

MINISTRY BY MAIL
Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship
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Twentieth Sunday after Trinity, October 21, 2012

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(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)

Hymns: 392, 391, 324:1-5, 412, 424:1-3.

Lessons: 1 Samuel 18:12-23, Philippians 2:1-11, Matthew 20:25-28.

Sermon Text: 1 Peter 5:5-7.

Sermon by Pastor Robert Mehltrittter

In the name of Jesus Christ, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

Have you heard or read a quote like this? "The children now love luxury. They have bad manners, contempt for authority, they show disrespect to their elders.... They no longer rise when elders enter the room. They contradict their parents, ... and are tyrants over their teachers."

Or this one? "The young people of today think of nothing but themselves. They have no reverence for parents or old age. They are impatient of all restraint. They talk as if they alone knew everything and what passes for wisdom with us is foolishness with them. As for girls, they are forward, immodest and unwomanly in speech, behavior and dress."

Doesn't that sound like someone criticizing young people today? Well, the first is attributed to the Greek philosopher Plato, about 400 B.C. and the second is attributed to Peter the Hermit, about 1274 A.D. Regardless of who said either of those things and when, we do have God speaking to us from his inspired word with a specific warning about such sins.

Last week we talked about elders in the church, meaning those who are leaders. Today the Word of God continues with admonitions and encouragement to live our lives in

HUMILITY AND SUBMISSION TO ONE ANOTHER

1. ***"Young men, in the same way be submissive to those who are older."***
2. **In fact, all of you should behave with humility toward one another**
3. **That God *"may lift you up in due time."***
4. ***"Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you."***

The text first turns to ***"Young men."*** ***"Young men, in the same way be submissive to those who are older."*** Submissiveness is not a new idea in Peter's letter. Today he applies it to those who are physically younger.

I think that all of us – young and old – can think of some situation we personally saw in which younger people failed to show appropriate respect for those who are older. Just because many people do something does not make it right, especially in God's eyes. God's ways are different than man's ways. We read in Isaiah 55:8-9: ***"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the LORD. 'As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.'"***

Although we can easily recognize sin in others, we must never fail to look into the mirror of God's law to see ourselves as we really are. The hymns we have already sung today remind us of our "guilt", our "sins", our "iniquities", our "guile", our "delusions". But they also reminded us that our "guilt is pardoned" by our God, that Christ's righteousness "hides and cancels all [our] sins" and that "Jesus sinners doth receive".

Scripture says ***"Young men, ... be submissive to those who are older."*** Peter here is speaking of the same kind of submission that God's Son Jesus Christ lived when we read of the 12-year-old Jesus who stayed

behind in Jerusalem at the temple. When his parents found him after searching for him for three days Scripture tells us ***"Then he went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them."*** (Luke 2:51)

Insubordination is one of the sin sicknesses that has always plagued families and churches. This seems to afflict young men worse than anyone. "No one is going to tell me what to do!"

The pagan and secular idea of manhood is strong self-assertion imposing one's will on everyone else. When anyone bowed to others, it was done only because they were forced to do so and thus was considered degrading or shameful. Christ and the ethics taught in God's Word are necessary in order to see lowly mindedness as a great Christian virtue. For example, we read in Matthew 18:1-4: ***"At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, 'Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?' He called a little child and had him stand among them. And he said: 'I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.'"***

Younger men are to be in proper subjection to the elders in the church. Remember that elders as Peter is using it here are leaders in the church. Elders are not just older people per se. This sentence is directed specifically to you who are younger – this would be the youthful people in the church. In Jewish thinking, this would be anyone under 30 and perhaps even some who were older.

Those who are in training in learning the word of God, those who are preparing for leadership roles often become impatient with the leaders. The leaders are often not ready to move as quickly or as radically as the young people are. Particularly in time of persecution the willingness of young people to take radical stands without considering the consequences could endanger the church.

Young men – or anyone for that matter, though Peter is addressing young men here – with the wrong kind of attitude can really hurt the flock of God. Leaders can't lead if the people won't follow.

Sinful young minds imagine that defiance shows strength. God says that young men show strength by choosing in love to subordinate themselves to their leaders. Young men who demand respect from others by their attitude usually end up with none – the truth is that the people most highly respected in any community are those who most show a servant attitude and help people.

But defiance, insubordination, and disrespect should not exist especially among any Christians. We are all to humble ourselves under God. Really, all of God's people need to reach often for the cloak of humility, treating other people with respect and value. Of course that should not just be a cloak but humility should be the attitude of the heart. We read in Ephesians 5:21: ***"Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ."*** And in Colossians 3:12-13: ***"Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you."***

It is not only young men who are to be submissive and humble. God's word goes on: ***"All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, 'God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.' Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time."***

Peter speaks of clothing yourselves with humility toward one another. It is common in the New Testament to speak of clothing oneself with a virtue. This particular Greek term refers to the apron that a slave or herdsman tied down over his tunic to keep it from being soiled. Perhaps Peter was even remembering the act of Jesus in the upper room when he washed the disciples' feet and performed this act of service which a slave would normally perform, an action to which none of them would stoop. Do you remember how Peter behaved on that occasion? He didn't want Jesus to wash his feet. On that occasion he saw an example of the lowly mindedness which he now urges upon all.

Humility is a Christian value of the greatest importance indicating a servant's attitude toward others. It is something that God values highly. Think of the example of Jesus. Both the Jewish culture and the Greek cultures did not value humility highly. I think we can also say that today in our society humility is not highly regarded. Those who are powerful and self-sufficient are those whom God rejects and ultimately destroys. All those who are humble and submit to God are blessed and will be exalted by God in due time. We have many such examples in Scripture, but the final exaltation will begin on judgment day. Scripture says this of Moses, the man whom God chose to lead his people, after he was forced to be a shepherd in a foreign land for 40 years:

"(Now Moses was a very humble man, more humble than anyone else on the face of the earth.)" (Numbers 12:3)

This teaching of humility, which is especially seen in the teaching and life of Jesus, is surely reason enough for any Christian only to serve another.

The reference to Proverbs 3:34, which reads: ***"He mocks proud mockers but gives grace to the humble"*** shows what God really teaches, and it promises special grace to humble people and bad news for proud people. Here's more comfort for suffering Christians to whom Peter was writing. It is not always God who smites us down, but it is always God who lifts us up. And he promises to do that ***"in due time,"*** in other words, when his grand vision for our lives brings it all together – definitely on judgment day. We can truly cast our anxieties on him, resting quietly in the certainty of his care for us. The Savior demonstrated for all time his rock solid commitments to the believers when he was on the cross and from the empty tomb – our lives are really going to be all right.

Humble yourselves, then, under the mighty hand of God, so that He may exalt you in His time. The reference is to the suffering which He sends His Christians. The pride of the human heart is inclined to resent this chastisement, to murmur, and to grumble. But true Christians will repress this tendency, will willingly bow themselves under the chastening hand of their almighty Lord and Master, will cheerfully bear all the misfortunes which He thinks it best to permit. If this is the case, then God, in His mercy, will also lift up them that are His out of the slough of despondency which threatens to engulf them, and will make them feel the fullness of His goodness in Christ Jesus.

In thus bearing the misfortunes, and even the chastisements which fall to their lot with meekness and patience, the apostle suggests to the Christians: Cast your every care upon Him, for He cares for you. All the cares and worries of this present life, everything that bothers the Christians, in its entirety, and once and for always, they should simply cast upon their heavenly Father. If Christians thus, by the prayer of faith, put everything that worries them into the care of their heavenly Father, they will realize and experience the truth of His many promises. They will find out that God takes a personal interest in every one of them; that without His will or permission not a hair of their head will fall to the ground.

That humiliation leads to exaltation is a common theme of Scripture. God's purposes are never simply to humiliate people but that by all of their coming low before him he might exalt them in and with Christ in due time. For Peter the due time or opportune time is surely the return of Christ. When Christ returns believers will be vindicated, their enemies will be judged, and they will receive in exchange for their persecution that inheritance which is already waiting for them in heaven. This is truly something worth humbling oneself for, for those who resist God – the proud – will never receive it.

When we humble ourselves, and don't try to make ourselves great and proud and important, we are looking to someone – God – to care for us.

We may be anxious that we are not going to be provided for. But God tells us here that when we throw all our cares upon him, he will care for us. He DOES care for us.

When God says humble yourself he also tells us how to do this. By ***"casting all your anxiety on him."*** The reason one can do this is that God cares about you.

Although the young people of the world may fit the pictures I started this sermon with, our Christian young people should find the examples of humility and submissiveness in their parents and Christian brethren gathered here, and rely upon God to exalt them in due time. That exaltation begins with the words of God: Be of good cheer. Your sins are forgiven. That is why we can rejoice with the hymn writer:

“Jesus sinners doth receive.
Also I have been forgiven;
And when I this earth must leave,
I shall find an open heaven.
Dying, still to Him I cleave-
Jesus sinners doth receive.” Amen.
(The Lutheran Hymnal 324:8)