous things. And knowing our place is, “I’m not like God. I’m not equal to God. I’m under God and I’m finite. I got a lot to learn. I’m fallen. I’m really selfish. And I’m foolish. Sometimes I do and say stupid things.” Knowing that allows us to gladly accept our place. Not the place we want to be, the place we ought to be.

And if we’re humble in the place where God has positioned us, when he feels we’re ready, he can call us to lead more or to do more. But he needs to work on us. He needs to work on us and our character. And I tell you this as someone who, I love-hate preaching these sermons because this is a perennial issue for me. Pride, me-ism, I’m a drama queen, I love a crowd, right? I mean, it’s just like, gosh, every time I preach this sermon I just feel like, man, over and over when the Bible keeps talking about humility it’s, I mean, it’s just like a week in the wood chipper for me. Okay, and so I don’t tell you, “Here’s what I’ve learned.” I would tell you, “Take it from the guy who walked the wrong way up the aisle. That’s not very fun,” right? Be humble and let somebody else walk you the right way down the aisle.

THE PRIDE TEST

Here’s what we’re going to do. We’re going to take a pride test. You will.

Number one, do you long for a lot of attention? Some of you do this by being really dramatic. You have the spiritual gift of freaking out. Some of you are always needy and clingy and desperate and you’ve learned to look pathetic. “Is there something wrong?” “Yes, there is! How could you tell?” “Well, the billboard sort of indicated.” Some of you do this by being pushy or demanding attention or being a big personality or vocal or— Do you demand a lot of attention? And if people are talking but you’re not the center of attention, do you make a way to get all the attention to you?

Number two, do you become jealous or critical of people who succeed? “Oh I can’t believe they got— They didn’t deserve that! That’s not even fair! How in the world?” Blog, Facebook, Twitter—so much of the world has gone totally negative. We just criticize people who succeed. And part of that is quite frankly just jealousy. It really is. It just is. “Well I could do better than them.” Maybe you could, maybe you couldn’t. But God’s working on your character and if you want to do something start with humility and we’ll see what he has for you. Do you become jealous or critical of people who succeed?

Number three, do you always have to win? “Can’t lose, I’m a winner!” Some of you even cheat at board games! There’s no pot of money. There’s no trophy, there’s no ESPN highlights for the backgammon or Monopoly move of the day. “I just can’t lose! I cannot lose! I’m a winner!” You know— Oh, whatever.

Number four, do you have a pattern of lying? Oh, the room changed. The whole temperature of the room changed. That was interesting. Some of you say, “No, I don’t lie.” Well, you just did. And see, under lying is pride because lying is usually, “You’re going to know something about me that doesn’t put me in a favorable light and I want to be seen in a favorable light so I will lie, even if it’s a little thing. Just so that I’m perceived as being someone I’m truly not.” Under lying is pride. We lie to make ourselves look better and we lie to make other people look worse so we can look better in

comparison. It's all pride.

Number five, do you have a hard time acknowledging you were wrong? You don't confess sin, you have to get caught. And even when you get caught you put up a fight. You blame shift, get emotional, You say, "I don't like the way you showed me my sin!" Change the subject to their tactic instead of your transgression. What? Tricky. Some of you can't say, "I'm wrong." Some of you will say things like, "Nobody's perfect!" Which is basically saying, "I'm a human being," which isn't really an apology. It's more of an excuse. You have a hard time acknowledging you were wrong.

Number six, do you have a lot of conflicts with other people? There are a lot of conflicts between the proud and the proud. They're always going at it. Sometimes there's conflict between the proud and the humble. We see that with Jesus, right? He's humble but he keeps having conflicts with religious people who were proud. But he humbly stands up to the bullies. Very rarely is there massive conflict between the humble and the humble. Right? Yeah, those humble people, they are killing each other. Those humble people. So if you're involved in a lot of conflict maybe you're the humble one, probably you're the proud one.

Number seven, do you cut in line at the store, airport, on the freeway, etc.? Right, you're at the grocery store, it's a long line, they open another line, you're in. You cut, and everybody's giving you the stink eye. But you know most people don't like conflict and they're not going to say anything. So you do one of two things. You stare at them, like, "I dare you to argue with me," or you talk on the phone and pretend you're stupid like you didn't know. Right? "Yeah, I'm at the store." Then they can't come up and say, "Hey, you cut in line," because then they would be rude. And what you're doing is you're being rude and making them feel that they can't be rude. Tricky. Tricky. Some of you drive on the shoulder of the road all the way up to the front of the line in traffic and cut in. Why? You're more important than everyone you just passed. Right? "I'm very important, I have important places to go. I have significant things to do." You all can just wait.

Or, at the airport is amazing. The airport— If you don't believe in total depravity, go to the airport. It's amazing. You can be on a plane at the very back of the plane, you're like the last row. You can't even see the front of the plane. Ding! Everybody jumps out of their seats and they're all fighting to get in line to go nowhere! It doesn't matter where you're in line, getting off the plane is going to be a while. You can cut in front of one person, you know what that does? Nothing, nothing. But it's just a way of saying, "Yes, there are hundreds of us, but at least I'm better than that one. I'm very important." Do you cut?

Number eight, do you get upset when people do not honor your achievements? "They didn't even say thank you. They didn't even send a card saying, 'Hey, thanks.' They never— nobody ever honors me. Nobody ever acknowledges— Why do I even bother? Nobody even says good job! Oh, wait a minute, that's right, I'm supposed to wait for Jesus to say, 'Well done, good and faithful servant,' and that day's still coming."

Number nine, do you tend more toward an attitude of entitlement or thankfulness? "Hey, I deserve that! I've worked hard! I really made a sacrifice. This is what I have coming to me." Or thankfulness? "You know what? I deserve hell. Everything else is a gift. Thanks, Lord. I'm grateful for whatever." Proud people, they feel like they deserve. They have this sense of entitlement. Humble people say, "Thanks, Lord. That you would give gifts to your enemies, that's great."

Number ten, do you honestly feel you are basically a good person and superior to others? Now, you wouldn't put this on your Facebook account, all right? "Tell us about yourself." "Well, I'm better than everyone." But in your heart, there's sort of this smugness, this superiority, thinking, "You know what? Most people are pretty stupid and I'm pretty smart. And most people are not a real gift to the planet and I'm superior to them. I'm basically better than most people."

Okay, now we'll score this. We had ten questions and you get one point for every question. If you scored one to ten, you're proud. If you scored zero, you're very proud. There's your score. "What did you score, Pastor Mark?" Twenty-seven! That's what I scored.

HUMILITY AND HONOR

So what happens to those who are proud? What's the consequence? Well, Jesus says humility can lead to honor just like pride leads to dishonor. He says this in Luke 14:11, "For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted." Jesus says you either start with humility and then God raises you up, or you start with pride and God knocks you down. So there are only two ways to live your life. And Jesus tells you this because he loves you. And he doesn't want you to pick a fight with him and he doesn't want to have to knock you down a notch. He'd rather you be humble and him lift you up when you're ready for more leadership and influence and service to others.

Jesus is good, he loves you. But he can't let arrogant, proud people using his name just run around and take advantage of people. Because, see, proud people, boy, they make the worst spouse, they make the worst parent, they make the worst friend, they make the worst church member. Humble people, they, by the grace of God, they can be a pretty good spouse, pretty good parent, pretty good friend, pretty good church member. Are you going to start high and end low, or are you going to start low and end high, actually end with the resurrection of the dead and the ascension into the kingdom of God?

This is a big issue in the Bible. The Bible talks about humility and pride frequently. I'll give you a few examples. Proverbs 16:18, "Pride goes before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall." You ever seen that? Somebody really prideful, maybe you, felt cocky and confident and self-assured. "I know what I'm doing." Boom! The bottom falls out.

I was looking at it before the sermon and I was reminded of it. When I was in Ireland, I went to County Cork, where my great-great-grandfather, James, sailed to the U.S. from during the potato famine. And it's the same port of call that the Titanic had its last leave from. There's a big picture and under it there's a caption that was said when the boat left the dock. I don't know if it was the captain or whoever, said, quote, "Even God could not sink this

ship.” That was not a good idea at all. That was not good.

So Jesus’ own brother, in James 4:6, and Jesus’ disciple Peter in 1 Peter 5:5, say, quote, “Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for God opposes the proud but he gives grace to the humble.” Friends, I’ve been meditating on that verse for the last few years and I’m not saying I’ve learned it, but I’m compelled by it. God opposes the proud. That means we pick a fight with God when we’re proud. And God gives grace to the humble. He comes to serve. What a foolish thing it is to fight God.

And see, some of you think that humility means you don’t do anything. Jesus wants you to do things. He wants you to do them by grace and humility. He cares about the heart as much as he cares about the action. He cares about both. Why you do what you do, not just what you do. They both count.

I’ll tell you a couple of things about pride versus humility. Number one, if you want to grow in humility, don’t focus on humility. Because here’s what I’ve seen happen. “I’m so proud, I need to really work on humility. So I’m going to focus on humility so that I can be more humble,” which is still about me, which is ultimately pride.

You say, “Well, how do you grow in humility?” Think about somebody else. His name is Jesus. You start to think about Jesus and that’s how we grow in humility. You say, “Okay, how did Jesus live his life?” Friends, was Jesus humble? The most humble person who’s ever lived. How did he live his humble life? By the power of the Holy Spirit. So for us to grow in humility, it’s about not just being totally obsessed with ourselves. “Am I proud or humble?” Jesus. Let me get to know Jesus. Let me look at the life of Jesus. Let me live by the power of Jesus and, as a result of that, I’ll be able to start to demonstrate a little bit more all the time, I hope, the character of Jesus. The answer to pride is not humility. Humility is a byproduct of really focusing attention on Jesus. Then you grow in humility because it’s also— again, if it’s knowing your place, you get to know Jesus, you’re like, “Yeah, I really don’t have anything to brag about. Jesus is my Lord and he is good to me and he saves me and salvation’s a gift and, yeah, I know my place. My place is not seated on the throne high and exalted. My place is before the throne, face on the ground, saying thanks.”

So, some years later, the Apostle Paul comes along and he talks about this issue of pride versus humility and how Jesus is the answer to pride. And it’s from Philippians 2:1–11, and it’s lengthy so I’ll just read it to you. “So if there is any encouragement in Christ,” so he’s talking about Jesus Christ, “any comfort from love,” all right, that he loves you. He loves me, he loves us. “Any participation in the Spirit,” that Jesus lives a humble life by the power of the Holy Spirit and then he saves Christians and gives us the Holy Spirit that we might live a life like his by the power of God. That’s humbling, isn’t it? So it’s not even me glorifying myself, it’s me glorifying Jesus, which means looking like him. And it’s not even me doing it by my own power, but by the power of the Holy Spirit. All of this is tremendously humbling.

“Any affection and sympathy.” What this allows us to be toward people is affectionate and sympathetic, saying, “You’re proud.” And see, here’s what we should never say to people, “You are so proud! I cannot believe it!” We should be affectionate and sympathetic. “You are so proud like me.” That’s how we should say it. I understand, we’re in this together. Let’s be forbearing, longsuffering with one another. You’re proud, I’m proud, we’re proud. Let’s be affectionate and sympathetic. We both need Jesus to save us from ourselves and the Holy Spirit to cause us to be like Christ.

“Complete my joy by being of the same mind.” Paul’s going to start talking here about the mind, that we need to think differently, we need to think biblically. If you just think in a way that is worldly, you’ll automatically default to pride. “Pride’s good! Humility’s bad! It’s all about you! Get what you can get! Be what you can be! Do what you can do! Take what you can take! Be in it for yourself, not for God or others!” And Paul says, “Different mind. You got to change your thinking. The world and its wisdom,” he says elsewhere, “does not know God.” All right, “Do not be conformed to the pattern of this world. Be transformed by the renewing of your mind.” It all starts with a change of mind, which is saying, “I don’t want to follow worldly wisdom. I want to be like Jesus because he’s the wisest one of all.”

“Do nothing from rivalry or conceit.” Competition, “I’m going to beat you.” Conceit, “I hate you, I despise you. I’m going to destroy you. I’m going to—I’m going to defeat you!” There is a way to humbly win. You can do this in sports, you can do this in business. You can have a humble ambition. You can have a humble competition. You can even have a humble victory, which is very different than rivalry and conceit. And so much of life is motivated by pride and hatred. Jesus says to be motivated by humility and love.

“Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility,” there’s our word. “But in humility count others more significant than yourselves.” Most of us only think about ourselves. Those of you who are single, you’re going to have to work at this the hardest of all because you don’t have to consider anyone else. You get up, go to bed, eat, drink, do, watch, whatever you want. Whatever you want! You don’t have to consider anyone else. You have a universe with one person in it.

And even if you get married, it’s possible to still be a person that’s not considerate of the other. You think, “I’m going to get married so that they’ll serve me, help me, go to bed with me, take care of me, look after me. They’re here to make my life better.” Pride. Same thing with kids. “Kids are here to make me happy, to give me affection, to be a joyous presence in my life, to carry on my legacy. How dare you do that! How could you do that to me?” Pride. Paul says, “Consider others above yourselves.” The whole world doesn’t exist to glorify you. Consider others.

And friends, we live in this world where the whole goal is to, out of hatred, rivalry, conceit, crush other people. In pride, get the best seat at the table and then pay other people to serve us. That’s the goal. The Bible says, what about other people that also bear the image of God? What about Jesus? Is that how he did it?

Some of you say, “But I want to do something! I want to make a difference!” No one’s done more than Jesus, friends. More songs written about him, more books written regarding him, more paintings painted of him, more lives committed to him, billions, than anyone who’s lived in the history of the world. Our calendar is around B.C. and A.D., before Christ and *anno Domini*, the year of our Lord. Our biggest holidays are about his birth and

resurrection from death. No one's bigger than Jesus and he did it all humbly.

Are you like me? Are you straining to even get your head around this? Like, this is just so counter-intuitive, counter-cultural. Actually, it's kingdom. It's kingdom. "Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus." It says you can't think like this unless you belong to Jesus. This isn't just philosophy. This is the Holy Spirit's miracle.

"Who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men." The eternal God, the creator of heaven and earth, the same stuff as God the Father, this immaterial, spirit God, decided to do what? To pursue proud rebels and to do so humbly. And so he let go of all that he enjoyed and he took upon himself human flesh and God became a man. Humility, ultimate humility. Jesus went from affluence to poverty. He went from hearing angels sing, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty!" to people he made shouting, "Crucify him, crucify him, crucify him!" He went from a glorious throne to a humble manger. He went from heaven to a small town with one well and a few dozen people, to a teenage mother. His dad wasn't a king. His dad was a carpenter. He didn't travel the world. He walked a little bit on foot and didn't get very far. He didn't live in a big mansion. He lived in a peasant's house. He didn't work a fantastic job. He was a laborer. He didn't have loads of money. He was homeless and broke.

This is not the God anyone was expecting, and when Jesus showed up, this was even part of the complication and conundrum of the religious people. Like, "You can't be God. God's not humble. God doesn't humble himself." Yes, he does. His name is Jesus. Jesus is humble. It says he took on the form of a servant. See, our whole mindset is, "No, no, no, no. You're supposed to be served! You're supposed to fight for your seat at the table, get to the position of power, and then have lots of people serve you!" No. Jesus had that, gave it all up, came to earth to even wash the feet of Judas Iscariot, who was ripping him off and going to betray him. He's a servant. It's shocking, it's scandalous.

"Being found in human form, he humbled himself." Friends, you and I, we need to humble ourselves. Circumstances can humiliate us, but we must humble ourselves. "By becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross." God was humble enough to let his creation murder him so that he might die in our place for our sins as our savior. You and I are going to spend eternity just thinking about that because it's overwhelming.

"Therefore, God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus," that's the name! Not your name, my name, our name. Not our church name, not our theology name, not our company name, not our family name. The name of Jesus, that's the name that matters. "Every knee should bow, in heaven," those who are saved, "on earth," the church, "and under the earth," even those who are going to hell. "And every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father."

Here's what he's saying. Jesus was in glory, came in humility, suffered as a servant, died and rose as our savior, has now been exalted. We see Jesus today, he's not in humility. He's in glory, he's in glory! And his name is above every name. And the response to that is that our knees bend, bow. This is a position of humility. This is a position of surrender. This is a position of worship. The right response is someone on their knees saying nice things about Jesus. That's what we're made for. Some of you are miserable, here's the cure. Here's the cure! This is what you're made for! And he alone is worthy.

When's the last time you were on your knees? Some of you say, "I never get on my knees." That's the problem. Even as we worship and sing, Mars Hill, if you want to get on your knees, put your face in your seat, and talk to God about your pride, feel free to. And some of you say, "I would, but what will other people think?" And I would say, "If you're humble, does it really matter?" Knees bent, voice raised, singing praise, prayer, worship to Jesus. Our humble God, our serving God, our loving God. What's the answer to pride? Jesus. Some of you say, "No, no, the answer to pride is humility." Humility is a byproduct of getting to know Jesus, the exalted one.

PRIDE VS. HUMILITY

Let me close with a few things. Pride is natural. You just get it as a descendant of Adam, with a sin nature, selfishness. Humility is truly supernatural. It's a gift of God by the power of the Holy Spirit. True humility—you can fake humility. True humility is a miracle.

Number two, pride covets others' success. "I can't believe they got married! I can't believe they got a 4.0! I can't believe they got a raise! I can't believe they got—I can't believe—that's not fair!" Humility says, "Praise God, that's awesome! I'm so happy for you," and actually means it.

Pride is about being selfish. Humility's about being a servant like Jesus.

Pride is about getting glory! "Where's my seat at the table? Where's my honor? Where are my accolades? Where's my 'at a boy'?" Humility's about giving glory. "Jesus, you're great. Thank you. Yeah, I did something, but I did it by the grace of God. Yeah, I've got a good mind. Hey, thanks for my mind! Yeah, something went well, thanks for the opportunity! Yeah, I worked hard, thanks for the strength!" It's all by the grace of God. It's all by the grace of God. So that the grace comes to us and the glory goes to him.

Pride is independent. "I've got this covered. I'm organized. I'm disciplined. I'm self-sufficient. I don't really need God and I don't really need people. I can take care of myself." Humility is about dependence. "God, I really do need you to help me and I really need your people. So I want to be in community in the church. I'm blind to my own blindness. I'm finite, fallen, and foolish. That means I need some friends."

And pride is achieved. You can check pride off your bucket list. It's something you can do. "I want to be proud. Nailed it! And the backflip, landed the dismount, tada! I did it!" Humility is nothing you achieve. It's something you continually pursue by the grace of God. So you can't reach a point where you're like, "I'm so glad I'm through that proud season! Dang it, I just went varsity with pride! What a mess I am!" We never achieve humility in this life, but our goal is to pursue it by the grace of God and the power of the Holy Spirit because of Jesus' love.

And some of you will hear this and you will immediately go to despair. "Oh, I am horrible." Yes, you are. And you will start obsessing over yourself. I want you to have conviction, but not condemnation. I want you to move from your pride to Jesus' humility, that he is a servant. He died for all your sins and even though he's Lord, God, Savior, King, and Christ, high and exalted, seated on a throne right now, he's still a humble servant. He's here to serve you and to help you with your pride.

So rather than being depressed and thinking about how proud you are, let's talk about the name that is above every other name. Let's do that in song, amen? And we'll take communion. As we take communion, it's humbling. We receive communion like we receive salvation. The broken body, shed blood of Jesus, gift. He gives, we receive. It's humbling! We sing, we sing of the name that is above every other name. The answer to pride is Jesus, amen.

Father God, as we gather now to sing the name of Jesus, and some of us feel inclined to bend our knee in surrender, we confess, God, that pride is a sin and that humility is a miracle. So please forgive us of our sins and allow us to experience this miracle of being about Jesus, our humble servant, in whose name we pray, amen.

[End of Audio]

Note: This sermon transcript has been edited for readability.