

## **“Walk Humbly with God”**

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Today we conclude this journey through our new vision/mission statement with a look at the phrase “...walk humbly with your God.” (slide) Remember that this comes from Micah, chapter 6. Micah has set this passage up as a trial in a courtroom in which Israel has been charged with lack of faithfulness to Yahweh, who has been faithful to them. Micah asks Israel what do they think God wants from them in the way of worship. Does God want sacrifices of thousands of rams, or of ten thousand rivers of oil, or even the sacrifice of their firstborn? No, thunders Micah, what God wants in the way of worship is for God’s people to “do justice, to act mercifully and to walk humbly with your God.” Words that still ring true for us today.

To walk humbly with our God.

There are so many great stories and sayings about humility.

After resigning his pastorate to go lead another church, a pastor was approached by a lovely older member of the congregation. She wept over the pastor’s decision to leave and said, “Things will never be the same.”

The minister tried to console her, saying, “Don’t worry, I’m confident you will get a new pastor who is better than I.”

She continued to sob and replied, “That’s what the last three pastors have said, ...but they just keep getting worse.”

Winston Churchill was once asked, “Doesn’t it thrill you to know that every time you make a speech, the hall is packed to overflowing?”

“It *is* quite flattering,” replied Churchill, “But whenever I feel that way, I always remember that if instead of making a political speech I was being hanged, the crowd would be twice as big.”

Golda Meir told a colleague: “Don’t be humble; you’re not that great.”

Oscar Wilde: “The nicest feeling in the world is to do a good deed anonymously, and then have someone find out.”

Lord Longford wrote: “In 1969 I published a small book on Humility. It was a pioneering work which has not, to my knowledge, been superseded.”

As we look at this phrase to “walk humbly” let’s note that *some scholars have pointed out that the word “humbly” might better be understood as “carefully” or “circumspectly.” The key word in this verse is “walk”. We are to walk with God, careful to put God first and to live in conformity with God’s will. Our life pilgrimage is likened to a walk with God as our constant companion. (New Interpreter’s Bible, vol. VII, p. 580)*

Scripture gives us numerous examples of those who walked with God: Enoch, the father of Methusaleh. Genesis 5:22: “Enoch walked faithfully with God 300 years...” In the next chapter of Genesis Noah is introduced with these words: “This is the account of Noah and his family. Noah was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time, and he walked faithfully with God.”

Skip ahead many centuries. When King Josiah, one of the few good guys among the kings of Judah, was given the book of law found during the reconstruction of the temple, his heart was moved and he wanted to lead his people back into right relationship with God. In II Kings 23 we

read, “The king stood by the pillar and made a covenant before the LORD, to walk after the LORD, and to keep God’s commandments and God’s testimonies and God’s statutes with all his heart and all his soul, to carry out the words of this covenant that were written in this book. And all the people entered into the covenant.” The covenant to walk after the Lord. (Idea from sermon by Cara Shonamon)

Of course, who is the most famous example of walking with God? Jesus. He began his ministry by going away to be alone in the wilderness, to listen to God as he discerned just what sort of Messiah God was calling him to be. Throughout his ministry Jesus would get up early to pray, go away alone at night to pray, to be renewed by focusing on God.

So to walk humbly with God means to put God first, to know God through the reading of scripture, to take time to listen to God, to seek first God’s righteousness and God’s will.

A few more examples. We might think of Mother Teresa as someone who clearly “walked humbly with God.”

A couple of more recent examples of people who walked humbly with God: I think of two 20<sup>th</sup> century farmers from this congregation: Edgar St. Martin, Steve’s dad, and Ed Chadwick, my dad. Men who were physically strong, and spiritually strong, who knew the scriptures and lived them. Who were scrupulously honest in their business dealings, who gave of themselves in service to their community by serving on the school board, who were active in the church, serving as elders, trustees, ushers, as mentors to young people. When Edgar served as liturgist he was a marvelous reader of scripture. Neither man boasted of their accomplishments. They didn’t care who received credit. They walked humbly with God and were powerful influences on many of us who were privileged to know them.

Whom do you know from your life that walks or walked humbly with God?

(People from the congregation shared.)

Two more examples of walking humbly with God. It has been suggested that the Women's March in January of 2017 was an example of walking humbly with God.

And finally this story, also from a march. (Quoted in a sermon by Donna Giver-Johnston, pastor of Community Presbyterian Church of Ben Avon, PA.) In Atlanta, there are two Presbyterian Churches right across the street from each other. In between, on the street, one summer Sunday a few years ago, there was a parade, people standing up and marching for the rights of gay and lesbian (LGBTQ) people. On one side of the road, members of a Presbyterian church protested and called the marchers names and said they were sinners going to hell.

The other Presbyterian church took a different approach. They poured water into paper cups and stood along the route handing out cups of water to those who walked by. An old woman—well into her 80s—diligently filled up cups of water and put them on a tray. She was a little unsteady on her feet, but that did not stop her. She began to walk out into the street, offering cups of water to people as they marched by. But she did not stop there. She continued all the way across the street, to the other side, to where her Presbyterian sisters and brothers were shouting insults at the marchers. She said not a word. She simply lifted up her tray and offered them a drink of water.