

**Recycling Pride**  
**Mark 10:35-46**

Friends, if you had to list the qualities you were looking for in a friend I'm pretty sure that arrogant, egotistical, self-centered and narcissistic would not be at the top of your list.

In fact I'm pretty sure that no one is looking for a proud, envious, greedy, gluttonous, slothful, lustful, and angry person for their best friend, or even as an acquaintance.

These aren't attractive qualities; they cause relationship problems, they drive people away.

We all know how difficult and miserable it can make things if someone in your group of friends, or in your family, or your workplace, or school, or church is beset by one of these seven characteristics.

People don't want to be around those who are characterized by pride, envy, greed, gluttony, lust, sloth or anger...

Now perhaps you're familiar with this particular group of unsavory qualities – not only because you might know some people who are afflicted by them and perhaps you are willing to admit that you are prone to few of them yourself, but also because in this particular combination they are more commonly known as “the seven deadly sins.”

And this list of sins was put together back in mid 300's A.D. by a Greek monk named Evagrius, who lived in the Egyptian desert. Originally it was a list of eight impure thoughts that could be used to assist Christians in the practice of examining their lives in pursuit of spiritual growth.

And eventually this list made its way from Egypt to Rome and in the late 500's A.D. Pope Gregory the Great modified the list to the current seven and identified “Pride” as the root sin of the other six, and from here on they became known as “the Seven Deadly Sins.”

And basically what this list does... is systematize and summarize all of the behaviors, attitudes, and beliefs which

the bible tells us are sinful into seven categories, which are fairly easy to remember and identify in our lives so we are equipped to confess our sins when we've done wrong.

And it also functions as a reminder that even if we have not murdered someone, or had an extramarital affair that we are still prone to the sinful qualities which give birth to those actions just like Jesus reminded the Pharisees in Matt 5 that it is anger which is at the root of murder and lust which is behind the action of adultery.

And it's precisely because these seven sins function as the principal source for so many other sins that they are considered to be deadly.

Now, I know that some people were taught that committing a "Deadly Sin" meant that you basically got kicked off Jesus' team and that would pretty much be it for you – so you'd better behave – but friends... that's just completely unbiblical and it's not true at all.

These sins are considered deadly... simply because they lead to so many other sins – and these sins only illustrate our need to receive Jesus forgiveness – they are not the excuse Jesus is looking for to kick us off the team.

In fact we know this by how Jesus dealt with his own disciples in the passage of scripture that we read this morning.

James and John come to Jesus with a request, which is not a bad thing in itself but I don't know if you noticed the way they approached Jesus?

They come to him and tell him "We want you.... To do for us... whatever we ask!" in other words "Hey Jesus, how about a blank cheque!"

A little bit arrogant don't you think? Who do James and John think they are? This kind of request is presumptuous at best if they had made it of a friend or a fellow fisherman...

It's downright disrespectful to for students to make this kind request from their teacher and given the fact that Jesus is the Messiah, the son of God – to approach Jesus like this... and demand that he agree to give them whatever they want... well it's the height of self-absorption; it's the sin of Pride.

And Jesus' humors them... "what do you want me to do for you?"

And really we shouldn't be surprised at their request but still it's so full of self-importance it makes us shake our heads.

"Let one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory" In other words, make us the two of us the most important and powerful people when you do what you are going to do as the Messiah- ok???

They were probably expecting that Jesus would "come into his glory" when he would use his divine power to lead God's people to victory over the Romans, just like the Judges in the

Old Testament - Gideon, Deborah, or better yet... like King David.

Yes, like King David because the Messiah would rule as King over an era of peace and prosperity that would never end, and all the nations would know Yahweh was the true God and would come to Israel to worship Him – and we think we are ideal candidates to be second only to the Messiah when this all goes down.

Just a wee bit arrogant. Pride is at work.

And it's not just James and John, you see when the rest of the disciples hear about this request the passage says "they became indignant with them."

The rest of the disciples were upset by James and John's request – who do they think they are asking a question like that – it's inappropriate! But I'm fairly certain that what really got the rest of the disciples indignant was that James and John's request offended their own sense of pride.

Why them? Why not me – I’m just as good of a candidate as they are, actually I’m a bit better!

Pride is always so easy to see in others friends, but because it tends to catch us when we are at our best, when we are using our strengths and doing what we do well... it’s much harder to catch when we’re the ones being affected by it.

Pride makes us condescending towards others, it causes us to belittle and devalue others, it makes us self-centered and self-absorbed – so we neglect that which others might need from us - like encouragement, praise, complements, time, attention, help...

And probably the most dangerous aspect of pride and the reason why it’s considered to be the root sin is because it causes us to set ourselves up against God...

We’re smart – and so we believe we know better than God what should happen in our lives...

We’re creative – and so we believe that we should be admired and praised for what we make...

We’re moral – so we believe that we should be able to determine what is right and wrong...

We’re made in God’s image – so we believe that we should be considered gods...

But pride blinds us to the reality that we’re not as good as we think we are, we’re not as important, we’re not indispensable, we’re not infallible...

So as Proverbs 16:18 says *“Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall.”*

Inevitably pride leads to some sort of collapse and we come crashing down from our lofty heights. I’ve certainly been there; done that - I’m sure you’ve experienced that as well.

And finally friends Pride is so dangerous because it can prevent us from getting the help we need. Pride is what makes us figure we can pull ourselves up by our own bootstraps and do a better job next, do it right next time, and

refuse to admit that Sin has warped and twisted us in a way that only Jesus' forgiveness can undo...

And it keeps us from experiencing the healing power of Christian community that we need to help us overcome our tendency to become proud again and also to mend the fences which our pride has destroyed. James 5:16 *"Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed."*

But pride gets in the way of the disciples doing any of this, so Jesus needs to step in and deal with the situation. He gathers them together and teaches them a different way, a path away from pride.

And really friends, all throughout this passage of scripture Jesus is the prime example of someone who could be proud but isn't.

Jesus could have been flattered that James and John had made such a request from him, while it was arrogant to ask it

that way it still shows Jesus is the one who can make the decision and they have to come to him to ask...

But Jesus responded – "that's not my decision to make... God the Father has already determined who will be in those positions." So Jesus doesn't set himself up against God.

Good example, but there is more to it than that. When Jesus rebukes his disciples about their pride he identifies what the problem is.

The disciples are taking their inspiration from the Gentile rulers – their Roman overlords, Ceasar and his Generals, the provincial governors like Pontius Pilate... Ironic isn't it – the very leaders whom the disciples hope Jesus will defeat and free them from... they are the ones the disciples are inspired by.

Inspired by how they use their power to have other's do their bidding and their wishes and accomplish their goals. Inspired

by how grand and important they seem with all the trappings of their office, how people seek them out

But friends what we want to pay special attention to here is how Jesus recycles the pride, how he gets at what sin is twisting and warping so that it manifests itself as pride.

Jesus says “whoever wants to be great!” Friends the energy that sin twists into pride is the desire to be great... power.

Notice that Jesus doesn’t gather the disciples together and say - stop being proud, be humble instead.

That would be rather pointless, because Jesus had a number of disciples who had a high level of “power” that’s just how God created them – think of Peter... and especially James and John. They were strong powerful personalities – and as such they were especially prone to Pride.

One time they had volunteered to call down fire from heaven on Jesus behalf when he was snubbed by a Samaritan village.

And Jesus had a nickname for these two? He called them Windbags, Sons of Thunder – endearing of course...

So Jesus knows it’s pointless to tell them to stop being powerful, instead he instructs them on how they can use their power to serve others – as He himself is doing.

Jesus says “The Son of Man” - a term which denotes power... did not come to be served but to serve and give his life as a ransom for many!

Friends, we all get proud from time to time, but if you are prone to pride – if you frequently are confronted about your arrogance, or presumptuousness, or your self-centeredness – the good news is that you are a “Powerful” person.

And that is good because if you confess your sin of pride to your fellow Christians and ask the Holy Spirit to recycle that pride, you will then be able to use your power to begin to serve others.

And when it comes to building community you will have the opportunity to be an empowering person, an empower leader.

You can look for those who are looking for help, who need help... and you can use your power to help them move closer to the dreams and visions which God has called them to – and you will be humbled... that God has allowed you to touch the lives of others in this significant way.

Friends, when sin twists our God given power we manifest pride. But by the grace of Jesus Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit that pride can be recycled and an empowering leader can emerge...

Friends – is God speaking to you this morning??? Don't let your pride get in the way.

Recycle it!

Lets pray...