

Humility 102

Andrew Murray's Third and Fourth Chapters in "Humility"

(Language updated by Ted Hildebrandt, 2010, additional editing & emphasis by Pastor Chris)

Monday' Reading:

"But I am among you as one who serves." Luke 22: 27

In the Gospel of John we have the inner life of our Lord laid open to us. Jesus speaks frequently of His relation to the Father, of the motives by which He is guided, of His consciousness of the power and spirit in which He acts. Though the word humble does not occur, we shall nowhere in Scripture see so clearly wherein His humility consisted. We have already said that this grace is in truth nothing but that simple consent of the creature to let God be all, in virtue of which it surrenders itself to His working alone. In Jesus we shall see how both as the Son of God in heaven, and as man upon earth, He took the place of entire subordination, and gave God the honor and the glory which is due to Him. And what He taught so often was made true to Himself: "He that humbles him: shall be exalted." As it is written, "He humbled Himself, therefore God highly exalted Him."

Meditate on the words in which our Lord speaks of His relation to the Father, and how unceasingly He uses the words not, and nothing, of Himself. The not I, in which Paul expresses his relation to Christ, is the very spirit of what Christ says of His relation to the Father.

"the Son can do nothing on his own" John 5:19

"I can do nothing on my own. As I hear, I judge, and my judgment is just because I seek to do not my own will but the will of him who sent me." John 5:30

"I do not accept glory from humans." John 5:41

"I have come down from heaven not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me." John 6:38

"My teaching is not mine but his who sent me." John 7:16

"I have not come on my own." John 7:28

"I do nothing on my own" John 8:28

"I did not come on my own, but he sent me." John 8:42

"Yet I do not seek my own glory" John 8:50

"The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own" John 14:10

"the word that you hear is not mine but is from the Father who sent me." John 14:24

Monday's Reflection:

Sit and meditate on the words of Jesus above. Turn to the fifth, seventh, eighth, and fourteenth chapters in the Gospel of John to read the context of each. Why do you think Jesus is so adamant about this point?

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Tuesday's Reading

Briefly re-visit the words of Jesus from yesterday's reading. These words open to us the deepest roots of Christ's life and work. They tell us how it was that the Almighty God was able to work His mighty redemptive work through Christ. They show what Christ counted the state of heart which became Him as the Son of the Father. They teach us what the essential nature and life is of that redemption which Christ accomplished and now communicates. It is this: He was nothing, that God might be all. He resigned Himself with His will and His powers entirely for the Father to work in Him. Of His own power, His own will, and His own glory, of His whole mission with all His works and His teaching, of all this He said, It is not I; I am nothing; I have given Myself to the Father to work; I am nothing, the Father is all.

This life of entire self-abnegation, of absolute submission and dependence upon the Father's will, Christ found to be one of perfect peace and joy. He lost nothing by giving all to God. God honored His trust, and did all for Him, and then exalted Him to His own right hand in glory. ***And because Christ had thus humbled Himself before God, and God was ever before Him, He found it possible to humble Himself before men too***, and to be the Servant of all. His humility was simply the surrender of Himself to God, to allow Him to do in Him what He pleased, whatever men around might say of Him, or do to Him.

It is in this state of mind, in this spirit and disposition, that the redemption of Christ has its virtue and efficacy. It is to bring us to this disposition that we are made partakers of Christ. This is the true self-denial to which our Savior calls us, the acknowledgment that self has nothing good in it, except as an empty vessel which God must fill, and that its claim to be or do anything may not for a moment be allowed. It is in this, above and before everything, in which the conformity to Jesus consists, the being and doing nothing of ourselves, that God may be all.

Tuesday's Reflection:

Continue praying the humbling prayer from last week. Record any points of pride God is revealing to you below.

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Wednesday's Reading

In our meditation this week we have the root and nature of true humility. It is because this is not understood or sought after, that our humility is so superficial and so feeble. We must learn of Jesus, how He is meek and lowly of heart. He teaches us where true humility takes its rise and finds its strength-in the knowledge that it is God who works all in all, that our place is to yield to Him in perfect resignation and dependence, in full consent to be and to do nothing of ourselves. This is the life Christ came to reveal and to impart -a life to God that came through death to sin and self. If we feel that this life is too high for us and beyond our reach, it must but the more urge us to seek it in Him; it is the indwelling Christ who will live in us this life, meek and lowly. If we long for this, let us, meantime, above everything, seek the holy secret of the knowledge of the nature of God, as He every moment works all in all; the secret, of which all nature and every creature, and above all, every child of God, is to be the witness, that it is nothing but a vessel, a channel, through which the living God can manifest the riches of His wisdom, power, and goodness. ***The root of all virtue and grace, of all faith and acceptable worship, is that we know that we have nothing but what we receive, and bow in deepest humility to wait upon God for it.***

It was because this humility was not only a temporary sentiment, wakened up and brought into exercise when He thought of God, but the very spirit of His whole life, that Jesus was just as humble in His intercourse with men as with God. He felt Himself the Servant of God for the men whom God made and loved; as a natural consequence, He counted Himself the Servant of men, that through Him God might do His work of love. He never for a moment thought of seeking His honor, or asserting His power to vindicate Himself. His whole spirit was that of a life yielded to God to work in. It is not until Christians study the humility of Jesus as the very essence of His redemption, as the very blessedness of the life of the Son of God, as the only true relation to the Father, and therefore as that which Jesus must give us if we are to have any part with Him, that the terrible lack of actual, heavenly, manifest humility will become a burden and a sorrow, and our ordinary religion be set aside to secure this, the first and the chief of the marks of the Christ within us.

Brother and sister, are you clothed with humility? Ask your daily life. Ask Jesus. Ask your friends. Ask the world. And begin to praise God that there is opened up to you in Jesus a heavenly humility of which you have hardly known, and through which a heavenly blessedness you possibly have never yet tasted can come in to you.

Wednesday's Practice:

Take the last paragraph from Murray seriously. Look through your daily life, what ways does the humility of Christ shine through? What ways does pride (self centered will) rule instead of Christ's humility? Ask someone who knows you well where they see selfishness in you, give them permission to be brutally honest.

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Thursday's Reading

"Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls." Matthew 11:29

"and whoever wishes to be first among you must be your slave, just as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve and to give his life a ransom for many." Matthew 20:27-28

We have seen humility in the life of Christ, as He laid open His heart to us: let us listen to His teaching. There we shall hear how He speaks of it, and how far He expects men, and specially His disciples, to be humble as He was. Let us carefully study the passages, which I can scarce do more than quote, to receive the full impression of how often and how earnestly He taught it: it may help us to realize what He asks of us.

1. Look at the commencement of His ministry. In the Beatitudes with which the Sermon on the Mount opens, He speaks: "*Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven...Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.*" (Matthew 5:3, 5) The very first words of His proclamation of the kingdom of heaven reveal the open gate through which alone we enter. The poor, who have nothing in themselves, to them the kingdom comes. The meek, who seek nothing in themselves, theirs the earth shall be. The blessings of heaven and earth are for the lowly. For the heavenly and the earthly life, humility is the secret of blessing.

2. "*learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.*" (Matthew 11:29) Jesus offers Himself as Teacher. He tells what the spirit both is, which we shall find Him as Teacher, and which we can learn and receive from Him. Meekness and lowliness the one thing He offers us; in it we shall find perfect rest of soul. Humility is to be a salvation.

3. The disciples had been disputing who would be the greatest in the kingdom, and had agreed to ask the Master (Luke 9:46; Matt. 18:3). He set a child in their midst and said, "*Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.*" "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" The question is indeed a far-reaching one. What will be the chief distinction in the heavenly kingdom? The answer, none but Jesus would have given. ***The chief glory of heaven, the true heavenly-mindedness, the chief of the graces, is humility, "the least among all of you is the greatest."*** (Luke 9:48b)

Thursday's Practice

Take a walk with Jesus. Imagine Jesus is walking along side you. Ask Jesus where in your life you lack His humility. Listen for where Jesus wants to transform your heart to greater dependence on God.

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Friday's Reading

4. The sons of Zebedee had asked Jesus to sit on His right and left, the highest place in the kingdom. Jesus said it was not His to give, but the Father's, who would give it to those for whom it was prepared. They must not look or ask for it. Their thought must be of the cup and the baptism of humiliation. And then He added, "*whoever wishes to be first among you must be your slave, just as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve and to give his life a ransom for many.*" (Matthew 20:27-28) Humility, as it is the mark of Christ the heavenly, will be the one standard of glory in heaven: the lowliest is the nearest to God. The primacy in the Church is promised to the humblest.

5. Speaking to the multitude and the disciples, of the Pharisees and their love of the chief seats, Christ said once again (Matt. 23:11), "*The greatest among you will be your servant.*" Humiliation is the only ladder to honor in God's kingdom.

6. On another occasion, in the house of a Pharisee, He spoke the parable of the guest who would be invited to come up higher (Luke 14:1-11), and added, "*For all who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.*" (v. 11) The demand is inexorable; there is no other way. Selflessness alone will be exalted.

7. After the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican, Christ spoke again (Luke 18:14), "*all who exalt themselves will be humbled, but all who humble themselves will be exalted.*" In the temple and presence and worship of God, everything is worthless that is not pervaded by deep, true humility towards God and men.

8. After washing the disciples' feet, Jesus said (John 13:14), "*So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet.*" The authority of command, and example, every thought, either of obedience or conformity, make humility the first and most essential element of discipleship.

9. At the Holy Supper table, the disciples still disputed who should be greatest (Luke 22:26). Jesus said, "*the greatest among you must become like the youngest and the leader like one who serves.*" The path in which Jesus walked, and which He opened up for us, the power and spirit in which He wrought our salvation, and to which He saves us, is ever the humility that makes me the servant of all.

Friday's Practice:

As you have been continuing to pray the humbling prayer, what ways is God revealing pride to you? Can you see ways God is beginning to remove that pride as you surrender to God?

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Saturday's Reading

How little this is preached. How little it is practiced. How little the lack of it is felt or confessed. I do not say, how few attain to it, some recognizable measure of likeness to Jesus in His humility. **But how few ever think, of making it a distinct object of continual desire or prayer.** How little the world has seen it. How little has it been seen even in the inner circle of the Church.

"Whoever wishes to be first among you must be your slave." We all know what the character of a faithful servant or slave implies. Devotion to the master's interests, thoughtful study and care to please him, delight in his prosperity and honor and happiness. To how many of us has it not been a new joy in the Christian life to know that we may yield ourselves as servants, as slaves to God, and to find that His service is our highest liberty, the liberty from sin and self? We need now to learn another lesson, that Jesus calls us to be servants of one another, and that, as we accept it heartily, this service too will be a most blessed one, a new and fuller liberty too from sin and self. At first it may appear hard; this is only because of the pride which still counts itself something. If once we learn that to be nothing before God is the glory of the creature, the spirit of Jesus, we shall welcome with our whole heart the discipline we may have in serving even those who try to vex us. When our own heart is set upon this, the true sanctification, we shall study each word of Jesus on selflessness with new zest, and no place will be too low, and no stooping too deep, and no service too mean or too long continued.

Brethren, here is the path to the higher life. Down, lower down! This was what Jesus ever said to the disciples who were thinking of being great in the kingdom, and of sitting on His right hand and His left. Seek not, ask not for exaltation; that is God's work. Look to it that you humble yourselves, and take no place before God or man but that of servant; let that be your one purpose and prayer. God is faithful. **Just as water ever seeks and fills the lowest place, so the moment God finds the creature abased and empty, His glory and power flow in to exalt and to bless.** He that humbles himself shall be exalted; that is God's care; by God's mighty power and in great love God will do it.

We sometimes speak as if humility and meekness would rob us of what is noble and bold and human. O that all would believe that this is the nobility of the kingdom of heaven, that this is the royal spirit that the King of heaven displayed, that this is Godlike, **to humble oneself, to become the servant of all!**

Jesus, the meek and lowly One, calls us to learn of Him the path to God. Let us study the words we have been reading, until our heart is filled with the thought: My one need is humility. And let us believe that what He shows, He gives; what He is, He imparts. As the meek and lowly One, He will come in and dwell in the longing heart.

Saturday's Practice:

Plan to and secretly serve someone in your life today. Do not glory in it, do it with no thought of self, only care for the person you are serving.