

"Pride"  
The Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost  
Proper 22  
8 October 2023  
Trinity+St, Peter's Episcopal Church  
San Francisco, California

---

Isaiah 5:1-7  
Psalm 80:7-14  
Philippians 3:4b – 14  
Saint Matthew 21:33-45

INI

I just returned from a couple of ecclesiastical conferences, the Diocesan Clergy Retreat at Bishop's Ranch, and the Society of Catholic Priests (that's Anglican) in Kansas City, Missouri. During those days I ran into several people that pushed my pride button. That is, by the way, the inquiry that forms today's sermon – pride, and we will be relying a great deal on the second lesson, from Paul's letter to the Philippians, and the Gospel. At any rate, in the course of these two meetings, I ran into several people who thanked me for mentoring or guiding them in their vocation. These words of thanksgiving made me feel good, perhaps a little bit too good – so that when I saw the themes laid out in the Philippians reading, I knew that I had to deal with my own sense of pride. So I have divided the reading into three separate examinations:

Examination 1: What is your status in this world? Does it come at the expense of others? (Philippians 3:5-6)

*If anyone else thinks he can be confident in flesh, all the more can I. Circumcised on the eighth day, of the race of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrew parentage, in observance of the law a Pharisee, in zeal I persecuted the church, in righteousness based on the law I was blameless.*

Paul mentions the pride that he has in his heritage – he is the Jew's Jew. He is, religiously speaking, better than his audience. It is an attitude that we can identify with. I'm thinking about all the jokes we make about people who are not Anglican, about our good taste, etc. The jokes we make about race, or gender. The jokes that we make about class, or income, or, well, you get the picture. So what is the status that you enjoy at the expense of others? Or how are you not quite as good as someone you know? What is the status that ought to elevate you, that ought to help you love God and serve your neighbor?

Paul talks about his persecution of the church, which, at one time, was a source of pride for him. His status as a pharisee had to be overcome with something, something greater, something that was attained not at the expense of others. Like Paul we ought to have an examination of life, and of what we truly ought to be proud of.

Examination 2: What might not be necessary in your life? What might you need to take on? (Philippians 3:7-11)

*Yet whatever gains I had; these I have come to regard as loss because of Christ. More than that, I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and I regard them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but one that comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God based on faith. I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death, if somehow, I may attain the resurrection from the dead.*

Now Paul switches the subject and takes pride in what he has lost or given up, all for the sake of knowing Christ and his resurrection. It's an interesting examination for those who live in a culture of gain, of succeeding, of acquiring. Last night I went to see the Opera "The (R)evolution of Steven Jobs". The theme is his acquiring of so much in life, and yet losing it all. This theme is repeated in the eighth chapter of Mark: *What profit is there for one to gain the whole world and forfeit his life?* It leads us to the question, what is there in your life that might not be necessary? What might be given up, lost, relinquished. And then there is the opposite question, what might you need to take on? What need might you see in the world that would draw you to take it on? Steve Jobs gave up on friendships, a daughter, several relationships, and eventually himself. Paul sought only Jesus, and wondered what his suffering was really for.

Examination 3: What race are you running, and what is the expected prize? (Philippians 3:12-14)

*Not that I have already obtained this or have already reached the goal; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. Beloved, I do not consider that I have made it my own; but this one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus.*

Paul compares his seeking beyond pride to a race that he is running, a race that has a destination and a goal. We might ask ourselves in the examination that I am proposing to know what we are seeking in life. Perhaps a knowledge of God and an even greater knowledge of him. Life in Christ is not static, it is not accomplished and then admired. It is a course of events, of goals met and those not met. Of successes and of downfalls. But it is always a course ending in forgiveness and redemption. As I am thinking about these examinations that we are called to make I am thinking of the Examen of Saint Ignatius of Loyola. It is made up of the following inquiries:

1. Find yourself in the presence of God. Use whatever tools you have at hand to accomplish that – music, silence, bells, icons, nothing. Sit and find yourself in God's presence.
2. Review the events of your day. What goals, races if you will, did you run? What did you win what did you lose? Summon a sense of gratitude for what you were given in this day.
3. Seek truth. Pray for the Spirit of truth so that you can have a sense of discernment that will be needed for the next step.

4. How did you respond to the challenges of the day. Which races did you win, which did you lose. How did you feel during these challenges? Was there pride or was their disappointment?
5. Find in your mind what Jesus might say to you at this time, and offer a prayer of thanks for the insights you might have received. Then, look forward to tomorrow.

Let us pray:

Lord God, you have called your servants to ventures of which we cannot see the ending, by paths as yet untrodden, through perils unknown. Give us faith to go out with good courage, not knowing where we go, but only that your hand is leading us and your love supporting us; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.