Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Humility: An Essential Element for Ministry
Scripture: Luke 9:46-56
Code: 80-293

Have you noticed how easy it is to be proud when you're right? Notice that? How hard it is to be humble when you're right? Well, we're right. Our theology's right. Our understanding of the word of God is right. We get it. Our view of Scripture as the inherent revelation of the holy God is right. Our understanding of the gospel is right. It's biblical. It's correct. We have the right message to preach to the world. And in all honestly, it is hard to be humble when you're right.

I'm not saying we're infallible. I know I have errors in my understanding of Scripture. I just don't know where they are. Could somebody please point them out to me? I'll be more than happy to change. But we're right. We were right about what's most important in the whole world. I don't know if I'm particularly right about political issues or economic issues or social issues. And a lot of things I don't wanna say I'm right about, but I do understand the word of God. And so do you. And sometimes, because we're right, and because we know the truth, and because we love the truth, because we understand the truth, we can become intolerant and heavy-handed. And we need to learn humility.

We have to speak the truth in love. We have to be patient and gentle and humble. And it's hard when you're right. And I'll tell you something else, we live in a world that exalts self-love, self-satisfaction, self-promotion. It just exalts self. And it's really considered virtuous to exalt yourself. And so here we are, forced to live in a counterculture way. To be models of selfless humility in a world that sees that as a weakness.

But the Bible sees pride as a very ugly sin. It is the Devil's sin. It's what got him and all the other angels who joined his rebellion thrown out of heaven. It's basically what got Adam and Eve thrown out of the Garden. It is that damning sin that produces rebellion against God and his law and his commandments. It is pride that seeks to dethrone God, and seeks to strike at his absolute perfect sovereignty and his majesty, and seeks to replace him with self. And pride grips every human heart.

That's why it's so hard to come to Christ. That's why the gate is narrow, and that's why the way is hard, and that's why you press into the Kingdom, because it's hard to bring yourself to hate yourself, and deny yourself. Self-hate, as Jesus said, "is essential. You cannot come into my kingdom if you don't hate your family and even hate yourself," he said. It's hard to deny yourself. To refuse to associate any longer with the person you are. To set aside your own desires, ambitions, dreams and goals, and come naked and empty-handed inpenenton, broken and contrite. Hard to be humble.

It wasn't too many years ago when a young, wide-eyed seminary student in his first year said to me one day, "Father MacArthur, how did you finally overcome pride?" I said, "Oh, it was three or four years ago when I knocked that one off." What a question. Nobody will ever overcome pride until we're out of this flesh. Pride remains in our fallen flesh. It will stay there until glorification. Pride has to be broken for people to be saved, and it has to be continually broken for people to be sanctified. It's not a once broken in a contrite heart. It's a permanently broken and contrite heart. But humility comes hard, especially if you're right. And I guess I have a fear that, we've been spending a week at this conference nailing down the things we're right about, and doing everything we can to supercharge you and motivate you and energize you to go out and fight the battle for the truth. And I just don't wanna have you arrive at your place of ministry with a big club, ready to pound on people who can't get the picture quite clear that you're right and they're wrong. And the more you know, and the more mature you are, the more impact your ministry has had, and the more blessing upon your life, and the more you feed your pride. In fact, in the second letter to the Corinthians, apostle Paul said, "The Lord sent along a messenger of Satan," actually an angalas of Satan. That's a satanic angel. That's a demon. He sent along a demon I believe in the group of false teachers who have come to Corinth and ripped and shredded that church. And it was so devastating; it was like literally running a spear through Paul. The agony of watching a church in which he had invested so much of his life be so shredded by false teaching. It pierced his heart, and he prayed three times for the Lord to remove this thing. But he recognized that the Lord had sent along a thorn or a spear to ram through his otherwise proud flesh, he says, 2 Corinthians 12, "to keep me from exalting myself," because I've had so many revelations. Been to heaven and back, seen things unspeakable, caught up to the third heaven, had personal private appearances of the Lord, Jesus Christ, post-resurrection. Plenty to be proud of. Views so mightily in the gentile world, given all the Epistles. Lot to be proud about. And if the Lord needs you to humble his otherwise proud, blessed servant, he will even send a demon, inspired group of false teachers, in the purposes of his providence, into a church to humble its pastor.

It is essential that we understand how important humility is. Out of that, Paul said, "I prayed three times that the Lord would stop this, and three times he said, 'No. My grace is sufficient. Your power will be perfected in your'", what? In your weakness. It's when you come to the end of your self that you're really powerful.

This was the problem with Jesus and his disciples. Open your Bibles to Luke 9. Do you realize that for three years total, it's at least two plus years, by the time you get into chapter 9 of Luke, the disciples have been with Jesus. This is a 24/7 deal. You talk about an education? 24 hours a day, seven days a week, they're in the presence of Jesus, and everywhere is a classroom, and everything is a lesson. It is relentless teaching. And everything Jesus ever taught them was absolutely right. Everything was absolutely true. Everything was a true interpretation of a divine mind. They were taught perfectly. They were right. In addition to being right about everything, they were given

authority to represent Jesus Christ, and to proclaim the gospel of the Kingdom from town to town and village to village, and they were given so much authority that if they went into that place and somebody did not receive their message, they were to pronounce a judgment on those people, shake the dust off their feet, and get out. That's a head-trip for a bunch of nobodies. They were given the power to cast out demons. They were given the power to heal diseases. They were common, ordinary guys given this immense amount of truth, authority, divine power, to wield in the name of Jesus Christ. And I'm telling you, for the most part, their flesh was having a very difficult time not being proud. And so, it was necessary for our Lord to teach them on many occasions what it was to be humble.

One of those is in the ninth chapter of Luke. And it really is three incidents. And we're just gonna take the three, and we're gonna go to school with Jesus in the school, not of theology, but of humility. Verse 46. Now you have to know one thing before we read verse 46. They have just received their power at the beginning of chapter nine, power and authority over demons, healing diseases, proclaiming the kingdom, pronouncing judgment on cities, shaking the dust off their feet. There they went, in verse 6, "preaching the gospel, healing everywhere." To add to that, three of them, Peter, John and James, according to verse 28, had an incredible experience. They were taken up to a mountain with Jesus, and there he pulled aside his flesh, and he was transfigured, and they saw the shining glory of God. And they also met Moses and Elijah on the mount. Now, you talk about an amazing, astonishing, unique, unequaled experience. Here they are, with all this power, all this authority, this great kingdom message, the representatives of Messiah, having seen the greatest Old Testament figure, the law giver, Moses, the greatest Old Testament prophet in many minds, Elijah, personally, post-resurrection, on the mountain, and the transfigured Christ. Really hard to be humble.

So they come down from the mountain, and they're having their regular argument. Verse 46, "An argument started among them as to which of them might be the greatest." You can understand it. You can hear it. One of them says, well, you never know. It could be me. And James says, well if it was gonna be you, you'd been on the mountain with us. So the group is narrowed to three. We were taken up on the mountain, you weren't. And it might have gone like this. In the last village we were in, how many did you heal? Well, I had some minor healings. Huh, I had five major healings. You can hear the argument. Who sits next to Jesus most often at dinner?

Now remember this, there are 12 apostles. There are four lists in the Bible of them, Matthew, Mark, Luke and Acts each has a list of the 12. In every list, there are three groups of four, and they're always in the same group. The names mixed in the group, but you're never out of your group. And the groups have descending intimacy with Christ. They were not all intimately involved with Jesus. Now, every time those lists are given, everybody stays in his group. The names mingle, but the first name in each group never changes. So there were leaders in the groups. The little group of three had a recognized leader in each case, and the first name in all the lists is always Peter. Peter was

the leader over the leaders of the groups. So, put it simply, there was a pecking order. It was a matter of the nature of people, an actual giftedness. And they just sort of fell into those little groups, and maybe it had something to do with their personality. Group one, very bold. We don't have to question Peter's boldness, do we? I mean, if he wasn't in group one at the beginning, he would be in group one pretty quick. James and John are with him there, called sons of thunder, so they thundered their way into group one, whether they were invited or not. So you can see that there's a pecking order going there. And this debate goes on all the time. They lived in a world of hierarchical understanding. They lived in a world of ranking, which is still true in the world. They were forever going along arguing over who is the greatest, and comparing all of their spiritual experiences, all their opportunities to display power, etc, their intimate times with Jesus, and even this incredible experience on the mountain.

So here we are, faced with the issue of pride. They are right. Their message is right. They're authorities from God. They are his chosen representatives, and they are unable to deal with this lofty calling. It's hard to be humble when you're right. But it's necessary. And in this text, we're going to see Jesus teach humility. Verse 46 sets itself in Capernium, sort of the central location for the Galilean ministry, which had been going on over a year now. And maybe it's in a home, maybe it's in Peter's home. They had just returned from traveling. They're back together again, and on the road, there was this debate. And it was a heated one. It got so heated, that James and John asked their mother to go to Jesus and plead their case to sit on his right and his left hand. And why did they do that? Because their mother was related to Jesus' mother. So they thought they had the inside family track. Blood is thicker than water. They finally arrive at this place in Capernium, and this is what's going on. And now we hear from Jesus, lessons on humility.

But let's look at this section of Scripture from the viewpoint of seeing the pride and what it does. First point, pride ruins unity. Pride ruins unity. By the way, there are a number of other places where the Lord confronts this competitiveness. This one is very instructive. Pride ruins unity, verse 46, "An argument arose among them." It's not good. Dealigismasof the date, the battle, arguing back and forth, dialoguing back and forth, fracturing their unity. They were a team. They were a unit. They were one. They weren't supposed to be competing with each other. But they were called, commissioned, commanded, empowered as an apostolate. They were the first generation of gospel preachers who would give their lives for Christ, and needed to yield their hearts to one another, and not destroy the unity of that crucial mission. Pride destroys unity. It ruins unity. Jesus, even when he was at the end of life, right near the cross, speaking to them about his own personal suffering, couldn't move their attention to that, because they were too busy alienating each other their desires for personal glory. They debated about this right up to the very end. Pride destroys relationships. It did it in Corinth, didn't it? _____ I am of Christ, elevating people, lining up behind these people and creating chaos out of that kind of carnality. In 2 Corinthians chapter 12, that same chapter I commented on earlier, as Paul writes this letter to them, he says, "I'm afraid to come." I'm afraid to come and see you. Earlier, he said, I don't know if I can come because I can't stand the pain. I don't

know if I can come because I don't think - I don't have any more tears to cry over you. I can't come again to you and suffer. I'm afraid if I come again, I'm gonna find that my labor was in vain, is what he says. I don't know if I can take it. I don't know if I can face you. And here in 2 Corinthians 12:20, he says, "I'm afraid that when I come, I'm gonna find strife, jealousy, angry tempers, disputes, slander, gossip, arrogance, and disturbances. And I'm afraid that God will humiliate me, and I'm gonna mourn over you." I just don't know if I can handle your factions. All a result of pride. That's why in Philippians 1:27, he says, "Strive together. Strive together for the sake of the gospel." Strive together, not competing with each other. He says, "we have the same mind," chapter 2, "maintain the same love, love each the same, united in spirit, intent on one purpose, do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind that each of you regards others more important than yourself, and Christ is your model for that. You thought it not something to be grasped to hold on to, this place with God, but gave it up and became a servant, humble himself to death, even death on a cross." Pride destroys unity. You talk about unity in a church until you're blue in the face, but as long as pride exists, it destroys relationships.

When we can fall to the level where we are more concerned about others than ourselves, when we are more eager to honor others than we are ourselves, then there's some home for unity. "Put on a heart of compassion," he writes to the Colossians, "kindness, humility." Put on love, which is the bond, the glue, of unity. Pride will ruin a unified testimony for the gospel.

Secondly, pride not only ruins unity, it raises relativity. Go back to verse 46. It raises relativity. It makes relativity the issue. And that's exactly what happened. The argument, indicating that this unity was about which of them might be the made zone. The comparatively greater one, is the Greek. The argument about which would be the greater was a legitimate expression of the pride of their hearts. That is just ugly.

Pride desires superiority over others. Pride seeks to elevate itself. Pride compares itself with everybody else, like Paul said in 2 Corinthians about the false teachers, "they compare themselves to themselves." This is what the _____ did. Just sickingly proud. Sickingly self-elevating. They loved, he says, to be noticed by men. They loved the place of honor at banquets. Chief seats in the synagogues. Respectful greetings in the marketplace. They love to be called Rabbi. They love to be called Father. They love to be called leader. But the greatest among you should be your servant, and whoever exalts himself should be humbled, and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted. Earlier, in Matthew 20, he said the same thing. You wanna be chief? Be a servant. Same argument.

Now this is part of the secular world, where everybody fights for the top. Inevitably, pride raises relativity. A proud heart is incessantly comparing himself with others. A third thing to keep in mind here about pride, and here's the real exposure. Pride not only ruins unity and raises relativity, pride reveals sin or depravity. Pride reveals depravity, verse 47, "But Jesus, knowing what they were

thinking in their heart." Whoo. You remember in chapter five, where the Feracesionsscribes were thinking about Jesus? They were musing over thoughts. And Jesus said to them, "why are you reasoning that stuff in your minds?" Whoa. No man needed to tell him what was in the heart of a man. He knew what was in the heart of a man, John 2 says.

This is good. How would you like to spend three years, 24/7, with God reading your thoughts? You'd say I might have to forfeit my ministry. I might have to forfeit my calling. That may be the greatest evidence of God's grace in using us. He does know your thoughts. He knew what they were thinking. In fact, what they were thinking again is Dealigismas,the debate to the dialogue. He knew the debate. He knew the sin that was in their hearts. Pride is sinful. You're exposed. That's sad. You could look at - I don't wanna be proud because I don't wanna create discord and disunity and destroy relationships, which pride does. I don't wanna be proud and live in a relatively comparative kind of environment where you have to find some sort of spiritual pecking order, and everybody considers honors and achievements and all that kind of stuff. I don't wanna get caught up in that. Well then, my friend, don't be thinking that way in your heart, because sooner or later, if that's how you think in your heart, that's how you're gonna be. Given enough time, your heart comes out. Time and truth go hand in hand. Given enough time, the truth about you will show up. A proud man may keep it under wraps for a while. I think that's one reason why some pastors have a very short ministry. Soon as the congregation finds out that they're driven by a proud heart, they lose their credibility.

The Lord then is reacting, not just to pride because of the damage it does, not because of the relativity of it, but because of the sin of it. And so, knowing what they were thinking in their heart, "it took a child and stood him by His side," and it was the heart attitude that caused him to give them the lesson on humility. "A child small enough to hold," according to Mark 9:36, "and yet grown enough to stand up before Jesus picked the child up." A little child. And this is in Matthew 18. You can't even enter the kingdom unless you come as a child. What's the image we're trying to say? No achievement. No achievement. No accomplishment. You come really void of anything on your own that can earn you any place with God. I don't care how many degrees you have, how widely you've read, how clever you are in communication, how strong a leader you are, you don't with anything. You come as a child. No greatness belongs to a child. Children aren't great. Child then becomes the best illustration of a believer in Matthew 18, that's the whole chapter is about a believer. A believer is a child. Children were considered the weakest and the most ignored and vulnerable of all people. They had little value, since most of them didn't survive to become adults. And Jesus takes this little child as an illustration. Look, you got the wrong perspective. You're viewing yourself as if you're kings, as if you're great men. You've got to get this thing reversed here. Your children. The sin of pride fails to recognize your dependence, and lack of achievement and accomplishment. What does Paul say? What is his testimony? "I am what I am by," what? "By the grace of God." Pride ruins unity, it raises relativity, and reveals depravity.

Number four. Pride rejects deity. Look at verse 48. This is potent. He said to them, with that little child right there as a living object lesson, "Whoever receives this child in My name receives Me. Whoever receives Me receives Him who sent Me." Wow. Jesus is saying, I think in a unique way, that children do belong to him. But more than this, this physical child, he is talking about those who are his own. In Matthew 18, he made that clear. He said, "Unless you become as a child, you can't enter my kingdom." And then all of us are children in the kingdom, without any merit, without any achievement, without any accomplishment. And Matthew 18 says, "you have to receive one another as children, because the way you receive one another is the way you receive me. And every believer that comes to me, Christ comes to me. And every believer Christ is in, the father is in." That's what he says. You receive the child, you receive me. You receive me, you receive the one who sent me, the father. Pride rejects the presence of God in other believers.

When I view a believer, there's only one way to view that believer, and that is as Christ to me. As Christ to me. How can you then say as a pastor, well, I don't have time for those kind of people. I can't be bothered with that guy. Get me out of here. I've had enough. Wait, who's coming to you in this person? This is Christ, and this is the father. Jesus took it all the way down to the point where he actually did embrace the little children because in a special way they belong to God, and the disciples said, what in the world are you doing wasting time with them? Get rid of them. It took the rabbinic view. And Jesus said, whoa. Permit the little ones to come to me, and forbid them not, for such is the kingdom of heaven, not only are they in reality a special care of the father, but they're illustrative of the fact that believers who are children in the spiritual sense are, in a special way, the fathers. That's why in Matthew 18, you have the first instruction to the church. The church is mentioned in chapter 16, "I'll build my church," chapter 18, second time the church is mentioned, where it talks about if somebody since and doesn't repent, tell it to the church. Matthew 18, first instructions to the church, first warnings to the church, first warning. "If you cause one of these little ones who believe in me to stumble, you'll be better off drowned." Pretty serious. That's the first instruction from the Lord of the church to the church. You better be careful how you treat other believers. If you lead them to stumble into sin, and there are a lot of ways to do that, you'd be better off dead. Do not despise one of these little ones who believes in me. And when you receive them, you receive me. That's all in Matthew 18. That's why he says apparently if your hand or your foot is causing you to do this, you better cut it off. If your eye is causing you to do this, you better pluck it out. And very dramatic and hyperbolic language, he says take drastic action so as not to offend other Christians who belong to me. Why? Because you're offending Christ who dwells in them. In a very real sense, pride rejects deity. Am I better than another believer in whom Christ dwells? Such a thought is ludicrous.

There's a fifth principle that comes out of this lesson. Pride reverses reality. Back to verse 48, "He who is least among all of you, this is the one who is great." Does that upset the world? Does that overturn conventional wisdom, turn it on its head? Whoever is most is great. Whoever is biggest.

Whoever's got their faith on the screen most often. Whoever is the most popular, the most widely known, the most influential, the most powerful, is the greatest. And Jesus flipped it on its head, and said whoever's least is greatest. Just absolutely turned it upside down. Pride reverses reality. The reality is that the lowliest is the greatest. And that's the answer to the question. Who's the greatest? Alright, guys, have a battle for humility, because the lowliest is the greatest. It's the opposite of how fallen minds think. You go back to 1 Corinthians 1, where the apostle Paul says that when the Lord established his church, there were not many noble, not many mighty. But he took the lowly, the base, the weak, the nothings, the nobodies, and it keeps getting lower and lower. And he made up his church of those people in order that the glory might be his, in order that there would be no other explanation for the church other than the purposes of God. We are the lowly. We are the least. And among us who are the least to start with, and who are all children, it should be a battle to see who can serve the most. "Whoever would be chief among you, let him be your servant", Matthew 20. God gives grace to the humble. James says, "not the proud". Pride, you see, reverses reality. You see so much of that even in the Christian world. People who are honored and who are popular and who have accomplished all kinds of things and are associated with bigness who become relentlessly self-promoting. It's just so ugly. It's a battle we all have to fight, especially if we've been blessed. But the battle we ought to be fighting is to see if we can be lowly like Jesus was.

Pride ruins unity, it raises relativity, it reveals depravity, it rejects deity, it reverses reality. Number six, pride reacts with exclusivity. Proud people just think the world revolves around them. And for this, we come to a second incident. Verse 49, and I'm just giving you the overview. Verse 49, "John answered and said, 'Master, we saw someone casting out demons in your name, and we tried to hinder him because he does not follow along with us.'" Pride reacts with exclusivity. John had just come down from the mountain of transfiguration. John was a dynamic, driven, compelling son of thunder, not the meek person that we often think of him. John has just had the most incredible experience of any person ever, along with Peter and James. He's feeling his oats on the intimate circle, and he comes across along with some of the others, somebody casting out demons in the name of Jesus Christ. And he says, we tried to hinder him because he doesn't follow along with us. And I think there's some integrity in his question. He says, master. It's very respectful, epistates, means ruler. He's submitting to the Lordship of Christ. He says that - it's almost as if he says that, was that the right thing to do? We said to him, hey, buddy, you're not in our group. You're not in our denomination. You don't wear our label. Well, he was casting out demons in your name. It doesn't say he tried. It said he was. Apparently, he had some power. Maybe he was one of the 70 was kind of was out on his own. But he was doing it consistent with your name, and your will. That's what in your name means, consistent with who you are, and he was apparently a believer, though not an apostle. Trying to do something for the glory of Christ. And he says, we tried to hinder him. And the Greek construction here is apparently in an ongoing way, which may have meant the guy kept doing what he was doing, and they were trailing along trying to stop him in a prolonged effort. Why? Because he doesn't follow along with us. He's not in our group. But pride is always tactarian. It's always narrow. It's always pinched down. To us for no more, shut the door. This is not an

unbeliever like Simon Magus, trying to buy the Holy Spirit's powers operating in my name. This is that ugly sectarianism in the church. And people say that, they may ask me questions like that. Well, I saw you associate with so and so, and I saw so and so associate with you, and I don't know about that. Look, if I want to be associated with people who are a part of my group, it would be a lonely world. Pride wants to do that. Pride wants to say, I know more than you. I don't know if I can work with you. You need correction. You need help. You're not quite there. You get there, and I'll work with you. That's what pride says. Humility says if you're in the name of Christ doing the best to serve Christ, I'll come alongside. Pride is always sectarian. You look at sectarianism, and narrowness, and you're gonna find Pride. There's a latitude. There's a generosity. There's a bigness of heart among the humble. And here came the lesson. Jesus said to him, "Stop that. Stop hindering him. Stop, for he who is not against you is", what? "for you." By the way, no middle ground, huh? Well, I don't know. He's sort of for us. No. No middle ground. If he's in Christ, doing his best to serve Christ, and he's for Christ, stop trying to hinder him. Maybe he's not where he ought to be. But then again, neither are you. Wonderful place for diversity. If you don't think the Lord wants diversity in the church, guess again. The true church, I'm talking about the true and faithful church, is very diverse, isn't it? Very diverse. I've been all over the face of the Earth, and I'm telling you, I've been in every imaginable kind of environment of Christian people who truly love the Lord, Jesus Christ, with every kind of expression of worship in ministry. All I wanna know is, are they for him? Or against him? If they're for him, then I wanna be a part of helping. I don't wanna hinder.

Again, I say it's hard to be humble when you're right. But humble yourself and realize that we're all still in process. For some, the process is a little bit behind you. And do your best to teach them what they need to know to come more in line with Scripture. Humility is equal to greatness. That's the point. Humility is in the hearts of those who purse unity by seeking to exalt others. Humility is in the heart of those who refuse relative comparisons. Humility is in the heart of those who purify the inner person of all selfishness. Humility belongs to those who exalt God alone as the object of worship, when he comes in another believer, they well honor and love that believer, because that believer is Christ to them. Humility belongs to those who understand that the way down is the way up. Humility is characteristic of those who embrace the diversity of true believers.

One more point. One more thing pride does. Pride restrains mercy. Here we come to the third incident. School's still on. The scene changes in verse 51, Galilean ministry ends, "the days are approaching for His ascension," could be his ascension to Jerusalem. Could be his ascension up the cross. Could be his ascension into heaven. I would probably lean towards the latter, that it looks all the way to his ascension to the father, the culmination of everything, and in light of that, he resolutely set his "faith to go to Jerusalem". This then embarks upon the last year of the Lord's ministry, as he moves towards the cross. So the scene changes. The lesson goes on. He resolutely sets his faith to go to Jerusalem. "He sent messengers on ahead of Him," and that's kind of how they did it when they went into ministry in a new area, now in Judea from the end of the Galilean ministry, which closes in verse 50, the ministry begins in Judea in verse 51, and runs all the way through to the end,

with a few short stops in Galilea along the way. But the remainder of the months of his life were spent in Judea. And here we find an illustration of how pride restrains mercy. Mercy is such a lovely word. It's generous. It's kind. It's selfless. It's a sweet word. And it's opposite, merciless, is reserved for the rankest kind of people with the worst vengeance and vitriol, and viciousness.

So the school of humility is still open, as the scene changes, and the lesson is still really important. They're headed now towards Jerusalem. Verse 52 says, "He sent messengers on ahead of him, and they went and entered a village of the Samaritans to make arrangements for Him." He had gone north into Galilea through Samaria. Now he's coming back into Judea, apparently through a village of Samaritans. Again, they were a mixed race of Semite Pagans left over from the Northern Kingdom, left there after the Syrian Invasion, intermarried with Pagans, became loyal to the Assyrian King. They were hated by the Jews as half-breeds who had rejected their race and their faith. The Jews didn't like them at all, and they hated the Jews as well. But of course, the Lord began his ministry and the revelation of his messiahship with a Samaritan woman by a well in John 4, because the gospel was always intended for the world light of the gentiles. And consequently, he goes back to a village of Samaritans. He's headed there to preach the kingdom. He's headed there to do the works to support the message, and as they approach that place, he sends messengers on ahead to make preparations, place to stay, food to eat. And they went. Verse 53, sad. "They didn't receive Him." Don't come to our town. We don't want you. I'm quite sure the apostles gave full disclosure, because they understood who he was back in chapter 9, verse 20, earlier in the same chapter. He said to them, "Who do you say that I am?" Peter answered on behalf of them all and said to Christ of God, they know who he was. The Christ of God is coming to your town. Messiah's coming to your town. The savior of the world is coming to your town. The miracle worker, the great teacher is coming to your town. Real healings could happen. Demons can be cast out. The gospel of the kingdom will be preached. You'll hear the message of salvation, the good news of heaven.

They don't want him. Why? Because he was journeying with his face towards Jerusalem. They hated the Jews. Anybody headed to Jerusalem, they despised. They weren't allowed to worship in Jerusalem. They were half-breed Samaritans. They weren't allowed to go in there. They had to build their own place at Garazim, which is kind of a mixture of Paganism and Judaism in their own kind of worship. And, to make matters worse, in 128 B.C. John _____ had destroyed their temple at Garazim, which just made them hate the Jews more. They were very intolerant. They said, we don't want him. Verse 54, "When His disciples James and John saw this," now they're the sons of thunder, remember, "they said, 'Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?'" When did you ever have the ability to do that, guys? Where are you gonna get that power? We'd like to incinerate them. Well, that's a great reaction to unbelief. That's wonderful. That is a real missionary heart. You think they weren't feeling their transfiguration oats? Where did they get that idea? That's just out of nowhere. Lord, do you want us to command fire from heaven? What made them think like that? Well, they had just been with Elijah. And they remembered the story, incredible story, or Elijah. They were feeling Elijah-like. Go back to 2 Kings 1, just briefly. This

is just amazing. 2 Kings 1, "Moab rebelled against Israel after the death of Ahab." So Israel and Northern Kingdom's got a battle on their hands with the Moabites. "Ahaziah," who is the king of Israel. Not to be confused with Ahaziah, king of Judah, another man. Ahaziah did a dumb thing, he "fell through the lattice in his upper chamber." You know, if you're walking around on the lattice, you better be careful. He feel through "in Samaria," so they're in a Samaritan village, right? So Samaria, they make the connection, ah, we remember what happened in Samaria long ago. When the king falls through the lattice, the capital of the Northern Kingdom in Israel is Samaria. So he becomes ill. He sends his messengers and he says, "Go," get this, this is the King of Israel, "Go inquire of Baal-zebub," who's that? "The god of Ekron," the Philistine God, "whether I shall recover from this sickness." This is a king of Israel telling his messengers to go ask an idol that belongs to the Philistines whether he's gonna recover. Verse 3, "The angel of the Lord said to Elijah the prophet, 'Arise, go meet the messengers.'" Go stop those messengers, "of the king of Samaria and say to them, `Is it because there is no God in Israel that you are going to inquire of Baal-zebub, the king of Ekron?'" What are you doing? Is there no God in Israel? And tell them this, King isn't gonna get off his bed. He's gonna die there. Elijah told them. And he left. And the messengers went back, in verse 5, and they were asked by the king, "Why did you return?" And they explained what happened, that they ran into Elijah, and they explained what he said. The king was mad, really mad. Verse 9, he sent 50 men with a captain of 50 to take Elijah prisoner. They found him, the captain of 50 said, "O man of God, the king says, `Come down,'" which is old Hebrew for you're under arrest. Elijah answered, and said to the captain of 50, "If I am a man of God, let fire come down from heaven and consume you and your 50." Fire came down from heaven and consumed him and his 50. Whoosh. Burnt to a crisp on the spot. The king is stupid. Verse 11, he sends another 50 guys. This is a great way to deplete your force. He sends another 50, with another captain. Verse 11, he says, "O man of God, the king said, `Come down quickly.'" Elijah answered and said to them, "If I am a man of God, let fire come down from heaven and consume you and your fifty." Fire of God came down from heaven and consumed him and his fifty. Now there's 100 fried corpses on the spot. Verse 13, he sends a third 50 with a captain. This guy's at least rational. The third captain comes up, he bows on his knees before Elijah. He begs him. He says, "O man of God, please let my life and the lives of these 50 servants of yours be precious in your sight." Not a real soldier mentality there, huh? This guy's sniveling in fear. "Behold fire came down from heaven and consumed the first two captains of 50 with their fifties. Please let my life be precious in your sight." And the angel of the Lord said to Elijah, "Go down with him, don't be afraid." So he went down with him to the king. And he told the king, you asked Baal-zebub rather than the God of Israel? You're never gonna get out of bed. You're gonna die. Verse 17, he died according to the word of the Lord. Elijah, Samaria, fire from heaven.

Back to Luke 9. We're in a Samaritan village. We just saw Elijah, fire from heaven. That's how they were thinking. We're gonna pull it down. Verse 55, "He turned and said to them," first, a rebuke. It is a rebuke. "You do not know what kind of spirit you're of." You guys have lost it. You can't even control yourself. "The Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives, but to," what? This is a mission of mercy, folks. Listen. Those who hate Christ are not our enemies, they are our mission

field. If this crazy politicized evangelicalism doesn't stop hitting the mission field, we're gonna continue to undermine our testimony. You can't turn the opponents of the gospel into the enemy. We attack everything, everyone, who disagrees with us. Homosexuals, feminists, liberal left, labeling them, assaulting them, calling them names, trying to vote them out of power. They're lost. How do you expect them to act? You would act the same way if you were in the same condition. They're not the enemy. They're the mission field. When will we stop _____ these people for temporal ends, and forfeiting the opportunity for eternal ends? There will be fire, but the fire will be coming later. For now, we're on a mission of mercy.

That little village was saved from fire. It's in Acts 8 that Philip, a deacon in the early church, was preaching in Samaria. Who knows? Maybe some were saved. Many were under his preaching, who escaped the desire of these guys that day in that Samaritan village. Look, even Jesus said, "I didn't come to judge. I came to save." And we're out there on a mission of mercy, folks. We're out there on a mission of mercy. We cannot alienate the very people we are called to reach. But pride will do that every time. Pride restrains mercy. What do you do when you face that? I love it, the end of verse 56, "They went on to another village." Just keep moving. Go to the next place.

We do know the truth. We have the truth. But we must preach the truth with love and humility. Jesus said this, "Be merciful as your father in heaven is merciful. And be humble, as Christ who humbled himself."

Let's pray. Your word is precious. Your word is rich, o God. It is powerful. We thank you for taking us to school with Jesus. May we learn well the lessons of humility. Jesus could have brought the fire down, but he just went to another place. Help us, Lord, to manifest all the characteristics of humility and none of these characteristics of ugly pride. May you be honored in our life and ministry, we pray for your glory. Father, these have been wonderful and rich days, and this morning has been a blessed time of worship. We commend ourselves again to your grace and to your word, which is able to build us up and give an inheritance to us, with the saints in eternal glory, to which we wait with joy. In Christ's name, Amen.

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