**Pastor Tim’s Message Notes from 6-5-2022
Go Low**

One of the things that I love about God is His providence. His providence is the way that He is working in different ways in our lives, directing us, leading us, and bringing things together in His timing.

For example, last Saturday I was attending my daughter, Anna’s, outdoor dance performance and during the intermission I took a walk. And while we were standing on this scenic bridge over this stream my daughter Kayla overheard a woman say that she was hoping to see a turtle down by the water.

And wouldn’t you know, a little bit later during that intermission, we find a turtle at another part of the grounds walking around. Then, Kayla pointed out to me that she heard this woman say that she was hoping to see a turtle.

So, I go over to her and begin to speak with her. I mention that my daughter told me you may be hoping to find a turtle. We then walked over to where the turtle was and then we got to talking about the Lord and about Dillsburg and about Chestnut Grove. In fact, this woman, Brenda, plans to move to Dillsburg later this year. She currently lives in northern Virginia. So again, I think of God’s providence in how He used Kayla and a turtle to enable this conversation to happen.

Similarly, our book club here at the church is currently reading a book about Dietrich Bonhoeffer. And I see God’s providence and the timing of our reading about Bonhoeffer in relation to today’s Scripture passage from James.

How many of you have heard of Dietrich Bonhoeffer? Bonhoeffer was born in 1906 in Germany. His family was rather well off financially and they had good reputations locally and nationally. In fact, Dietrich’s father, Karl, was a highly sought-after psychologist.

But during the 1930’s, as Adolf Hitler would rise to power in Germany, Dietrich was faced with a dilemma. Much of the church in Germany has sadly chosen to support Hitler, a man that was quickly persecuting minorities, such as Jews, in Germany.

But Dietrich Bonhoeffer chose a different path. Dietrich did not love his reputation so much as to go along with the narrative. He was willing to resist the tyrant that was Hitler. He illegally would lead what could-be-called an underground church movement within Germany. It was called the confessing Church.

Eventually Bonhoeffer was arrested for his resistance to Hitler. And he was executed just before the end of World War II. Bonhoeffer knew that following Christ has a cost. He knew that his earthly life would pass like a vapor and he chose to do what was right, knowing full well that he would be putting his physical safety as risk.

Bonhoeffer’s actions remind me of what James wrote in his letter to the young church. Please turn with me to James 1:9-11

**9Believers in humble circumstances ought to take pride in their high position. 10But the rich should take pride in their humiliation—since they will pass away like a wild flower. 11For the sun rises with scorching heat and withers the plant; its blossom falls and its beauty is destroyed. In the same way, the rich will fade away even while they go about their business.**

So, what is James getting at here? First, he addresses Christians that are in humble circumstances. These would be Christians that would be considered down and out from a worldly perspective. Perhaps they would be struggling financially. Maybe they did not have the greatest reputation. They certainly would not be seen as very powerful.

This group of believers is instructed to take pride in their high position. Now, normally in the Scriptures, pride is not viewed as a positive thing. This verse is not an exception. James is not instructing them to become proud or arrogant.

Rather, James is telling these believers that they are to take pride for their high position in Christ. Their high position refers to who they are as children of God through their faith in Jesus Christ.

Because of their faith in the savior, they were made royalty. They were adopted as children of God. They now possessed every spiritual blessing in Christ. James wanted these believers that were struggling from an earthly perspective to refuse to find their identity in their lack or in their difficulties. But that, to remember that they are spiritually rich in Jesus Christ. They possess eternal life. They are part of the family of God. And God will meet all of their needs as they trust in Him.

Then, in verses 10 & 11, James addresses believers that from a worldly perspective are doing very well. They have money, they have power and influence. What does James tell them? They are instructed to **take pride in their humiliation.**

What does this mean? James understood that for these believers, it would be tempting to become prideful. Prideful because of having more money. Prideful for having good reputation or greater influence. Again, I think of Dietrich Bonhoeffer here.

Bonhoeffer chose to put James’s instructions into practice. He chose to live in such a way that he lost his high status and eventually even found himself behind prison bars for doing what was right.

**In this passage from James, the Lord is highlighting how Christians are to deal with two very real dangers – poverty and wealth.**

If Christians find their identity in either one, that’s a problem. All Christians are to find their identity not in their circumstances, but in relationship to Jesus Himself.

As the passage goes on to say, **For the sun rises with scorching heat and withers the plant; its blossom falls and its beauty is destroyed. In the same way, the rich will fade away even while they go about their business.**

So how do we as a Christian community today respond to this passage from James?

I think that it is simply this. We are all called to find our identity in Jesus Christ and to humbly live as His servants in their world.

Some of us may find ourselves in more humble circumstances today. Life can be quite a struggle. Whether it is financially or physically or emotionally, we may be tempted to feel like we are down and out. But in Jesus, friends, that is simply not the case.

Yes, things may be difficult. Yes, we may need support to get us through.

But in Jesus, we are rich. In Jesus, we are forgiven for our sins and made children of God. In Jesus, we are Blessed with a capital B.

So, if that is where you are today, take pride in how Jesus raises you up with Him and the truth that He is with you and He will never leave you nor forsake you. Amen.

And maybe some of us here today feel a little like Bonhoeffer. Maybe life is going comfortably well. You have more than enough money in the bank. You are physically doing well. Relationships are strong.

What does Jesus have to say to you? Again, He would remind us to find our identity in Him, not in those more comfortable circumstances. Not in wealth or power or in a good reputation.

But rather, find your identity in Christ. Christ went low. Christ, who is fully God, came to live among us as a servant. He wasn’t boastful. He wasn’t proud. He was humble.

Like Bonhoeffer and more importantly, like Christ Himself, we are to go low.

This is not about our name or our power or our wealth. What matters is humbly serving Christ and living to bless others in Jesus’ Name. That’s what it’s all about.

I ask you friends, how is Christ calling you to go low, to humbly serve. How has God wired and gifted you that can bless others? Is it in teaching? Is it in encouraging? Is it…

We are all wealthy in some way. But let us choose to use our giftedness to go low, for the benefit of others, in Jesus’ Name.

In God’s providence, we are each here together today. Let us choose to follow after Jesus as after saints in the faith, like Dietrich Bonhoeffer, to not cling to our wealth or high position, but instead let us go low, find our boasting in Jesus alone and in all that He has done for us.

Feel free to sing with me if you know the words. Either way, may this be a prayer from all of our hearts.

In Christ Alone

[Brian Littrell](https://www.google.com/search?sxsrf=ALiCzsYAMGmvs23tTsdLt9Q4uw4MqPoKig:1654376501165&q=Brian+Littrell&stick=H4sIAAAAAAAAAONgVuLUz9U3MC4sS85axMrnVJSZmKfgk1lSUpSakwMA8MEkgh4AAAA&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwi0xrTd2JT4AhXZsYQIHakiCm0QMXoECAQQAw)

In Christ alone will I glory
Though I could pride myself in battles won
For I've been blessed beyond measure
And by His strength alone, I overcome

Oh, I could stop and count successes
Like diamonds in my hands
But those trophies could not equal
To the grace by which I stand

In Christ alone, I place my trust
And find my glory in the power of the Cross
In every victory, let it be said of me
My source of strength, my source of hope is Christ alone

In Christ alone do I glory
For only by His grace I am redeemed
For only His tender mercy
Could reach beyond my weakness to my need

And now I seek no greater honor
Than just to know Him more
And to count my gains but losses
To the glory of my Lord

In Christ alone, I place my trust
And find my glory in the power of the Cross
In every victory, let it be said of me
My source of strength, my source of hope

In Christ alone, I place my trust
And find my glory in the power of the Cross
In every victory, let it be said of me
My source of strength, my source of hope is Christ alone
Is Christ alone

Friends, this life we live is quickly passing. Let us live every moment not for ourselves, but to humbly serve our Lord our Savior, Jesus Christ, Amen.

Sources:

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