

## Walking Humbly

“Walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which we’ve been called, with all humility, gentleness, and patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” One look at the world we live in today, and it’s clear that St. Paul’s words have fallen on deaf ears. Understand: I’m not just referring to the fools running for office or the angry mobs that see fit to burn, loot, and destroy. I’m referring to all of us. Take an honest look in the mirror, and dare to see things through God’s eyes. Do you walk in all humility, gentleness and patience? (This word—patience—is better translated as “long-suffering.”) *Is that you? Even with the people you don’t like?* Do you bear with one another in love... *love like your merciful Lord shows to you?* Do you strive to maintain the unity of the Holy Spirit in the bond of peace, or do you strive to get your way? What if you don’t get your way? What if somebody—*gasp!*—dares to have a different opinion than you? Hmm... what if your Lord treated you the same way you treat others (including your own brothers and sisters in the faith)?

You know... we don’t even have to dig that deep. Do you really walk in a manner worthy of the *undeserved baptismal calling* to which you’ve been called? *Always?* Careful before you answer. You know as well as I do that our Sunday morning walk tends to be very different from our walk the other 167 hours of the week. It is truly troubling how our “Christian walk” doesn’t seem to extend beyond the church doors and out into the rest of daily life; i.e., the home, the workplace, or the voting booth. God calls us to walk in His ways all the time, even during pandemics, civil unrest, and election years, and yet it’s almost as if we’ve erected “no trespassing” signs into those areas of life that are at odds with the faith we dare to boast about. The Word of God is permitted to guide us here and here, but not here, here, or there. We’ll walk in a manner worthy of our call to life; we’ll act like the Christians God has called us to be... *so long as it doesn’t interfere with our opinions, our preferences and our desires.* Folks: You can’t walk in the way of life and in the way of death at the same time. Either you are walking in a manner worthy of your calling, or you are not. Either you are walking towards the Lord of Life, or you are walking away from Him and into death, and if you’re walking away from Christ, the answer isn’t to keep on walking the other way. *The answer is to repent and stop and turn around.*

You know... instead of looking to the corpse in the mirror, where there is no comfort, let us instead look to this cross and consider our standing before God in light of the words of our Epistle lesson. God is the One who called you out of darkness and into His marvelous light. He called you out of death into life, *in spite of you.* He still calls you, coming to you and calling to you by means of His Word.

He came to you and put His name on you in the waters of His Holy Baptism, not because you earned it, but solely because He loves you and has an incomprehensible compassion for you. To walk in a manner worthy of our calling is to walk in our Baptismal righteousness; to walk in a way that gives all the glory to the Way, the Truth, and the Life. It's not that difficult to understand. To walk in our Baptismal calling is nothing more than humble *response* to God's free and undeserved gifts of mercy, grace, and unconditional righteousness. ***We do what we do simply out of joyous response to what God has done for us.*** We love because He first loved us. We forgive because He has forgiven us. We walk in a manner worthy of the baptismal calling to which we've been called.

As for humility, gentleness, and long-suffering patience, these are virtues that are not inherent to children of Adam. These are gifts given from above; gifts wrought in us by the Holy Spirit. These aren't prescriptions, as if you need to first have these things if you are to have any hope that you'll be saved. No! ***These are descriptions of those who are saved.*** By nature, we're not humble or gentle or patient. We're self-centered and works-righteous and impatient and vengeful, always trying to build ourselves up, even when it means tearing others down.

This is why I tell you (instruct you) to look to the cross; look to Christ. These virtues (humility, gentleness, long-suffering patience) are not inherent to children of Adam. ***These are virtues exemplified in Christ.*** We confess this in our creed. The God of all glory humbled Himself for our sake. He humbled Himself by giving up all of heaven's majesty/glory by taking on our flesh, conceived, born in a lowly manger, suffering, and dying... for us. "*He humbled Himself to the point of death, even death on a cross.*" These virtues aren't just exemplified by Christ; **they ARE Christ!** "*Take My yoke upon you, for I am meek and lowly and gentle. I am long-suffering and patient.*" "**I AM.**" **That's not prescription! That's divine description!** This is all Jesus. Through the working of the Holy Spirit, this is also baptismal description of all those in Christ. "***Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized were baptized into His death and resurrection?***"

Folks: This is why the faithful humble themselves. ***HE*** is why the faithful humble themselves before the King of kings ***and all others whom Christ loved enough to die for.*** Baptized into Christ, the baptized child of grace knows who they are, by nature, and where they came from. Faith knows/believes the Truth. My sin put Jesus on that cross. I think about that a lot... and it horrifies me. My sin is so great and heinous that God Himself had to take on flesh and shed His blood and die in order to make the ransom payment for me. I know my place. I deserve nothing but present and eternal punishment.

Purely by God's grace, though, because of the all-redeeming work and person of Jesus Christ, I have been called into His marvelous light. ***In spite of me***

*and my sin—my shame*—I have been baptized by Him and made a member of His royal household; a co-heir with Christ of the Kingdom of Heaven. Through repentant faith, I know my place—the eternal heavenly place He’s made for me—and not even the gates of hell can steal it away from me. To say it’s humbling is an understatement. ***How do you say “thank you” for such an undeserved and amazing gift?*** Answer: Walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you’ve been called, with all humility, gentleness, and long-suffering patience, bearing with one another just like Christ—in love—eager to maintain the unity of the Holy Spirit in the bond of peace; the peace that passes and surpasses all human understanding.

And if you’re still not humbled, look around. Your King and Lord exalts you today in the presence of all men, calling you and inviting you to His feast table, where angels, archangels, and all the company of heaven are gathered. You come to the earthly end of the King’s feast table, ***and the King of heaven and earth comes to serve you.*** “Take and eat. Take and drink. This is My body and blood, given and shed FOR YOU.” Talk about exaltation! Talk about a place of honor! And the best is still yet to come. More and greater exaltation awaits. Your Lord has already prepared your heavenly mansion room for you. **He knows your place!** Your spot at the heavenly side of the eternal feast is already prepared and reserved. When your pilgrim walk through this veil of tears is complete, your Lord will send His holy angels to bring you home to Him, where you will hear Him say to you in the presence of all those angels, archangels, and company of heaven: “Well done, good and faithful servant. Enter into our Father’s rest.” I guess the only remaining question is: ***How does all this divine exaltation NOT humble you? How could you want to walk any other way? How could you not want to walk in the manner that is worthy of His gracious baptismal calling?***

May Jesus Christ and His humility, His gentleness, His long-suffering patience, grace, mercy, love for you give you peace, and may His peace guard you, keep you, and be exalted through you, both in your walk now and into all eternity.

To Him be all the glory, praise, and honor... **AMEN.**