

No Room for Vanity and Pride

by Joshua Daniel

The sermon emphasizes the importance of living a life that reflects Jesus' character and seeks God's guidance and wisdom, avoiding the pitfalls of vanity and pride.

Duration: 53:22

Scripture: Psalm 39:5-6, Psalm 119:37, Proverbs 30:8, Daniel 4:34-37

Topics: "Humility And Pride", "Worldly Vanity"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the fleeting nature of human achievements and the vanity of worldly success, drawing from Psalms 39 and the story of King Nebuchadnezzar. It highlights the importance of humility, righteousness, and mercy, urging listeners to turn away from vanity and lies, and to seek God's ways. The message warns against pride and the pursuit of material wealth, calling for a return to God's truth and judgment.

Transcript

So friends, in the portion of scripture which we have just read, which is taken from Psalm 39, many years ago, I heard a gentleman with numerous academic degrees mention something which I had never noticed many years ago. This is in the fifth verse of the 39th Psalm. Behold, thou hast made my days as a hand-breath, and my age is as nothing before you.

Verily, every man at his best state is altogether vanity. You know, this is something which the king, who was a very victorious warrior, King David, recognized, that every man at his best state, I don't know how to refer to something as your best state. I don't know where onto your imagination has flown.

Is there anything about the presidency of the United States? You know, the king of England used to rule as emperor of half the globe. And that was supposed to be the height of power. But after the mighty armies of Britain were defeated by men who normally wielded pitchforks out of their zeal for righteousness and freedom to worship God, this nation that sprang out of those handful of men who were called the pilgrims and the later wave of Puritans became so powerful that the head of state is recognized to be at least one of the mightiest people on the face of the globe.

But what does the Bible say? Truly, every man at his best state is altogether vanity. There's something in the human nature that cannot consolidate our victories. You know, we make some gains and we say, hey, I have achieved this, I have achieved that.

But then when it comes to consolidation and the next step would be conservation and the next step would be to pass on that measure of victory to somebody else. Some people, of course, are known to guard their trade secrets very carefully. It's not every nation that gives away its trade secrets like America.

You know, you give away all your trade secrets and all your manufacturing and then you suddenly find yourself in a state of joblessness when people lose their skills and their desire to excel and sit back and live a laid back kind of existence. You know, folks, well, that is something of an anomaly. It's a grave contradiction.

But that is human nature. You know, I have achieved, I've got this money. And what do you do with that money? You blow it.

Somehow the Lord taught me how to husband my few resources. As I traveled, mostly on my old bicycle, squeaking and screeching because it was almost as old as I am, and I was at that time. Nevertheless, I was content.

I had no money in my pocket and I had no money ambitions either. And I was a happy, contented boy. And that continued through college life.

When I saw peer pressure or whatever you call that pressure, you know, to acquire this and buy this and show off here and show off there, I didn't want to follow the example of those around me. I chose to obey the word of God through thick and thin, through ridicule and scorning. But soon that scorning ceased.

And people could see that I had something that made me steady, firm in my ways. A stranger, who was an excellent tennis player, by the way, much my senior, as we were walking to catch the bus, a total stranger, a heathen man, he said to me, I have been observing you. I was just a college student and not a very brilliant student or any such thing, just a very ordinary student.

He said, I notice that you are rock steady. Well, that compliment far exceeded the truth. But here was a stranger who was just seeing me catch a bus every day at the same bus station who had been watching me.

You know, folks, I wonder what kind of understanding people receive when they watch our lives. Do they see consistency or did they see a system by which they say, hey, here is a braggart, a man who is bragging all the time, is talking of a pie in the sky which does not really exist? No, that's not the kind of feeling that anybody should get. Now, when someone observes your life very closely, they must say, you know, as one man said to me in Ireland, a young man, and he observed one of my friends, old friends there, Duncan Campbell, who saw revival in the Hebrides, and this young man said, hey, there goes a man of God.

I want to be like him. I want to be like him. Now, here, of course, David had seen victories, and he had also run as a fugitive from the king's order to arrest and kill him.

So he really knew the rough and tumble of life much more than any of us, the dangers in warfare and the limitations of the terrain, rough areas, how he subsisted, how he managed to escape from cave to cave, all that is there. But in the sixth verse of 39th Psalm, surely every man walketh in a vain show, vain show. What? You know, when the lights are off and the show is over, how do people feel? They feel somewhat let down.

I've had an, oh, we had an exciting time here in the theater, but now it's all over. You know, there comes a kind of emptiness after a show. But as Shakespeare described it, all the world's a stage, and men are but actors on it.

You know, if you have been on the stage, you know how you act. You know, you act for the audience. Now, how do you act? Do you act to be seen by God? And are your acts real, or are they put on? Some people seem to have a put-on religion.

They put it off like their Sunday clothes as soon as they leave the sanctuary and get home. It's something put on. Some of you, you know, but the Christian life is Christ within you.

Christ in you, the hope of glory. So there is an expression, there's a spontaneous expression of Jesus. You know, it's not consciously put on.

It is an unconscious influence that you leave behind you everywhere. An unconscious influence. You don't act, you don't put on.

You know, you don't try to impress. Nothing of the sort. It's just a normal reaction to situations, to various situations.

But to help you along the way, it would be good for each one of us to ask ourselves, how would Jesus react to this situation? How would Jesus react? It would be very helpful. You know, I like to test my reactions. Because I say, all right, the way I react to an awkward situation, or an insult which I don't deserve, which I feel I am totally innocent, and I'm blamed or something.

How do I react? Do I react like Jesus? Jesus surprised his judges. Don't you see what things they are witnessing against you? How many witnesses there are? Have you nothing to say in your defense? Don't you want to say something? And they met with silence. Now, my dear friends, you know, that's not the way we react.

If somebody blames us when we feel we are unjustly being set upon, oh, we bristle, we come out with our true temper, and outburst. What kind of religion is that? You know, the sad fact is that many, many who go to church and imagine that they are good Christians do not show Jesus on Monday. Now, how can you account for so few being blessed if people show forth Jesus on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday? Just imagine how many people meet us or talk to us or pass us or watch us or see us.

How many? What is the unconscious influence that we are leaving behind? That we are walking in a vain show? That we are putting on an act? You know, to impress somebody? No, my dear people. No, there is a lot of vanity around us, and we would do well to escape it. You see, we see it almost injected into us, that parents, oh, you have got to achieve like somebody else.

You have to look at your cousins, look at your relatives, look at your folks, how much money they made. What nonsense is that? Now, is there anything better than to look at Jesus? You know, thy kingdom come, we pray. But we don't really mean it, because we don't belong to that kingdom, and we don't have the values of that kingdom.

We want an empty show. We want to put on an act. You see? And we like a vain show.

You know, folks, I get rather annoyed and sad when I see how people are learning to get, to throw in a lot of money into vain shows. Oh, we have a birthday coming. So, well, let's celebrate in that nice restaurant or hotel, an expensive kind of display.

You know, somebody else had their birthday over there in that hotel, you know. Mine must be a little better than theirs. You know? Look at your relative, look at your cousin.

As a matter of fact, what I learned from my cousins did not help me at all. Not at all. When I saw one or two of my cousins eventually converted and being on their knees for a long time, I said, boy, I don't have this kind of religion.

I'm not yet converted. This I said as a boy of 13 and 14. When I saw my older cousins, one or two of them, or at least one of them, converted.

But by and large, I had nothing set before me by my relatives, which I would say inspired me or made me more beautiful in any sense. They, of course, achieved more in academic life. They were excellent officials.

They made big money. But they had nothing to give me. Only one of my cousins I saw who followed my dad's example, and he was a godly fellow.

His example, of course, was definitely enlightening and inspiring. But that was the only person. Now, therefore, think of the usual pressure that we feel.

See, my relatives are doing this. They are building a house. They're buying something.

What nonsense is that? You know, every man walketh in a vain show. They're not building anything eternal. Now, if you turn to Psalm 119 and verse 37, you will see, Turn my eyes away from beholding vanity.

My, let me tell you, when I arrived in Europe, my first stop was in Rome. And a lawyer, a young lawyer, took me out into town. Rather late, after 10 o'clock or so, I found the streets full and no parking available.

I said, what are these people doing here? A little later, of course, I heard that this young man and his wife, who was expecting a baby, had divorced. And I don't know the subsequent story of their lives. But that was the first thing that I saw.

What are all these folks out, haven't they got a home? Shouldn't they be home by this unearthly time? Shouldn't they be minding their children? Now, this was over 50 years ago. Just imagine. And things have traveled on and moved on.

And today, we can hardly turn our eyes away from beholding a vain show or vanity. And what a wonderful prayer. Turn my eyes away from beholding vanity.

And quicken me in your way. You know, you better cease looking and dwelling upon vain things. Some people are just vain, you know.

Some people don't care. Some people are just vain. And they can't, they must stop and look and see what somebody else is doing and so on and so forth.

Vanity! What do you get out of it? Nothing. You get nothing. As a matter of fact, by watching such things, you get dirty.

You know, folks, turn my eyes away. Oh, yes. My eyes were very prone to vanity at one stage.

You know, some of those, oh, beautiful shop windows and all the nice stuff inside. Ha! You know, and the devil would make me waste my time. You know, sooner or later, I outgrew that so that I didn't care for any kind of shopping.

You know, that mania to shop. You know, acquiring this and acquiring that. That ceased.

It was to acquire the things of God, acquire the true inward new nature. That became the focus. Instead of looking at, you know, as I said, I was naturally prone to looking at vanity and a lot of filth.

Now, friends, in Proverbs chapter 30, you also see in the eighth verse, remove far from me vanity and lies. Give me neither poverty nor riches. Feed me with food convenient for me.

Remove far from me vanity and lies. Yes, lies and the whole system of lies arises around vanity. When we begin to be covetous, of course, we begin to also speak lies.

As one of our young men said, who was touched by the Lord down under, he said, as a university student, he worked in a fruit stall. And sometimes he helped himself to the change. Now, some of this kind of stealing and lying has come to such a stage that nations are in peril and their account books cannot be trusted.

How sad. At such a time, the Christian church, I wonder what the IRS, the Internal Revenue Service, thinks of Christians who go to church. When they said to me that in London, a big church was removed from the status of being non-profit, I was shocked.

A huge, big church full of immigrants from Africa and other places. And the Charity Commission of England said, no, this church does not qualify. What a sad state.

Now, when we see this coupling of vanity and lies going together, can a nation prosper that way? No, no nation can prosper that way. As a matter of fact, if you turn to Daniel, the fourth chapter, you will see the testimony of no less a person than one of the greatest emperors that ever ruled, Nebuchadnezzar, in the fourth chapter. Let's begin.

Nebuchadnezzar, the king, unto all people, nations, and languages that dwell in all the earth, peace be multiplied unto you. I thought it good to show the signs and wonders that the high God had wrought towards me. So this is his personal testimony.

How great are his signs, and how mighty are his wonders. His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and his dominion is from generation to generation. So he speaks of his dream.

I, Nebuchadnezzar, was at rest in my house and flourishing in my palace. I saw a dream which made me afraid, and the thoughts upon my bed and the visions of my head troubled me. So he summoned all his astrologers and all his men, but they could not give him the interpretation.

Finally, he called on Daniel. For some reason, he had singled out Daniel as the magician in whom was a different spirit. The spirit of the holy gods.

See? The eighth verse. In whom is the spirit of the holy gods. And he summoned him before him and told him the dream.

You know, he thought Daniel was really the master of all, over all these magicians. The magicians probably, as he saw, only fooled the people and deceived the people. But Daniel had the spirit of the living God, the holy gods.

And so, he spoke of, he spoke and said, this is the dream. A mighty tree, and it grew until it reached heaven. Eleventh verse.

And the leaves thereof were fair. Twelfth verse. And the fruit thereof was much.

And it was meat for all. And then, I saw in the visions of my head upon my bed and behold, a water and a holy one came down from heaven and cried aloud. Hew down the tree and cut off his branches.

Shake off his leaves and scatter his fruit. Let the beasts get away from under it and the fowls from his branches. Nevertheless, leave the stump of his roots in the earth.

Well, so, when he made known this dream, poor Daniel appeared to be perplexed for an hour. An hour is a long time, you know. When you're under the scrutiny of the court and all the big people.

For an hour, he was perplexed. Then he began to give the interpretation. And it was this.

Twenty-second verse. It is thou, O king, that art grown and become strong. For your greatness is grown and reacheth unto heaven and your dominion to the end of the earth.

Whereas the king saw a water and a holy one coming down from heaven and saying, Hew the tree down and destroy it. But yet leave the stump of the roots. You are that king.

You see, how that there was no room for vanity there. You are the mighty king, but you're going to be hewn down. The watcher from heaven has passed the decree.

You're going to be hewn down. And now when we see history and the great empires. Of course, Nebuchadnezzar was one of those great emperors who ruled from parts of Africa all the way to India.

As a matter of fact, when we see the fall of the nations, we know that there is a watcher in heaven. Hew down this tree. There was no room for vanity there.

There was no room for bribery and party spirit there. Get all my party men and union men around me to vote for me. No chance of that.

Hew down the tree. And then he went on to say, 24th verse, This is the interpretation, O king, and this is the decree of the Most High, which has come upon my lord the king. They shall drive you from men and your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field.

Just imagine telling a king who is on that resplendent throne, Hey, you're going to be with the beasts. Your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field and they shall make you to eat grass as oxen. They shall wet you with the dew of heaven until seven times shall pass over you till you know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men and giveth it to whomsoever he will.

The Most High ruleth in the kingdom of heaven. Someone objected or at least mentioned, Here we are on the Sabbath day passing a bill which we say is going to help the whole nation's health. And this is the Sabbath day.

Instead of being in the church or in a place of worship, here were all the legislators passing a bill which they thought will redeem the helpless. Did they know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men? No, the founders of this new nation knew it, but not these men or most of those men. And do you think that they are going to redeem the health of the nation? Never.

When you break God's laws, you break yourself. That's all there is. And now until Sunday has become soccer day and day for every frivolity and the nation does not seem to care that there is a God who can decree that we can be wiped off the globe, my dear people, walking in a vain show, and until you know, 26 verse, whereas they commanded to leave the stump of the tree roots, your kingdom shall be sure unto you after thou shalt have known that the heavens do rule.

Your kingdom will be only sure after you know, after you realize that the heavens do rule. Wherefore, O King, let my counsel be acceptable unto you and break off your sins by restitution, by righteousness, and thine iniquities by showing mercy to the poor, if it may be a lengthening of your tranquility. All this came upon King Nebuchadnezzar.

How did it come about? What triggered it off? As he walked, you know, maybe in one of the boulevards or in his house, he said in verse 30, Is not this great Babylon that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power and for the honor of my majesty? While the word was in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven saying, O King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is spoken, the kingdom is departed from you, and your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field. They shall make you eat grass as oxen and seven times shall pass over you until you know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men and giveth it to whomsoever he will. The same hour was the thing fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar.

You see, no reprieve, no time given. He had had his time. So the judgment came.

The same hour. Just imagine a man from the throne going to the beasts of the field and eating grass, lying down with the oxen. Just imagine.

You know, God can humble our pride in no time. The pride of a nation, the pride of a people, the pride of a family. You know, if you examine what's all this pride about? Over nothing.

Over nothing. We are just little specks in space except that Jesus has given to us an individuality, an importance. And your soul is counted to be so valuable that he shed his own blood for your salvation.

It is Jesus that has given humanity respectability and a dignity which we don't deserve. And what do we see here? The same hour he was sent out. And he was driven from men, 33rd verse, and did eat grass as the oxen.

And after seven times, or seven years, or whatever the time signified, he came to understanding. And then his kingdom, he was returned to his kingdom. At the same hour, 36th verse, my reason returned unto me.

And the glory of my kingdom and the honor and brightness returned unto me. And my counselors and my Lord sought me. And I was established in the kingdom and excellent majesty was added unto me.

Now, the conclusion of this testimony. Now, I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the King of Heaven, all whose works are truth and his ways judgment and those that walk in pride he is able to abase. And now, folks, I was very surprised when a noted author in Germany told me, I can't find anybody to even take my dictation.

I need to pay somebody. I said, what? Aren't there young people to volunteer in the church to come forward and help you to do this wonderful work? Must you have to pay each person? This business of exalting the dollar has come to such a pitch that we have lost all sense of balance. It's the dollar, dollar, dollar.

And I lose my family for the dollar? And I must have watchdogs over everything? Watchdogs over house? The House of Representatives to see how they are spending the money? You know, the pork barrels and so on? Well, and now you need a watchman to watch your husbands too. Oh no, he's a very good sportsman. He's an honorable man.

No, no, no. You need to hire somebody to watch your husband. What are we, becoming beasts? That's all.

We are driven amongst beasts. You need a watchman over a lawmaker? Oh, how sad. Here the reason returned.

Oh, may reason and understanding return to people all across this nation, to the White House, to the rulers of nations, that we may acknowledge that His works are truth. There's the Kingdom of Heaven. Whose works are truth and His ways judgment.

And those who walk in pride He's able to abase. Let us pray. Let us tell God, Lord, take all roots of vanity out of me.

My false trust. There is a Watcher from Heaven and His decree is the final decree. Oh Lord, I deserve to be driven amongst the beasts.

Give me a humble heart. Them that walk in pride He's able to abase. Loving Father, the heathen nations do not have the Bible.

Or many don't. As one of our Bibles was sold or sent to a member of the royal family of Japan. Oh please Father, let these values, let this light spread to the remotest people.

Otherwise men will walk in a vain show and be pulled down suddenly and the show will close and the curtain be wrung down with their being thrown into confusion. Oh my Father, save this nation. Please we that are kept at this time may understand our responsibilities and not pursue vanity and little goals but give us an understanding of what the Watcher from Heaven thinks.

Give us a consciousness of His decrees that we may be rid of all our vanity pomp and show and be a humble people who will obey your word. We ask this in Jesus' holy name. Amen.

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