

BOLD HUMILITY



Scripture:

Psalm 96:1-9

¹O sing to the LORD a new song; sing to the LORD, all the earth. ²Sing to the LORD, bless his name; tell of his salvation from day to day. ³Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous works among all the peoples. ⁴For great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; he is to be revered above all gods. ⁵For all the gods of the peoples are idols, but the LORD made the heavens. ⁶Honor and majesty are before him; strength and beauty are in his sanctuary.

⁷Ascribe to the LORD, O families of the peoples, ascribe to the LORD glory and strength. ⁸Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name; bring an offering, and come into his courts. ⁹Worship the LORD in holy splendor; tremble before him, all the earth.

Luke 7:1-10

¹After Jesus had finished all his sayings in the hearing of the people, he entered Capernaum. ²A centurion there had a slave whom he valued highly, and who was ill and close to death. ³When he heard about Jesus, he sent some Jewish elders to him, asking him to come and heal his slave. ⁴When they came to Jesus, they appealed to him earnestly, saying, "He is worthy of having you do this for him, ⁵for he loves our people, and it is he who built our synagogue for us." ⁶And Jesus went with them, but when he was not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to say to him, "Lord, do not trouble yourself, for I am not worthy to have you come under my roof; ⁷therefore I did not presume to come to you. But only speak the word, and let my servant be healed. ⁸For I also am a man set under authority, with soldiers under me; and I say to one, 'Go,' and he goes, and to another, 'Come,' and he comes, and to my slave, 'Do this,' and the slave does it." ⁹When Jesus heard this he was amazed at him, and turning to the crowd that followed him, he said, "I tell you, not even in Israel have I found such faith." ¹⁰When those who had been sent returned to the house, they found the slave in good health.

This is the Word of the Lord! Thanks be to God!



Brene Brown is a PhD sociologist who researched vulnerability and shame. As she describes vulnerability, she encourages humility and authenticity. The three, vulnerability,

humility and authenticity all are key ingredients to successful relationships as well.

Brown's recent video describing why being vulnerable is so essential for growth and

psychological health was shown to the congregation.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AO6n9HmG0qM>

VULNERABILITY AND COURAGE

Vulnerability and courage are foundational elements that enable us to be “boldly humble.” It takes courage to allow others to see us as we truly are and present our authentic self to the world. Without mustering up the courage to be this way in life, we fumble through life anxiously trying to cover up how we really feel and who we truly are.

There is great reward in being boldly humble. When we humbly present our authentic selves to the world, then we are able to have authentic relationships and less stress along our journey in life.

BOLDLY HUMBLE

Jesus was boldly humble. He was the “servant leader” who came to earth to show us how much God loves us and how to love each other, by washing feet, touching lepers and other outcasts, by listening to the life stories of those who committed adultery and cheated on their tax collecting. Jesus humbled himself by being vulnerable and humble alongside those who the Roman Jewish society saw as misfits. But he also built friendships with wealthy leaders in the community, such as Joseph of Arimethea who donated the tomb where they eventually laid Christ’s body.

Just think about your friends and relatives. Who do you trust the most, the ones who pretend all is perfect in life or the ones who authentically share with you their struggles and their joys?

I feel most comfortable around those who share what they have learned from their mistakes and failures in life.

JESUS’ AUTHENTICITY

Reverend Dr. Eric Barreto commented about this passage in Luke on a blog called Day One. He said, “Jesus had a terrible reputation. He spent time with the wrong kind of people. He ate with the grungy and despised.” He associated with the despicable. He reached out to the poor, the broken, the marginalized, those who didn’t have the right clothes to wear, those who didn’t know how to talk articulately. Those who didn’t know where they were going to get their next meal were some of Christ’s favorite people.

But Jesus also found himself among the powerful of his time. He often associated with people of means and influence. All of this authenticity probably helped the Centurion feel he could trust our Lord and Savior.

A GENTLENESS OF SPIRIT

According to Luke 7, Jesus is busy. He is rushing to Capernaum to take a rest after teaching a memorable Sermon on the Mount. Part of that sermon is called, The Beatitudes. One of the most famous beatitudes is: “Blessed are the Meek for they shall inherit the earth.” The audience who heard this must have thought he meant the wealthy will inherit the earth. But the Greek word translated “blessed” in this verse can also be translated “happy.” The idea is that a person will have joy and be happy if he or she is meek. Meekness is a spiritual gift. It doesn’t mean doormat or shrinking violet. The Greek word translated “meek” refers to a gentleness of spirit, or humility. In the long run those who are gentle of spirit and humble are those with more peace and less stress in their lives. That is how you inherit the earth, through peacefulness.

THE CENTURION’S REQUEST

So back to Capernaum and Jesus who was ready for a rest. Even though he was probably exhausted, Jesus could not ignore the heartfelt, faith-filled plea from a Roman centurion. What made Jesus take the time to listen to his request for healing of his favorite slave?

I think it is interesting to analyze the centurion’s behavior in this story. First, he decides to wield his power by asking for a home visit from Jesus.

Then he changes his mind and realizes his unworthiness to impose himself on Christ's agenda, so he asks that Jesus heal his servant from afar. This humility and deep faith in the healing power of Jesus showed Christ that this was no ordinary centurion but a true believer in him.

But it took humility first for his faith to be realized. When the centurion humbled himself he realized he was asking too much. It was then that Jesus realized this man had faith greater than any others in all of Israel.

The centurion had come to faith in Jesus before he even met him. He had heard about Jesus and that was enough. What he had heard he believed and the faith that formed was very deep despite his lack of evidence proving who Jesus was.

The centurion was humble enough to have deep faith in Christ without proof, and then he got the proof later, in the healing of his friend. They were mutually humble.

HOW HUMBLE ARE YOU?

How humble are you? Has your humility helped you with your faith? Has vulnerability helped you get through life authentically?

Humility is the true key to success. But successful people can lose their way at times. They may start out humble but over time begin to feel omnipotent and overindulge themselves.

Humility halts the arrogance and self-indulgence trap. Humble people tend to share their resources and are better at networking, which helps them be successful in the long run.

Henri Amiel, the Swiss moral philosopher once said, "There is no respect for others without humility in oneself." And he also said, "Life is short and we have never enough time for gladdening the hearts of those who are traveling the dark journey with us. Be swift to love, make haste to be kind."

Mother Teresa connected humility to strength in a similar way to Brene Brown's theory of authenticity through vulnerability. Mother Teresa said, "If you are humble, nothing

will touch you; neither praise nor disgrace because you know what you are."

Bold humility with authentic authority is about being a leader who is willing to become last and the least and the servant of all.

The Bible has many verses that encourage humility. Two of my favorites are:

- First Peter 5:5-6 says, "Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."
- James 4 says, "Humble yourselves, before the Lord and he will lift you up!"

HUMILITY ON THE PLAYGROUND

I learned a hard lesson about humility and non-violence on the playground with my friend Susan when I was just six years old. Susan was being picked on and hit by some of the mean kids during recess. They were making fun of her big nose. Her nose was big, but she was smaller than I was in first grade. So I ran up and decided to sit beside Susan and show my support of her while she was being picked on.

Normally, I would have started to fight with the bullies to protect her. But I guess I realized we were outnumbered that day. So I just sat beside her and the group circled us both and hit us on the back. Thank goodness the group ran out of steam after awhile because we didn't react. We acted like we couldn't feel it. When recess was over I never told the teacher on them. But for some reason, after that the mean kids left both me and Susan alone. They got the message through our humble protest against their bully behavior that we were not going to meet their violence with violence. Humility won the day that day and taught me a big lesson for life about being brave enough to be vulnerable.



**BOLDLY HUMBLE,
AUTHENTIC, VULNERABLE**

Jesus calls us to be humble, not because he wants us to be weak but because he wants us to be bold and strong. When you admit mistakes, apologize, ask for and give forgiveness, and when you are willing to help another in need expecting nothing in return, then you are being in the world the way God wants you to be, boldly humble, authentic, and vulnerable.

When we are not that way; when we succumb to the pressure to go along with the popular crowd that is making fun of or neglecting a weaker person, then we are not thinking or acting the way of Jesus.

I want to close with a thought from Wendell Berry who warns us about thoughtlessly following the loud, boastful and greedy. Berry's quote seems especially pertinent for this surprising era where some people are promoting someone who is the opposite of humble. Berry gives this warning from his book titled:

Sabbaths

If we have become a people incapable of thought, then brute-thought of mere power and mere greed will think for us.

If we have become incapable of denying ourselves anything, then all that we have will be taken from us.

If we have no compassion we will suffer alone; we will suffer alone the destruction of ourselves.

These are merely the laws of this world as known to Shakespeare, as known to Milton.

When we cease from human thought, a low and effective cunning stirs in the most inhuman minds.

So may we be thinking, compassionate, humble people who encourage others to be so brave. Amen.

Benediction:

And may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you now and forever more. Amen



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