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## *We Are Just Servants – Not Gods*

*December 3, 2017*

**Scripture Reading:** Daniel 4

We have been learning more about discerning the true from the false, the genuine from the counterfeit, the good from the evil. In other words, we are learning more about how to recognize Christ and not be duped by that which is antichrist. Last time we considered the humble, servant quality of Christ and saw that whenever we see its opposite, a self-seeking, self-glorying Pharisaical spirit, we must not remain silent. It must be confronted at its first outbreak.

This morning I wanted to show you still more of Scripture's teaching on these things and in this case we are going to specifically look at the foolhardy welcoming of the praise of human beings.

Just as we have already heard from the 4<sup>th</sup> chapter of Daniel, pride and arrogance are a very common doorway for evil to come in. Christ accepted the worship of His creatures, but we must never do so.

Exodus 34:14 (for you shall worship no other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God),

Deuteronomy 6:13-15 It is the LORD your God you shall fear. Him you shall serve and by his name you shall swear. (14) You shall not go after other gods, the gods of the peoples who are around you— (15) for the LORD your God in your midst is a jealous God—lest the anger of the LORD your God be kindled against you, and he destroy you from off the face of the earth.

Isaiah 48:11 For my own sake, for my own sake, I do it, for how should my name be profaned? **My glory I will not give to another.**

John 5:43-44 I have come in my

Father's name, and you do not receive me. If another comes in his own name, you will receive him. (44) How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the only God?

Paul and Barnabas knew this well and when the crowds wanted to worship them, they put a stop to it immediately:

Acts 14:9-18 He listened to Paul speaking. And Paul, looking intently at him and seeing that he had faith to be made well, (10) said in a loud voice, "Stand upright on your feet." And he sprang up and began walking.

(11) And when the crowds saw what Paul had done, they lifted up their voices, saying in Lycaonian, "The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men!" (12) Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul, Hermes, because he was the chief speaker. (13) And the priest of Zeus, whose temple was at the entrance to the city, brought oxen and garlands to the gates and wanted to offer sacrifice with the crowds.

(14) But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of it, they tore their garments and rushed out into the crowd, crying out, (15) "Men, why are you doing these things? We also

are men, of like nature with you, and we bring you good news, that you should turn from these vain things to a living God, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them. (16) In past generations he allowed all the nations to walk in their own ways. (17) Yet he did not leave himself without witness, for he did good by giving you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness."

(18) Even with these words they scarcely restrained the people from offering sacrifice to them.

This is the primary thesis I want us to consider carefully then this morning:

***The visible church of our day is giving glory to men that is only due Christ. The leaders of the visible church are accepting this glory for themselves and thereby making Christ their enemy. Once Christ departs and hands such people over to their sin, all brands of evil will sweep in.***

Martyn Lloyd-Jones was genuine. He understood these things and did not crave the praise of men. He told of an incident that happened to him which illustrates exactly what we are talking about. There was some multi-church fellowship conference of some type where many local churches were

represented. While conference attendees were seated in the auditorium, it was announced that the clergy would then enter in procession down the aisle. Pomp and circumstance. Lloyd-Jones refused to participate, and rightly so.

When pastors and teachers and church elders and members as well walk in pride, look out on their church buildings that “they have built,” preach in such a way as to impress the congregation with their wisdom and eloquence, Christ detests it and if it is Another spirit will come in, bringing 7 more worse than itself. Christ will not share His glory.

Let’s go back to that verse from John 5 and move in for a closer look:

John 5:43-44 I have come in my Father's name, and you do not receive me. If another comes in his own name, you will receive him. (44) How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the only God?

Now, this is profound and incredibly important. Do you see the implication here? Jesus is telling these “church leaders” that they do not know the Lord. Faith is impossible for them. Why? Because they “receive glory from one another.” This kind of evil

precludes the true worship of God that has as its motive the glory of God.

Think carefully. What does this look like today? “Receiving glory from one another.”

I was given a perfect illustration of it very recently. A big shot type “Christian” celebrity was invited to speak at a local church. He spent most of his time talking about himself and the great things he had done, name-dropping, and then praising the pastor of that church and a few more of his associates who came along with him. The person who told me about this said he was very troubled by it, and well he should be. This is that receiving glory from one another. You’ve seen it in Washington and you see it in the church.

See the gravity of it? Jesus means that where people who claim to know the Lord are characterized and motivated by exchanging the glory of God for a “one another glorying,” *faith in Christ is impossible*. And weightier yet – *This means that where we see this man-praise going on without repentance, we are looking at unregenerate people,,, no matter how many people throng to read their books or hear them speak.*

And of course this is vital for all of us to have wisdom about not only so that

we guard against pride in ourselves, but also so that we can discern whose teaching is not of the Lord.

This is not an exaggeration. Listen to this quote I posted on my blog this week from Dale Ingraham, a pastor from New York who, along with his wife, Faith, work hard to expose sexual abusers hiding in the church:

I believe the church today is much like Israel in Jesus' day. The Pharisees, Sadducees, and Scribes were the religious leaders. They were the educated elites and yet they didn't know God. They were selfish, greedy and corrupt. There were only two Pharisees at the time, that we know of, who followed Jesus. [Today] Sex offenders are allowed to freely operate within the confines of most churches and few are trying to hold them accountable. Until the people in the pews throw out the wolves in sheep's clothing, nothing will change before Christ's return.

This is the direct result of sin and specifically the sin of pride and arrogance. (Check that connection out in 1 Corinthians 5).

Look at it again in Paul's warnings to the Galatians:

Galatians 4:17 They make much of you, but for no good purpose. They

want to shut you out, that you may make much of them.

And to the Corinthians:

2 Corinthians 11:3 But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ.

You see then why this is such a vital subject to be wise about? Warnings against pride, especially to pastors and church leaders, are not given simply because pride is a sin. Yes, it is. But *because it is a devastating sin that opens the door wide to evil and throws the flock to the wolves.*

1 Peter 5:1-3 So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: (2) shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; (3) not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock.

***When pride consumes a Christian, a pastor, a church, that pride exalts and relies upon man's wisdom and rejects***

*the wisdom of God as foolishness.*

Remember that quote cited by Winston Churchill during the days when he was trying to warn his government about the impending threat from Germany and they were too prideful to listen –

Who is in charge of the  
clattering train?

The axles creak and the  
couplings strain,  
and the pace is hot and the  
points are near,  
and sleep hath deadened the  
driver's ear,  
and the signals flash through  
the night in vain,  
for death is in charge of the  
clattering train

This is why it is crucial that we all grow wise to this terrible evil of pride, especially when it evidences itself in people who are supposedly teaching us God's Word.

Romans 16:18 For such persons do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own appetites, and by smooth talk and flattery they deceive the hearts of the naive.

2 Peter 2:3 And in their greed they will exploit you with false words. Their condemnation from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep.

What we are seeing over and over again and with increasing regularity is professing Christians, and especially their leaders, refusing to see God's Word as truth and wisdom. They consider it foolishness. Let me give you an example that I probably have mentioned before because it is so common:

1 Corinthians 6:9-10 Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, (10) nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.

God's Word plainly says that revilers are not Christians and Paul will end this chapter instructing us to put them out from among us and have nothing to do with them. (He is speaking of wicked people who claim to be Christians). And yet when these plain, obvious instructions of Scripture are put before many, many church leaders and members today, they scoff at God's truth. This is where arrogance

leads. And this arrogance is most often a telling indicator that the prideful one does not even belong to Christ.

Now, let's consider the matter from the very opposite viewpoint. Specifically, let's look at Christ.

Think about Christ –

John 1:1-4 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. (2) He was in the beginning with God. Colossians 2:9 For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, (4) In him was life, and the life was the light of men.

Colossians 2:9 For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily,

Colossians 1:15-22 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. (16) For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. (17) And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. (18) And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. (19) For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell,

(20) and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross. (21) And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, (22) he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him,

Alright then. Let's imagine we were alive and present when Jesus was on this earth. There He is. You see Him. Walking along. Coming into a town or village. Teaching. Children on his lap. Eating with tax-gatherers and sinners and other losers.

And this man you are looking at is *God!* The One who created all things and who, even as you look at Him, is giving life to everything that is alive, and who is by His power holding the entire universe together. And there He sits. Right there.

What is He like?

He teaches with authority. He accepts worship. He rebukes the wicked. He heals the sick and feeds the hungry with incredible miracles.

And yet:

Isaiah 53:2-3 For he grew up before him like a young plant, and like a root out of dry ground; he had no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him. (3) He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

Luke 2:7 And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

John 1:10 He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him.

Christ is love. He is light. He is life. He is power. But in all His majesty and divinity, He is love. So Paul's description of love here is a description of Christ:

1 Corinthians 13:4-6 Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant (5) or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; (6) it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth.

The Lord Jesus Christ, the One who

had every reason to boast – did not. Christ is not arrogant, He does not insist on his own way in the sense of selfishness, He is not resentful when others receive something and he does not, He is never envious. And of course all of this was seen most clearly at the cross:

Isaiah 53:7 He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth.

Therefore, and here is the heart of the point we desperately need to see if we are to recognize those who truly follow Him and belong to Him, and those who do not, *these qualities must be evident in anyone who knows Him.* And I submit to you that the large majority of “happening” church leaders of our day, just as in Jesus' day, not only do not evidence these qualities of humility, they evidence exactly the opposite. *And I also suggest to you that this pride and arrogance and seeking of self-glory has become so commonplace in what parades as Christianity that we are largely blind to it.* As a result, evil creeps in among us.

What did Jesus do when He was on this earth? One of the things He did, as

we have mentioned of late, is hang out with outcasts. With the lowly. Of the “in crowd” He said:

Matthew 15:12-14 Then the disciples came and said to him, "Do you know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this saying?" (13) He answered, "Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be rooted up. (14) Let them alone; they are blind guides. And if the blind lead the blind, both will fall into a pit."

Just consider modern day evangelicalism. One of the things we see is celebrity personalities, a rather small group of them actually, wielding undue influence over the church, and pretty well hanging out with each other, dropping one another's names, regularly receiving flattery and praise. On the move. Getting calls from their publishers. Working conferences into their appointment book. Applauded by the crowds. Paid huge salaries. And all the groupies who praise them and aspire to be like them.

Now think carefully here. Who would Jesus hang out with today? That is to say, if we are going to recognize Jesus, we must see through these things. We must see HIM, not a distortion of who He is as portrayed by so many who seem to be the “pillars of repute” in the church today.

John 13:13-17 You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. (14) If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. (15) For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you. (16) Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. (17) If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.

During the time of the Reformation, the very assumptions that Christians had been raised up with in the counterfeit church had to be questioned and many of them rejected. They were produced by men claiming to speak for Christ who were not sent by Him at all. Until things got so dark that the light of the gospel could hardly even be found. Not only did people like Luther have to come to an understanding of the gospel, they also had to unlearn and reject the religion they thought was Christ! Just like Saul on the road to Damascus when he found out not only had he not been serving the Lord, He had actually been promoting and teaching AGAINST the Lord!!

And here is where it begins as an infection in the church – pride. THIS is why the following Scripture is given to

us:

Matthew 23:5-9 They do all their deeds to be seen by others. For they make their phylacteries broad and their fringes long, (6) and they love the place of honor at feasts and the best seats in the synagogues (7) and greetings in the marketplaces and being called rabbi by others. (8) But you are not to be called rabbi, for you have one teacher, and you are all brothers. (9) And call no man your father on earth, for you have one Father, who is in heaven.

This is not so we can simply read it, and walk away shaking our heads about what evil jerks those Pharisees were. No. It is given to us so that we can apply it today and realize this is not Christ. This is not His body. And WE are not to permit such a system to get a foothold among us. That is what Jesus meant when he said we are not to be called rabbi or father. *He commanded us to not let such a man-exalting structure ever develop in the church.* Every single one of us has the responsibility for seeing that this never happens. And if Christians would have been diligent and obedient in ages past, the counterfeit church would never have become what it has down through church history.

Finally, let's close on this deep truth

that is impossible to fathom. Namely,

### ***God is good.***

Listen to the Psalmist express it in terms of the Law of the Lord, which of course is the expression of His being:

Psalms 19:7-11 The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple; (8) the precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes; (9) the fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; the rules of the LORD are true, and righteous altogether. (10) More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb. (11) Moreover, by them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward.

God is not an arrogant demagogue. The creator who has no beginning nor end, the One from whom all good flows, is pure, good, clean, loving and life-giving. And when this Perfect Good came into this world, He came humbly, to serve, to die, and put all things back as they should be. Who are we? What is man, that any should boast? This is how we recognize Christ and reject the counterfeit.