

When It's Hard to Be Humble - A Look at Mother Teresa

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Hello everyone. I'm Karen May and today we are going to talk about humility and Mother Teresa and I am pretty sure this is not going to go the way you expect. Let us start in prayer.

Opening Prayer

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. Heavenly Father, I thank you for your glorious creation, for the ways that each one of us is fearfully and wonderfully made. I ask you Lord to help us to see who we are in your eyes and to help us to see who you are for us. Help us Lord, to live out our lives, our talents, our gifts, in ways that bring you glory. I ask all of this in Jesus' name. Amen. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Lord It's Hard to Be Humble

So, I'm going to start today with a song by Mac Davis called "Lord, It's Hard to Be Humble" and hopefully my children will not come in here and make sure that this recording never happens. Here we go. "Oh Lord it's hard to be humble, when you're perfect in every way, I can't wait to look in the mirror, I get better looking each day. To know me is to love me, I must be a hell of a man. Oh Lord it's hard to be humble, but I'm doing the that I can."

The Catholic Definition of Humility

Now, you may think that I put that song in there to tell you how not to be humble, that everything about this song is wrong, but I'm going to tell you the exact opposite. There is a lot of things in this song that are right, that are true. It is hard to be humble because our definition, most of the time, is that of the world's. And that definition says that we should have a modest or low opinion of our own importance. So, we need to feel that we are less than we actually are and that's not what humility is. That's not the Catholic definition of humility. The Catholic definition is much more beautiful, much more complete and we are called to live, not as the world does, not to believe as the world believes, but to be different. And I want to live in this definition of humility.

The Catholic definition of humility says, "the moral virtue that keeps a person from reaching beyond himself. It is the virtue that restrains the unruly desire for personal greatness and leads people to an orderly love of themselves based on a true appreciation of their position with respect to God and their neighbors." This is what we kind of know. We don't want to be bragging too much or think too much of ourselves. We need to be in an orderly and true appreciation of where we are in God's creation with respect to God and with respect to others. That orderliness is what's important here. It continues. "Religious humility recognizes one's total dependence on God. Moral humility recognizes one's creaturely equality with others, yet humility is not only opposed

to pride." That's the part most of us know really well, but it goes on. "It is also opposed to immoderate self-objection which would fail to recognize God's gifts and use them according to his will." That secular definition is exactly what is not humility in this definition. "It is opposed to immoderate self-objection." To denying the gifts and the strengths that you have. You can have pride in the fact that you are a good mother, a good listener, a good doctor, a good employee, a good singer, a good writer, whatever your talents are, whatever gifts God has given you, you can have pride in that. Pride in itself is not the problem. It's pridefulness, it's that over understanding of who you are, that over importance of who you are in relation to God and to others.

And I see this all the time in spiritual direction that people see their values, see their worth and don't think that it's good enough for God. "I know God has forgiven me. I know Jesus has forgiven me but what I did was really wrong. It was really bad. I'm not a good person." And that's exactly who God loves. That's exactly who Jesus died for.

When I watched "The Passion of the Christ", it was really hard. It was really hard, but one of the hardest parts for me was watching him suffer as he's being beaten and beaten and beaten and spit on and crucified and rejected, knowing that is because of my sins that all of this is happening. And it really caused me to not want to sin again, to really look at my sin and realize the actual physical effect that it had on Jesus and to really not want to do that. And that's okay. But then the other part of that is to realize that all of that happened to Jesus because of me not because of what I did wrong but because of his love for me, because I am worth it. And if you get nothing else out of this lesson, I want you to know that Jesus died for you because you are worth it.

Being Humble When You Know you are Worth It

It's hard to be humble when you realize that, when you realize that you are worth the Savior of the world, dying on a cross to allow you entrance into heaven, to take the punishment for your sins. He loves you that much because you are worth being loved. It is hard to be humble. And Scripture backs me up on this a bit. In Genesis during creation, in Chapter One, verse 26 through 31, it talks about creation of people, and it starts this way. "Then God said, 'Let us make human beings in our image, after our likeness. Let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, the tame animals, all the wild animals and all the creatures that crawl on the earth.' God created mankind in his image. In the image of God He created them, male and female, He created them." We are made in the image and likeness of God. It's hard to be humble when we know that's who we are. And that passage finishes this way in verse 31, "God looked at everything he had made and found it very good." We are made very good.

And in the Psalms, one of my favorite Psalms, Psalms 139:13-14, it says, "You formed my inmost being. You knit me in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works." Right here in the Psalms. It sounds a little bit like that song. I praise you because I am wonderfully made. I am amazing. It is hard to be humble when I look in that mirror and another translation of that says, "I am fearfully and wonderfully made." But the credit is given to God. You made me. Look at what you've done. This is amazing. And I am fulfilled when I am living in that creation, when I am living out who I was made to be, that brings God glory. And in that we can boast, in that we can have pride.

And I think that one of the things that kind of turns our understanding of pride a bit is some of the comments by Paul specifically in 2 Corinthians verses 11 and 12. It can be kind of hard to understand when he says in Chapter 11, verse 30, "If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness." And again, in 2 Corinthians 12:5 he says, "But about myself, I will not boast except about my weaknesses." And we can do this. And you probably know people who do this if you don't, that any compliment you give to them, they'll downplay. "No, that I, I'm not very good. Here is my failures. Here are my faults. Here are the ways that I am weak" instead of receiving a compliment on what they have done well or what they are very good at, instead of just saying, "thank you". They can't do that. I can't boast about anything except my weaknesses. And that's not what he's calling us to.

And the end of that, I love verses seven through 10 and I think this helps us a little bit to understand what that balance, that right order is. It says, "Because of the abundance of revelations," He's talking about the revelations that God gave to him, "therefore, I might not become too elated. A thorn in the flesh was given to me, an angel of Satan to beat me to keep me from being too elated. Three times I begged the Lord about this that it might leave me, but he said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness.' I will rather boast most gladly of my weaknesses in order that the power of Christ may dwell in me." This is why he's boasting of his weaknesses because in our weaknesses, we see the power of God not the devaluing of us, but the power of God. Like, "I'm not very good at that and look what God did with it. That's amazing. That's beautiful." Not, "Here's my talent. I can't admit to that talent. I need to show you how I fail."

We boast gladly of our weaknesses, that the power of Christ may dwell in me and this next part, "Therefore, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions and constraints for the sake of Christ. For when I am weak, I am strong." So, he receives all of these things, hardships, persecution, constraints, because he knows who he is and even all those things don't prove that he doesn't have value but he knows who he is in Christ and so all of those things he can receive and then bring Christ into them and transform them. Have you experienced that? When someone is coming and attacking you and you don't take it personally because you know who you are, you know your boundaries, you know your values and you can return to that person and see that maybe they're hurting themselves and they're just reacting out of their own pain, and you can address that.

Or, being a mother of teenagers, sometimes all of that chaos and frustration and anger just needs a calm hand that doesn't get personally offended. He's unoffendable because his weaknesses aren't a problem. He doesn't have those buttons that get pushed because in those weaknesses, Christ's strength is shown. And so, in that weakness, we can see and we can misinterpret that that means we need to just focus on our failures, but what it means is that our weaknesses are where we really can see more clearly Christ's work through us. Of course, we can boast in that. It is hard to be humble when we watch Christ working through our weaknesses, much less our gifts and our talents.

Mother Teresa

And I said that we were going to talk about Mother Teresa, and I think she is a beautiful example for this because she knew her value in God's eyes, but she didn't see herself as better than others. She worked with the poorest of the poor and didn't see herself as above them. She was serving them. She was loving them. They deserved her love because they were creations of God just like she was. She was not superior to anyone. She was incredibly humble. When people came to work with her or even do stories or write books or report on her she insisted that they would not be allowed to do it unless they reported on the work. "Don't report on me, report on the work." Cause it didn't matter who she was. Like it said, "What do you like to eat? And "What time do you get up in the morning?" And what, I don't know, "What are your hobbies?" That wasn't what was important. What was important was the work that God had called her to do. And it wasn't that what she had in her life was not important at all. It just wasn't important to the world. It wasn't about her personality because her personality was going to be gone from the world when she died, but the work would not. That's the story that needed to be told.

And she even talked about herself being a little pencil in the hands of a loving God and he wrote with her and sometimes he needed to sharpen her cause she was a broken pencil, but she was a pencil and allowing God to use her to write. She knew her value. She knew her worth. And when she was questioned, she stood in that value. I read a book recently that at the end had a little interview with a reporter and a couple of the questions I remember reading going, "You must not have any idea about what she's doing," because one of the things he asked was, "There's some complaints about the work that you do because you work with people who are dying. They have no hope. There's no way that they can be healed and so aren't you wasting your time? Shouldn't you be helping people who have a chance of being healed?" She said, "No, no, this is not a waste of my time." She knew her value and she didn't see other people's complaints as more valid or other people's understandings of what her work should be as more valid than what she had heard God's calling to be. And she stood in that confidently, said, "No, we are serving people who will not be served otherwise and we are giving them this gift of love and care."

And then the next question was about the lack of medical training. The nuns in her order had very basic medical training. They weren't doctors, but they were treating people, again, going back to the previous question who weren't going to be able to be healed in a lot of times, most of the time. "And so shouldn't you have more medical training?" And again, she said, "No, that's not what we've been called to do. This is not our calling." She knew her calling and she stood in it and she didn't apologize for it. She didn't belittle it and in fact, it spread everywhere. Anyone who came to her, their lives were changed. They saw the world in a different way because she knew who she was and what her calling was and she didn't ever apologize for it. That is humility cause humility is not humiliation. Humility is not thinking less of ourselves and of our gifts.

Doing God's Will

In fact, I had somebody in spiritual direction today who was being called to something really amazing and really different than she ever expected. And one of her questions, which is very good question in spiritual direction is, "Am I doing this because I want to do it, because of my pride and my ego, or am I doing this thing that's pretty big because it's where God wants me to

do, where He wants me to go?" And there are several ways to see that that is what is happening, that you're doing God's will not your will and it's when those obstacles come or those difficulties come and it's going back to that being unoffendable, that you are willing to take some of these blows or these obstacles or these things that get in the way and it doesn't change who you are and what your value is. If it's a little hard and maybe the direction changes a little bit and you really see that this is God's will, that this is where God is calling you and everything is lining up, that that's the way to go even though it wasn't the way that you thought in the first place, then your pride is placed in the right place, then you are doing the work of God. You are using talents and your gifts, and you are living in those, because pride, it comes in a couple different ways and humility, or lack thereof comes in a couple different ways.

So, we can look in that mirror. We can look in that mirror and, "Oh Lord, it's hard to be humble." And we can take all the credit ourselves and give no credit to God. That is not humility, but in the same way we can have this false humility where we look in the mirror and we don't see God's glorious creation. And in the same way, we don't give credit to God.

So, I hope that from this talk you start to see that you are fearfully and wonderfully made, that you have been given gifts and talents that are meant to be brought to this world and you don't need to downplay them and focus on the things that you don't do well, on your failures, on your weaknesses, and not remember the gifts. We are called to live in our gifts and to live in them for God's glory. May God bless you and help you to live out the life that he has made for you. Let us pray.

Closing Prayer

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. Heavenly Father I thank you. I thank you for the ways that you love us, the ways that you challenge us, that you help us to stay in the right order, to know who we are in your eyes, who we are in your creation. Help us to love ourselves. Help us to love one another. And most of all, help us to love you. I ask all of this in Jesus name. Amen. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.
God bless.