

Sermon #1539

Title: His Humility

Text: Selected from Luke

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Series: All Eyes on Jesus

INTRODUCTION → Welcome to The Creek.

March Madness has passed and the NCAA Final Four has come and gone; and come to think of it, my “final four” are about over. In these final four messages at The Creek, it’s **All Eyes on Jesus** as He makes His final journey to Jerusalem where He will die on a cross for your sins and for mine. Jesus began that journey in...

Luke 9:51

When the time approached for Him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem.

The beginning of the end of His life starts in Luke 9:51. From this verse until Luke 19:28 as Jesus arrives in Jerusalem, Dr. Luke devoted 35% of his Gospel to this one last journey in the life of Christ. While walking along the way, we cannot help but notice...

- His High-Calling → Jesus came on a mission to seek and to save the lost.
- His Heart → Jesus called His followers to have broken, contrite hearts for others.
- Now, we stop a third time along the way and it’s **all eyes on Jesus**.

Some people call it “people watching.” I heard that in the cafeteria, on a Christian College campus, someone wrote a sign and put it at the beginning of the food line. The sign read, “Take only one orange. Jesus is watching.” Now the cafeteria smelled great that morning, because at the other end of the food line, there were some chocolate chip cookies, fresh out of the oven and someone wrote another sign that read, “Take as many cookies as you want. Jesus is at the other end watching the oranges.” Just as we focus our attention on Jesus in these weeks, He never takes His focus, His eyes off from those whom He loves.

As we begin today, something stands out at the time when Jesus began His final journey to Jerusalem. Check this out...

Luke 9:46

An argument started among the disciples as to which of them would be the greatest.

What’s up with that? We would think that after walking with Jesus for three-plus years, His disciples would not be arguing with one another, particularly when it came to having power and authority. Regretfully, this wasn’t an isolated event. Check this out...

Luke 22:24

Also a dispute arose among them as to which of them was considered to be greatest.

Just where and when did this dispute take place? On the last night of His life! They were in the upper room, having one last supper with one another. Jesus would be hung on a cross in a matter of hours, and they were fighting, arguing over who among them would be the greatest, the most powerful. And Luke wasn't the only Gospel writer to capture this conflict in his writing, but both Mark and Matthew included news of this conflict in their Gospels.

Mark 10:35-37

Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to Him. "Teacher," they said, "we want You to do for us whatever we ask." "What do you want Me to do for you?" He asked. They replied, "Let one of us sit at Your right and the other at Your left in Your glory."

Not only James and John, but all of His disciples thought that the Messiah would come and overthrow the Roman occupation of Israel. The Messiah would sit on the throne and rule with absolute power in the sovereign nation of Israel. His disciples—especially James and John—wanted to sit next to Him in power, thereby being the greatest among them. According to Matthew's account, even their mother got involved.

Matthew 20:20-21

Then the mother of Zebedee's sons came to Jesus with her sons and, kneeling down, asked a favor of Him. "What is it you want?" He asked. She said, "Grant that one of these two sons of mine may sit at Your right and the other at Your left in Your kingdom."

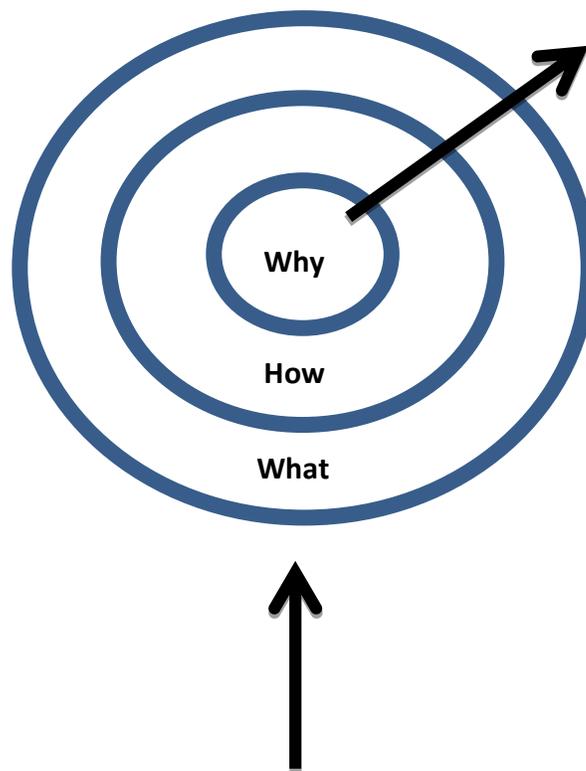
James' and John's mom even thought Jesus, her Messiah, was to arrive in Jerusalem, when and where He would overthrow the Roman occupation and rightfully take a throne. Moreover, she wanted what was best for her sons, at least in her thinking. She was ambitious for her sons to have power and position, which would bring about a great deal of prestige for their family. This final walk to Jerusalem was a lonely one for Jesus even though He is surrounded by many people, including His disciples. Though they are with Him, they do not understand what he is facing or going through. They are blinded by ambition.

It appears that even those who were closest to Jesus had an insatiable thirst for power, and at the core of this quest for power and position, but **why? Why** was this a recurring problem for the disciples? **WHY** did Jesus call it out? Come to think of it, we should start with **WHY!** Sounds like a structure for the sermon! Does this look familiar?

Yes, it's Simon Sinek's Golden Circle Theory! Now before you go groaning and moaning about, I want you to know that some people have even asked me in recent weeks if we would see "the circles" one more time, and it's pretty obvious that the answer is a yes. Seriously, in recent years, I've been moved by many people who have emailed me, called me, stopped to tell me that they have used Simon's Golden Circle Theory at work, in meetings, even in making family decisions. Yet, I was never so moved by news of this than getting an email a couple of weeks ago from a teacher, who happens to be a friend of Leah's and mine – and of how she has used

“the circles” → with her kindergarten students! Yes, with 5 and 6-year-olds! Here’s a picture of what they did in class some weeks ago [insert picture & share portions of the email].

Business consultant and author Simon Sinek shared on TED.com and in his best-selling book ***Start with Why*** his theory that if organizations want to be effective, they must start with why. In essence, he said that most organizations approach business from the outside in by first knowing WHAT they do, then knowing HOW they do business, and a few of the people know WHY they exist. To the contrary, Sinek said that effective companies and organizations work from the inside out. Everyone in the organization knows WHY they exist, and HOW they accomplish their purpose. It is then easy for them to know WHAT they do - what products they make or what services they provide.



Apple is an example of this model. Apple has become an overnight success because they start with WHY they exist in the first place. They exist to think outside of the box and to reach the world through technology. Apple knows HOW they will technologically reach the world: through innovative, attractive, simple-to-use products. So, WHAT Apple produces are iPhones, iPads, iPods, computers, etc. They think and operate by moving from the WHY to the WHAT. To better understand this section of James’ letter, we are going to use the WHAT, the HOW, and the WHY of the Golden Circle Theory. Let’s identify each of these circles first and then we will see how they speak into our lives.

So then, starting with **WHY**, then moving to **HOW**, and finishing with **WHAT**, we're going to unpack the bickering and back-biting of the disciples as they each struggled to be the proverbial "king of the hill" right next to Jesus.

WHY

While walking to Jerusalem one last time, Jesus happened to stop for dinner in the home of a prominent Pharisee (vs. 1), where He was "being carefully watched." Here's something that happened during that dinner.

Luke 14:7-14

When He noticed how the guests picked the places of honor at the table, He told them this parable: "When someone invites you to a wedding feast, do not take the place of honor, for a person more distinguished than you may have been invited. If so, the host who invited both of you will come and say to you, 'Give this man your seat.' Then, humiliated, you will have to take the least important place. But when you are invited, take the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he will say to you, 'Friend, move up to a better place.' Then you will be honored in the presence of your fellow guests. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

Jesus knew what was in a person's heart—his or her interior world—and His disciples were filled to overflowing with pride. That's not only **WHY** they constantly battled for positions of power, arguing as to who would be the greatest but also **WHY** Jesus taught about humility, which is the exact opposite of pride. And notice, His disciples were not the only people to want positions of power and recognition, but the Pharisees did, as well. And, check this out. While going a bit further on His journey to Jerusalem, Jesus noticed some people and had this conversation with them.

Luke 18:9-14

To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everybody else, Jesus told this parable: "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men – robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.' But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner.' I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

How about that. Not once, but twice, His disciples argued with one another as to who would be the greatest. And, not once, but twice, they heard Jesus say: "For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled and he who humbles himself will be exalted." If it's repeated, it's important. If a person exalts himself or herself, that individual will be humbled. God wants us to see something here, and that something is that pride is at the root of all that is evil. **WHY** did Jesus

call it out? He knew that “pride goes before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall” (Proverbs 16:18). Adam and Eve did NOT commit the first sin. Satan did. Satan rebelled against God, wanting to be just like Him. Pride was the first sin ever to be committed and that is why it is called the cardinal sin. It is at the core of human existence, and God hates it. Proverbs 6:16-17 states, “There are six things the Lords hates, seven that are detestable to Him: haughty eyes...”

Life then...in the ancient world was about vanity. A man’s image was about title, wealth, power, prestige, possessions. Even King Solomon was not only known for his wisdom, but for his wealth and his women—all 1,000 of his wives. The culture then was about the importance of self above all others. Humility was never seen as a virtue, but rather, as a weakness. People would shun humility. In ancient times, humility was viewed as humiliating. In both Hebrew and Greek, the word humility means “low, low to the ground.” When a king conquered another king in battle, it was common to force that king to the ground, and the conquering king would put his foot on the defeated king’s neck, cursing him in humiliation, and then kill him. Self-importance. Recognition. Pride.

Life then looks much like life now. Back in 1936, **LIFE** magazine came on the scene. Then some years later, in 1974, we welcomed **PEOPLE** magazine to the news stand. It was only three years after that, in 1977, when **US Weekly** magazine was introduced, whose title implies that we are excluding *them*. Just two years later, in 1979, the next magazine to hit the stands was **SELF**. I wonder when a new magazine will come along that will be called **ME**?

Magazines aren’t the only commentary on our prideful culture. Consider Hollywood and all of its award shows. The first Academy Awards (i.e., Oscars) took place in 1927, and since that time, more award shows have followed: the Emmys, Golden Globe, Grammy, People’s Choice, Critic’s Choice, Screen Actor’s Guild, Producer’s Guild, Writer’s Guild, Director’s Guild, MTV Movie, and more. These are just some of the 564 award shows today (1.5 per day), awarding 4,025 trophies (1 every 2 hours). Hollywood sure enjoys being in the spotlight. It’s called pride, a cancer that has metastasized throughout our culture, coast-to-coast, home-to-home, person-to-person. And God hates it. Why? Ego makes little or no room for Him. Think E.G.O. – it means “edging God out.” We edge God out of our lives, thinking that we have made it in life in our strength and with our talent. We are of the opinion that we have amassed all that we have and polished the talent and skills we possess in our strength. We “edge God out” with our over-active ego, so it should not surprise us that James 4:6 states: “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.” Now I can’t speak for anyone except myself, and I for one, do not want the Creator of the universe opposing me! There’s a powerful reason **WHY** Jesus hit the nail on the head when it came to pride and humility, with people *then*—and *now*.

HOW

So, how do we “humble ourselves?” It’s one thing to know there’s a problem and another thing to do something about that problem. What Jesus said to His disciples must have stuck because Peter wrote of this.

1 Peter 5:6

Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand that He may lift you up in due time.

Chan Gailey is well known for his life-long career as a football coach on teams like Kansas City Chiefs, Buffalo Bills, and New York Jets. Early in his career, he coached for Troy State University in Alabama and led them to be NCAA Division 2 Champions. One day, while at football practice, an aide ran up to Gailey and said, "Come quick! There's a call for you – and it's Sports Illustrated!" Coach Gailey dropped his clipboard, ran into the office, picked up the phone and said, "This is Chan Gailey." A voice on the other end said, "This is Sports Illustrated. We're just calling to let you that your subscription is about to expire. Do you want to renew?" Instead of *being* humbled, is there a way to become more humble? Just **HOW** were the followers of Jesus to grow humble? **How** do we grow humble? Jesus taught His disciples **HOW** to grow increasingly humble, and it wasn't just by the words that He spoke, but also by the life Jesus lived. Jesus *showed* them; He didn't just tell them. And the same is true for us. With **all eyes on Jesus**, three things stand out as to **HOW** we can grow more humble.

SERVE

Luke 22:27

"For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as one who serves."

To understand this statement of Jesus, let's give thought to the *context* before trying to understand its *content*. The context is the upper room. Jesus and His disciples are at the Last Supper, having their final meal with one another. Beyond any doubt, Jesus is the host of the meal and the one being honored. He and the disciples are "great" in the sense that they are AT the table and not the people serving those at the table. Yet, Jesus declared, "I am among you as one who serves." In John 13, we read that this meal was already being served, and Jesus got up from the meal and He went to each disciple and He washed their feet. Jesus did this, as He said, "I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you" (John 13:15). In a matter of a few hours, Jesus would set the ultimate example of serving by allowing Himself to be nailed to a cross. Jesus said, "The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many." Jesus modeled humility by the way He served others, and when we do the same, we grow more humble.

Galatians 6:9-10

"Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers."

Do we expect people to wait on us, serve us, whether at work, school, at home, in a restaurant, on vacation, etc.? How often do we ask people how we can serve them? Chick-Fil-A is getting a lot of negative press because not all people agree with their values. However, they have

become the number one fast food provider in our nation, and could it be *because* of their values, one of which is expressed as soon as someone steps up to the counter and hears those ever-familiar words, “How may I serve you?” Is that a value that we embrace and practice? Jesus did.

SPEAK

Luke 19:10

“For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost.”

If something’s repeated, it’s important, and from Luke 9 when Jesus set out on His final journey to Jerusalem until the night of His arrest and trial in Luke 22, Jesus referred to Himself as the Son of Man twenty-one times! The phrase “Son of Man” appears a total of 107 times in the entire Bible, and in the final days of His earthly life, Jesus spoke of Himself as the Son of Man roughly 20% of uses of the phrase. One of five uses of the name Son of Man were used by Jesus in the final days of His life! Jesus never said that He was the Son of God – even though the Jews, Satan, demons, and even a Roman centurion declared that He was the Son of God. And, the title Son of Man clearly indicates a lowly, humble position. Jesus consistently—and I believe, He purposefully—referred to Himself as the Son of Man because He was secure in His identity. Think with me. Jesus—who was the Son of God became the Son of Man (i.e., born physically, put on flesh – John 1:14) and the Son of Man died on a cross, rose from the dead and ascended into heaven where He has been crowned Son of God. Jesus referred to Himself as the Son of Man because He **KNEW** He was the Son of God. His identity was secure in God. He who exalts himself will be humbled and he who humbles himself will be exalted.

With what words do we **speak** about ourselves? Are our conversations seasoned with many uses of “me, myself and I”? Are we secure in our identity? If not, we will struggle with self-esteem—building ourselves up with words that honor us and diminish others. We will condemn others and commend ourselves. Yet, if we are secure in our identity, knowing that we are sons and daughters of God, knowing that God has lavished His love on us—calling us His children, then how we speak of ourselves will reflect humility.

SUBMIT

Luke 22:42

“Father, if you are willing, take this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Yours be done.”

Luke 23:34

“Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.”

Luke 23:46

“Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit.”

Not once—or even a few times—but over and over again, Jesus called God His Father. Whether directly speaking to God or speaking about God, Jesus consistently and repeatedly called Him His Father. There was only one time when Jesus called God something other than His Father, and that was while on the cross and Jesus cried out, “My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me?” There are 168 references in the Gospels by Jesus referring to God as His Father, yet Jesus was fully and completely God. The Apostle Paul said, “For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form” (Colossians 2:9). What did that show His disciples when they heard Jesus speak this way? What does that indicate to us? Jesus was in complete **submission** to His Father.

John 17: 1,4

After Jesus said this, He looked toward heaven and prayed: “Father, the time has come. Glorify Your Son that Your Son may glorify You. I have brought You glory by completing the work You sent Me to do.”

That’s **submission**. Jesus was fully and completely God, yet He willingly and deliberately put Himself under the authority of God, calling Him “Father,” and respecting His Father’s authority. Jesus **submitted** by walking sixty miles to be baptized (i.e., immersed). Jesus **submitted** to His earthly mom and dad. Throughout all four Gospels, we read of Jesus **submitting** again and again, though He was fully God. That is evidence of humility. At the end of this long, and lonely walk to Jerusalem, He rode into Jerusalem on the back of a donkey, fulfilling Zechariah 9:9, “See, your king comes to you gentle and riding on a donkey...” With **all eyes on Jesus**, it was not difficult to see His consistent humility. The question is: Can people see humility in us? **How** do we grow increasingly humble? By serving others more often, speaking less often of self, and submitting to others around us.

A puffer fish inflates into a ball-shape to evade predators, swelling their stomachs to several times their normal size. Puffer fish contain a toxin that makes them foul tasting and potentially deadly to other fish,; a toxin so deadly to humans it is 1,200 times more lethal than cyanide! There’s enough poison in one puffer fish to kill thirty adults. Like puffer fish, we can swell up with pride, making us look bigger than we actually are; and pride can be toxic to marriages and families, to friendships, and more. The late Bible scholar John Stott said, “Pride is your greatest enemy, humility is your greatest friend.”

WHAT

What is humility? First and foremost, it is a journey.

Philippians 2:5-8

Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus, who being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made Himself nothing. Taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness, being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross.

Jesus let go of all positional authority—of being equal with God—and He “humbled Himself.” That means He left heaven and “lowered Himself,” coming here to live a human life, one marked with indescribable service for others. He did not think about what He wanted. Jesus put the needs of others before His own wants. Humility is a journey into being less focused on self and more focused on others. Humility is putting others before me and their needs before mine. Humility is thinking more highly of others than I think of myself (see Phil. 2:3-4). Humility is not something done to me, but something that I do. Humility is not thinking less of myself but thinking less often of myself. It is a journey.

Cameras flash when a baby is born. A birth is a Kodak-moment. In much the same way, the birth of Jesus was a Kodak-moment, particularly as we see one snapshot of humility after another. Even though Jesus was fully and completely God, He was born to a peasant girl from an obscure village. His adoptive earthly father was a blue-collar worker, a carpenter by trade. The Son of God was born out in a barn and laid in a feeding trough for animals. Shepherds—those who were reviled by most people—were the first people to come calling on Baby Jesus in the delivery room. Think this through. Jesus Christ, the Creator of Life, was born into and confined by a human body. Jesus, the Sustainer of all the universe, became a helpless infant. Jesus entered this world on a journey into humility.

The journey into humility continued throughout His life. Jesus healed those who were ill. He fed those who were hungry. He raised people from the dead. He defended women and welcomed children. He even washed the feet of His disciples. He was not made famous by owning a home or writing a book. His resume did not include a college degree or elected office. While on earth, Jesus moved into humility.

Even in His death, Jesus moved into humility. Though He was—and still is—righteous God, Jesus allowed Himself to be arrested and stand trial as a common criminal. Though He was—and still is—holy God, Jesus died for sins He did not commit. Though He was—and still is—eternal God, Jesus experienced physical death. Crucifixion is both horrific and humiliating. Hanging naked on the cross, the Roman soldiers gambled for the only thing that He owned—the clothing that He wore the day He died. Once dead, He was buried in a borrowed tomb. Not just during the final weeks of His earthly life when He made one last journey to Jerusalem, but from even before the beginning of measured time, Jesus moved into humility—for “before the foundations of the earth were laid,” Jesus agreed to come and die for us. **What** is humility? It’s a journey from day-to-day for each one of us. When we wake up in the morning, we are faced with a decision – will I deliberately walk into humility?

And remember, Jesus did not make the journey alone. He had His disciples with Him, who were like family to Him. When we move into humility, we do not make the journey alone. For example, we take our children and our grandchildren with us. **What** do they see in us—humility or pride? Do they see us on the road of life being prideful and envious? Envy is resenting God’s goodness to other people while failing to give thanks for God’s goodness to us. We compare ourselves to others. We see their homes, cars and trucks, clothes and toys, and we want what they have. We hear of their travels and trips, and we want to go where they go.

We hear how they just got back from the French Riviera and we just got back from a road trip in our 1995 Buick Riviera. Stop the contest of who has the biggest house, newest car, most money, and nicest clothes! When it comes to lessons in life, more is “caught than taught.” Are we ambitious for our children and grandchildren? We have ambitions for them – wanting them to go into a certain vocation, receive a certain education, graduate from a particular university, etc. Our ambitions for them that may be in a particular profession, in athletics, academics, the arts, etc. Our ambitions for them is to be the best at whatever they do—even from the age of 4 (think *Toddlers and Tiaras on TLC*)—wanting them in the limelight of public recognition. Here are a few questions. Are these ambitions a reflection of greatness as defined in Scripture? Are the ambitions for our children and grandchildren more important than each of them growing in humility and servanthood? Are these ambitions more important to us than the importance of humbling themselves before God? Are we more concerned about our children and grandchildren’s recognition in THIS life before others than in the NEXT life before God?

We celebrate when our children and grandchildren make the dean’s list, honor roll, game-winning play, set a school record, ACT/SAT, etc. That’s good. Want to do something better? Let’s REALLY celebrate when the children and grandchildren demonstrate Jesus-like living: humility, servanthood, godliness, etc. After all, humility is a journey and we don’t make the journey alone.

Closing

With **all eyes on Jesus**, let’s take a moment to pray this prayer of Francis of Assisi (Italian Monk 1181-1226) and also credited to Rafael Merry del Val (1865-1930).

*O Jesus, meek and humble of heart, hear me.
From the desire of being esteemed, deliver me, Jesus.
From the desire of being loved, deliver me, Jesus.
From the desire of being praised, deliver me, Jesus.
From the desire of being preferred to others, deliver me, Jesus.
From the desire of being consulted, deliver me, Jesus.
From the desire of being approved, deliver me, Jesus.
From the fear of being humiliated, deliver me, Jesus.
From the fear of being despised, deliver me, Jesus.
From the fear of being rebuked, deliver me, Jesus.
From the fear of being criticized, deliver me, Jesus.
From the fear of being forgotten, deliver me, Jesus.
From the fear of being ridiculed, deliver me, Jesus.
From the fear of being wronged, deliver me, Jesus.
From the fear of being suspected, deliver me, Jesus.*

*That others may be loved more than I,
Jesus, grant me the grace to desire it.
That others may be esteemed more than I,
Jesus, grant me the grace to desire it.*

*That in the opinion of the world others may
increase and I may decrease,
Jesus, grant me the grace to desire it.
That others may be chosen and I set aside,
Jesus, grant me the grace to desire it.*

Amen.

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