

## Pray More Lenten Retreat - Transcript

### **Humility: The Foundation of Prayer**

**Pete Burak**

Hi, I'm Pete Burak. Let's begin with a prayer. *In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit Amen. Oh Jesus, teach us how to become you. Teach us how to live as you would live, if you were us. Teach us how to step into a new path of grace and peace and joy. Freedom, and virtue. And on a particular way today Lord Jesus, increase in us the ability to see you, to know you, to have your perspective and to live according to your word. Amen. In the name of the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

All right, the topic today is humility. The litany of humility and why humility is so important for the Christian life. And there are a lot of different perspectives out there on humility with some that are accurate. Some that are a little misleading. And today I want to focus on, "What does humility actually mean for our walk as a disciple?" And where does the foundation of it come from?

So let's start in John 14 - excuse me John 15: *"This is my commandment that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no man than this than a man lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you servants for the servant does not know what his master's doing but I have called you friends. For all that I've heard from my father I have made known to you. You did not choose me but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit. And that your fruit should abide. So whatever you ask the Father in my name he may give it to you. This I command you to love one another."* What a beautiful passage. So much to unpack there. But what I want to focus on there is the part where Jesus says, "I call you friends." And then He says, "You are my friends if you do what I command you." And what does He command us to do? To love one another. So I want to build on that within the context of humility.

So we're invited in a really dramatic, in somewhat mysterious way into friendship with God in Jesus. That God who is so far above anything that we are. But in the incarnation becomes man in Jesus Christ. We have the God man, right? Fully God, fully human. And we have this invitation to walk with him in friendship. And friendship that isn't necessarily no strings attached. I mean, His love is unconditional, but our experience of His love and our experience of being his friend, very much depends on whether or not we live the life that He's inviting us to. Whether we do what He's commanded us to do. Not out of, again, a subservient

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kind of slave relationship. Because He says, "A servant doesn't know what his master's doing." Jesus has revealed to us what this life is all about. He's shown us the path. He's saying, "This is how you are called to live." So we're no longer servants. We're His friends. But in order to continue in that friendship and experience the fullness of that friendship, we need to obey Him. And His first love - or His first command - is to love.

So, friendship. What is required in friendship? Well, a lot of things. You know Aristotle talks about three different types of friendship; the friendship of utility where I can get something from the other. Friendship of pleasure where it's just really fun to be around each other. And then He talks about what He calls the perfect friendship. Or another way to put it is like a true friend. And He says the perfect friend or the true friend is the friendship where you desire the good of the other, simply because that's the proper end. Like you are...you want the other to achieve and become the fullness of what they can be. Not for anything you can get back from it. Not because it's fun. But because it's good and right and just. And he said what is required in a true friendship or a perfect friendship, is both members of the friendship striving for virtue.

What is required for true friendship is virtue. And the pursuit of virtue with both sides pursuing virtue and then meeting in friendship in the middle. And in the Christian life we just see this so beautifully that when I strive to love the other. When I will the good of the other. And I am striving to be the best that I can be to grow in holiness to the fullness that the Lord can do in me. And the other is doing the same, while there's still there's pleasure that's involved with that. While there's still something we receive from that. There's a depth and a stability and genuineness that comes in those types of friendship.

And so when we enter into friendship with Jesus we know, from His side, He's going to uphold His end of the bargain. He's the epitome of virtue. He doesn't need to strive to be virtuous. He is virtue incarnate, right? So, our friendship with Jesus is most perfect in most true, when we enter into it striving for virtue ourselves. One of the things that is also required in friendship is communication. Is time spent with the other of a given take of ideas, of love of affirmation. And just dialogue communication. And so our friendship with Jesus begins with prayer. Okay? And so don't worry I'm going to get this back to humility but we're called to be friends with Jesus.

Full friendship requires virtue. The other thing friendship requires is conversation, dialogue, in this case, prayer. Then what does prayer require? Well let's look at the Catechism. Catechism section 2559: *But when we pray, do we speak from the*

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*height of our pride and will? Or out of the depths of a humble and contrite heart? He who humbles himself will be exalted. This is the line. Humility is the foundation of prayer. Only when we humbly acknowledge that "we do not know how to pray as we ought." are we ready to receive freely the gift of prayer. The Catechism says, "Man is a beggar before God."*

Humility. The virtue of humility properly disposes us and forms the basis of prayer. Because here's why. Prayer is a communication. It's a two way street. We say and the Lord speaks and we listen and the Lord listens. But, if we approach the relationship with God with pride, instead of you are God and I am not. You're Lord and I am not. I worship you adore you. I recognize your majesty and your glory. Because what humility does, is it properly orientates the truth about everything. But in particular the truth about us. Humility is not so much, "I'm horrible. I don't deserve anything. I'm no good anything." It's more of like, "This is an accurate portrayal of who I am." And an accurate portrayal and accurate understanding of who God is.

And so humility is the foundation of prayer because you can't have authentic communication without an accurate understanding of both parties. You have to know who the other is. You have to have a clear understanding of who you are communicating with. And humility properly orientates us to say, "Okay, you are God, and I am not. But out of love for me you have come close to me. You've drawn me close, that I've been invited into your throne room. And I can communicate with you with confidence and with love and with joy, but never losing sight of that all good work in me is from you. All good gifts are from you. My very existence is a gift that you continue to give me." That's humility. It's a proper perspective on life.

And so, humility allows us to pray, which allows us to be in friendship with Jesus and allows us to be obedient to Him. So, if we're called to be friends, we also then need to strive to be humble. The other reason we need to strive to be humble is that Jesus is our model for everything in life. And in this case, he is the epitome of the humble servant, right? He again demonstrates to us how humility plays a role even in His life. If you think about Jesus of all people, throughout all time in space, should have, could have, been the most kind of prideful in who they are. And He is actually the most humble.

You know pride comes before the fall. Pride is the root of all evil. Well, then humility is the antidote to the root of all evil. And we've seen this in Jesus. **Philippians 2: *Christ Jesus though He was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped. But emptied Himself, taking the form of***

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*a servant. Being born in the likeness of man and being found in human form, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross.*

*Therefore God has highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name. That at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth. And every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.* Another beautiful passage. "But being found in human form He humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross." Remember how we started this. Where Jesus says, "You are my friends if you do what I command you." Jesus talks about how He only did what he saw the Father doing. He did all things to glorify the Father. He was obedient unto death, even death on a cross. So if Jesus is obedient to His Father, to show His love, to humble Himself under the Father's will, then we are called to do the same. We are called to radically humble ourselves before Jesus and say, "Lord, what do you have for me? What are you calling me to? I long to be obedient."

Friendship with Jesus requires communication, but also requires obedience. And in order to be obedient, we need to grow in humility. And one of the tools that I found that has been very helpful for me in growing in humility is the litany of humility. It's a very painful prayer. It's very difficult to pray. Even as you're praying you're probably going to be saying, "Oh my gosh! I'm not even sure I feel this way." And it's kind of very beautiful time to just kind of let your will dominate your feelings there. As you pray through this litany, you know, "From the desire to be being esteemed, deliver me Jesus. From the desire for being consulted, deliver me Jesus." You know, all those litanies instill in us a break from the desire from these things that separate us from God. From these things that can lead us to pride.

It doesn't mean that we will never be esteemed. It doesn't mean we don't have a still...a great conviction about the love between others and the need to esteem others and affirm others, and to provide feedback when we're called upon and all that, but no. It's about desire. It's about a disposition of the heart. Are we humble and contrite before the Lord? Is our heart turned in the proper way of knowing, that even everything we would have to offer to somebody else? Even every gift that would be esteemed. Even everything that somebody would point out and say, "Man I love that about you," is something that we have received from our Father in heaven. So the litany of humility is one tip I would give you to grow in humility.

A few years ago, in Lent. So get this, I mean it's kind of embarrassing to say. But I had a realization one year that I had mapped out everything that I was going to do for Lent, right? "I'm gonna do this, this, this, this." Then it occurred to me, like, "You know, maybe Jesus would have some opinion as to what I should do." So I spent an hour in adoration simply just saying, "Lord you tell me what Lent should

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be about." And the theme He gave me was humility. It's just kind of appropriate since before that I was like, "No, I'm gonna do this, this this..." And so and He invited me to pray the litany of humility every day. Two things I had to do. When I got up in the morning, I kissed the floor, first thing out of bed. As an act of obedience and service to the Lord. And then I prayed the litany of humility, and boy did He answer it. And it was painful at times. It's tough to be humbled. It's tough to recognize that you're not the God's gift to humanity. It's tough to recognize when you fail then you need to correct. But I can tell you my friendship with Jesus grew that Lent. And so I'd invite you to consider the litany of humility.

And the other tangible thing that I'd invite you to do to grow in humility is to enter into conversations for a season of time, where your goal is to listen more than you speak. Ask a lot of questions this Lent. Enter into conversations, not so much to say, "Oh I can't wait to share what I think about this." But more so, "I want to listen and learn and value other people's perspective." Doesn't mean you can't speak but listen first before you speak.

Litany of humility and asking questions. Because if we do that, what we begin to do is form the habit of humility that is this very good virtue, that gives us a new perspective, that allows us to be obedient, and therefore allows us to communicate better with Jesus, and which ultimately leads to the end that He desires for us that we all desire for ourselves, which is friendship with Him. The goal of this is to enter into deeper friendship with the Father, Son and, the Holy Spirit. And that cannot happen without humility. So let's pray, let's beg and let's work to growing in this virtue. God bless you.