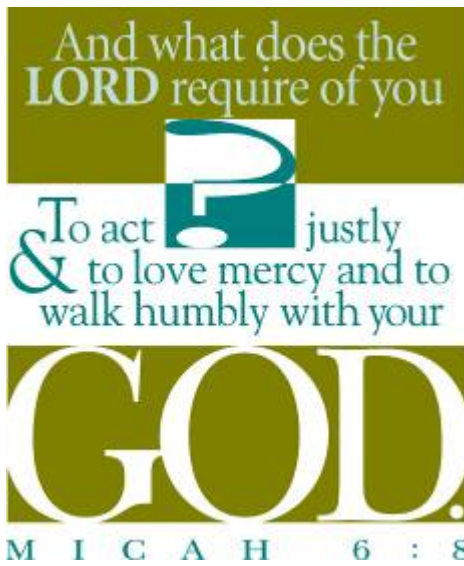


TAKING PRIDE IN HUMILITY

Dr. Fred Fourie ~Sunday, August 13, 2006



Micah 6: 6-8: "With what shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before God on high? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and **what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?**

1 Corinthians 1: 26-31: Consider your own call, brothers and sisters: not many of you were wise by human standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. **But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, things that are not, to reduce to nothing things that are, so that no one might boast in the presence of God.** He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification and redemption, in order that, as it is written, "Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord."

Matthew 5:1-12 When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying: **"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. "Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. "Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. "Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. "Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.**

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It is great to be back in the CBCC pulpit. There is nowhere else that I would rather be! A few days ago, we walked in the Historic City of Delft in the Netherlands. **Unexpectedly we landed in intermitted rain-showers without raincoats.** The choice was either to get wet or to give up visiting the fantastic places that we came from so far to see. At one point, we were exhausted from all the walking, waiting under a leaking canopy for a small break in the weather, before scurrying to the next place. A few others reached the spot before us. Another tourist assured me that the definition of a vacation is **when you spend thousands of dollars to see what rain looks like in a different part of the world.**

In fact, the opposite is true! How thankful and privileged we were to wander and learn amidst the ruins of the cradle of our western civilization to in Italy and Greece. We once again, often unexpectedly, became aware of beauty in nature that defies human description.

After a period of looking, enjoying, taking in – a familiar tune was constantly in my mind: **O Lord, My God! When I in awesome wonder; consider all the worlds your hands**

have made. I see the stars; I hear the rolling thunder, your power throughout the universe displayed. Then Sings my soul, my Savior God to you; How great Thou art - How great Thou art!

It was also a time to think, pray, wonder and wrestle with the Quo Vadis question and plan for the fall program here in CBCC. New understanding – new insights – new experiences – enough inspiration to return to this beloved pulpit with new enthusiasm and with so much joy.

At times when I feel so insignificant, so small and even overwhelmed with the challenging road ahead, the familiar and well-loved scripture in Micah 6 verse 8 - become as clear as seldom before. "What does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God? Born out of our faith, love and gratitude for the gift of Jesus Christ - we resolve to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with our God.

Being a Minister over many years directed me repeatedly to walk humbly with God. A colleague of mine, with a keen sense of humor, says that the typical Congregation's prayer is, "Lord, if you would keep our Minister humble, we promise to keep him poor!" A good laugh – but not true!

I remember how pleased I was during the eighties when, unexpectedly, I ago a large high school senior class voted for me to deliver their graduation sermon. Afterwards I spoke of the invitation as a truly significant honor. Only later, the truth reached my ears. In fact, the students made the selection by picking a Sunday and attending a number of churches. Their purpose was to time the sermons. They chose the minister who gave the shortest sermon to deliver their graduation sermon. My significant moment became a humbling experience!

Let us face it – humility is not in over supply in our times! Female rapper Queen Latifah was asked about the sin of pride. "Pride is a sin?" she responded. "I wasn't aware of that." "I don't think pride is a sin . . . I think some idiot made that up." The Bible says, "But to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with God." We could be in trouble if we put this verse up for a vote today. Who wants to walk humbly?

Think of a verse from the Sermon on the Mount: "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." In contrast we say, "If you try being meek in today's world, you will pay a price." I Corinthians says, ". . . but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong . . . God has chosen, the things that are not, that He might nullify the things that are, that no one should boast before God."

There is something to be said for being humble. There is something noble, something saintly about being meek. Remember, being humble does not mean being a doormat! Many people are mistaken for being humble just because they have back trouble--they have no spine! They are not humble. They are simply cowards. That is not the kind of meekness Jesus was praising! If Jesus had been meek in the sense of being timid, a pushover, he never would have ended up on a cross! Jesus was strong, a man of conviction who did not let others intimidate him.

At times in our lives, all of us will be in deep water. At such times, where will we put our trust?

Will we put it in our keen intellect?

Will we put it in our robust health?

Will we put it in our stocks and bonds or the equity in our home?

There will come a time when all of these will fail us. If we put our trust in ourselves--our accomplishments, our possessions, our investments--there will come a time, regardless of how much we have accumulated, when we will stare into the darkness and feel the waters of de-

feat and death rise around us. But if we put our faith in God, if we confess that our strength and our ability are inadequate **but that God's strength and God's ability will never fail, then we will discover why the humble and the meek of this world are blessed.**

Christian humility is not cowardice. It is not a summons to be a doormat. Rather it is an invitation to work behind the scenes in an enterprise greater than any of us could ever accomplish on our own; it is an invitation to appreciate the simple blessings in life; and it is an invitation to trust God whose strength will never fail. **What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with God?**

“Forbid it, then, that I should boast, save in the death of Christ, my God; All the vain things that charm me most I sacrifice them to Christ's blood.”

**AMEN**