

Let's grab our Bibles and let's go to Luke 1. The nature of what we have to talk about today is difficult. And what I mean by that is anytime you want to address humility and pride and you want to look at those, it becomes very, very difficult because, say you are walking in pride, it's nearly impossible to see that you are because...you're walking in pride. And so what ends up happening when you try to address these things is the very people that need to hear are in the end usually thinking of someone else they wish were here so they could hear. And so what I want us to do as we start off, because I believe this is such a big deal and God has more venom towards pride and arrogance than anything else in the Scriptures. Just to be completely honest with you. I mean, He's going to say, "Haughty eyes are an abomination to Me." And He's got so much venom towards this particular deal that I think we would be fools here not to stop before we get started and ask the Lord to let us see tonight. So before we go any farther, I don't want to just pray and get us started, but rather I want us all to kind of slow down here for a second and I want us to ask God to speak to us. And if you're not a believer in this place tonight, I'm glad you're here, but you can just stare at me awkwardly. Don't feel any pressure to do this, but I would tell you it's a great little prayer to throw out, "Hey, if You're real, speak to me." God's just really monstrously big and not scared of that prayer. So why don't we do this together before we get going? Why don't you bow your heads and close your eyes. You don't have to do that in order to pray, but for those of you who are my ADD brethren, it sure helps. The book of 1 Corinthians talks about the eyes of the heart being enlightened. Before we go anywhere else, can we ask that the Lord would let us see clearly tonight both His holiness and our heart? Would you ask Him to speak to you?

"Father, we don't just want to do church, we don't want to just punch the clock and head out, but we ask You tonight to speak to us and speak to us in the real deep places and speak to us in those places where we can't see. And that's the terrifying part of blind-spots, we just can't see them. And so my hope is, as we walk through one of the most famous songs in the Scriptures, that You would speak to us in a really deep way and You would enable us to see both ourselves and Your holiness and how we can compare to that and that You might humble us in all of that. And this might be a night where there's some confession of where we've let our hearts go and some repentance back to You. Help us though. My fear is that we would just learn some cute new things about Mary's Magnificat and that would be it. So help. It's for Your beautiful name. Amen."

Let's go to Luke 1, we'll pick it up in verse 39. And I'll just tell you out of the gate, before we get started. Preaching through the book of Luke, specifically a book that's this size, it's a massive undertaking and I'll tell you why. We could literally be in this for five years. You just can't hit everything, so what I'm trying to do is give you a broad enough overview that you see the entire book before you forget what we did week 1, so that you can kind of constantly feel what's happening here. Because I'll point out things that I would love to spend some time in but we won't get to it. So let's look at verse 39. "In those days Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country, to a town in Judah, and she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth." To catch you up on the story, Zechariah can't say anything, he was muted by God because he doubted God's promises but he doubted them in a kind of haughty, proud fashion. And so he's not

saying anything in this story and he won't say anything again until his son's born. And Elizabeth is a woman who's so old, the Bible says she's almost dead. Now I'm not putting a number on that, but it's old. And she finds herself pregnant. In fact, she finds herself now I believe about six months pregnant. Verse 41, "And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the baby leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit, and she exclaimed with a loud cry,

'Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! And why is this granted to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me?'" Wow! A couple of things I'd love to spend some time on. She doesn't know Mary's pregnant. Mary's coming to tell her she's pregnant, she walks in, baby leaps, filled with the Holy Spirit, "Who am I that the mother of my Lord..." Elizabeth is calling Jesus "Lord." He's an embryo. Did you catch that? "The mother of my Lord." Filled with the Holy Spirit. "The mother of my Lord." Jesus isn't even born and is being worshiped. It's pretty profound. But then look at this one. "For behold, when the sound of your greeting came to my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord." Verse 46, "And Mary said,..." We'll stop there.

I think being here, being in this environment and being where we are, I think you can lose and forget just how gigantic the world is. And one of the things that always happens to me when I go overseas, particularly Asia, is you start getting this realization and this awareness all of a sudden of how big the earth is. And what I mean by that is, it's 26 hours in the air to begin with, but then you have these weird things that happen to you. And what I mean by that is, you want to talk to your wife but the time is very, very different. And so you have these really weird things that happen to you where it's late, late, late at night for you, and I'll call home and talk to Lauren and she's having coffee on the back porch with my kids while they eat their breakfast. And so, I'm on the other side of the planet about to go to bed late at night, but for my wife, she just finished sleeping. Or in the middle of the afternoon, something cool would have happened and I would have to rush back and have this opportunity to call her but know that I can't call her because it's 3:00 in the morning. And it doesn't matter how miraculous, my girl wants to hear in the morning. She wants to hear after the first cup of coffee. "Somebody got raised from the dead? Tell me after I get my coffee." She does not want me to call her at 3:00 in the morning and go, "Guess what!" She just doesn't want that. So you become aware of just how massive this thing is. Like you and I right now, in this moment, we're sitting in this room on these chairs where you're listening to me speak, we're here right now. But right now, all over there world, there are men and women crying and laughing and rejoicing and celebrating and suffering and bleeding and eating and sleeping right now. Right now, there are these men and women who are on the highest mountain top you and I could ever imagine, and then there are others who are in the lowest possible valley, right now. And when I try to take that concept and I then try to roll it out even bigger than that and start thinking of the universe...because I know right now I have family on the other side of the world and I know right now they're sound asleep. Right now they're sound asleep because it's 4:40AM...right now. Body pillow. Dreaming. Out. They're out. That's happening right now. And so when I try to roll that out and think about how big and vast the universe is and then try to comprehend that there's a sovereign God that governs and controls all of that, it hurts my head. Like it hurts my head to think about just how He does it in terms of earth, but then you roll it out and go stars and planets and just the vastness that is space and that the Scriptures teach that there is one sovereign, good, right God that holds all things together simply by the word of His mouth. That's profound; it makes my head hurt. And then yet, despite the fact that there's a billion- trillion-trillion things going on right now, that God is intimately aware of all those things and intimately aware of you and of me and of all the details of our lives and how those details flow into one another, play off of one another. He's completely aware of it.

And this is what blows the mind of Elizabeth and Mary. Here they are, these two obscure, poor women, absolutely insignificant, one old and barren, one young and virginal. And the greatest three decades in the history of the world is about to start and He chose them. And it's blowing their minds. Do you know at this time in history, the Jewish men would start their prayers, "Thank You, God that I have not been born a gentile or a woman?" And how does God decide to shift and fulfill all the promises He's ever made? Elizabeth and Mary. And so they're freaking out about all of this. There's this consistent, "How is this possible? How is this possible? How is this possible?" I mean if you remember back to last week, the angel shows up to Mary and says, "Blessed are you among women," and "O favored one of God." And what's her response? "Who are you talking to? Me? I'm the favored one of God? Are you serious?" And now Elizabeth is doing the same thing. Mary's showing up and she's like, "Who am I? The baby leaped in my womb, the mother of my

Lord...who am I that you would walk in this house? Who are we that God's done this?" This is an overwhelming reality to both of these women. It's powerful, it's profound, it happens over and over again in Scripture. Remember David says, "When I think of the wonders of Your hand, who is man that You are mindful of him?" There's this thing that happens when the vastness of God collides with the small, fragileness of who we are.

And so Mary, kind of overwhelmed by this, she's going to bust into song. I mean, it's straight up "High School Musical" except holier...and better selling. She's just going to absolutely freak out here and start singing a song. But here's what's going to happen in the song, and I need to tell you two things and this is where it's going to get difficult. What's she's going to sing about is going to reveal the heart of man and how God deals with it. And I'm just telling you, in one place, it's beautiful and amazing and in another place, it's very painful and scary. But I'll let you see what I'm talking about yourself. Let's read this thing. "And Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant. For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed; for he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name. And his mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts; he has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate; he has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty. He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his offspring forever." And Mary remained with her about three months and returned to her home." Here's what you have happening in this song. You have three things about the humble and low in spirit, and then you have three things about the haughty in spirit or the proud. And I think each one of them is profound, and that's what we're going to look through today.

So let's look back over this, and I want to point out the humble and lowly in heart first. Look in verse 50. "And his mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation." This idea of fear is the idea of being scared and trembling, but not in the bad kind of fear but in the holy, good kind of fear. Think of it like awe or respect. What I would tell you is this. If they put the full-on male lion in the petting zoo, nobody there walks up and slaps him on the face. Do we? Like at family camp, they had in there one of those goats that if you scare it, it blacked out. So every dude that I know got in there and was trying to scare this goat and make it black out. I've got some great video; I should have brought it. And so, I'd get in there and get behind that thing and go "Yah! Yah!," trying to get him to black out. I'm not doing that with a male lion. I'm not getting behind one going, "Yah! Yah!" Because it could go very, very bad. Agreed? The fainting goat gets angry, blacks out. Male lion gets angry, supper. And that's what this idea of fear is, that God's mercy is for those who fear Him. And this has been absolutely true. The amazing part about this song is everything she says is not just in Scripture, it's everywhere in Scripture. Like, it's not just here and there; it's if you wrung it out, it's what would come out. This is absolutely true over and over and over again, that those who fear God and humble themselves before Him find His mercy. Zacchaeus, the tax collector, raising funds for the Roman occupying army as they kill, rape and pillage, climbs up in a tree to see the Lord but also to not be seen by the Lord. And Jesus walks right up to the tree and says, "Down. Let's go." Zacchaeus goes down, repents, is lowly and Jesus says, "Salvation has come to this house." Prostitutes and drunks continually make their way to Jesus and fall at His feet either sobbing or repenting, and He'll eat dinner with them. We could be here for hours. Or how about the woman—one of my favorite stories—who comes up to Jesus and says, "Will you heal my son?" And He says, "Hey, I've come for the Jews, not for the gentiles. Nobody takes their bread and casts it before dogs." That's a pretty tough passage, huh? "Will you heal me, Jesus?" "No, dog"...and not in the "hip" type dawg way. "No. I don't think so. You don't throw the miracles of God before dogs. It's not your time." But then the woman answers back. "But even the dogs get the scraps from the master's table." Jesus stops and says, "Done, and I have never seen faith like this in Israel." I mean, we could keep on going. The thief on the cross. "Today you will be with Me in paradise." Where men and women humbly bow themselves, no matter what their past, no matter what their background, whether they're religious, whether they're non-religious, whether they're absolutely pagan, if they'll humble themselves and fear the Lord, He has mercy, just this unbelievable amount of mercy.

Look at this next line. Go to verse 52. "he has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate;..." If you would spend serious time studying the Scriptures, particularly those whom God exalted and used powerfully, it would read like a who's who of "who?" King David, the line of Jesus, is so insignificant that out in the field, when the prophet comes to name the king, nobody even thinks about getting him. So all the brothers are there, and the prophet goes, "Um, I think we're missing one." "Really? ...four...five...six...seven. We are! Who is it? No, I know I have seven sons. Oh, David. He's in the field, playing his harp." And when you think king, you don't think harp, is that correct? You think warrior king; you don't think out in the woods playing the harp. But David comes in. David's the king, David's the giant killer, David's the man after God's own heart. But in that moment he's "Who? Who is this?"

At the time, they've got a king who is a specimen, I mean a foot taller than any Israelite, the best hunter they've ever known, the best warrior they've ever known, and then you've got this ruddy little kid playing a harp out in the woods. And God goes, "That's My man." Humble estate, gets exalted. Moses, the murdering herdsman. Peter, the blue-collar redneck. Do I need to keep going? I mean, it's the who's who of "who in the world is that?" Jesus shows up on the scene and doesn't get any religiously trained people. He begins to select people who had been kicked out of school a long time ago to pursue some career outside of being able to read. He exalts those of humble estate, those whose hearts are lowly before Him. He exalts them. Okay, how about this one. This is a no-brainer here. When God decides to fulfill all His promises with the birth of His Son, what palace does He go to? What royal bloodline? A little virgin girl? Jesus is born in a barn? Which you had to know was cool for Him growing up. "Were you born in a barn?" You know the answer to that. "Yes, I was." And then, we'll get to this later but the first people that were told are who? Shepherds. I mean, this is below blue-collar. He exalts the lowly in estate. This is an unreal idea.

One more He has here. Verse 53. I think this is profound. "...he has filled the hungry with good things,..." I have loved that verse this week. Let me tell you why. Feelings of gratitude, more than any other feelings I know, are unbelievably powerful emotions. When the heart is grateful, when it's not seeing the negative but when it's grateful for what it has, there's this unbelievable amount of joy that transcends any circumstance. Feelings of gratitude will take a level, solid, strong man and make him sob. When we become grateful for what we have, grateful for what we've been given, grateful for what God has done, in those moments of gratitude, everything works like it's supposed to, everything. So what He's saying here is that He fills the hungry with good things. When you haven't eaten forever, it doesn't matter what it is, you eat, there's this unbelievable amount of gratitude that comes into it. So when the sinner is hungry to be free from his sin, when the person who struggles with secret darkness or despair or frustration or rage or anger and he has this deep desire to not walk there anymore but to be filled with the Spirit and walk away from those things, he gets filled with good things. But this is a humble stance, to admit that you're hungry. That's not our game, but we'll get to that more in a minute. Our game is, "I'm fine, I'm full," and we keep cramming bread that never satisfies us, out of Isaiah, into our mouths. But to admit that you're hungry is a really humble, humble place to be. When I used to travel around with a group of guys that did music...I spoke, they did music. It was kind of Partridge Family-esque, except with Jesus at the center. And we stopped one night, and there was a guy at a gas station, and he asked us for something to eat. I mean, he didn't even ask us for money; he just asked us for something to eat and maybe some cigarettes. So we went inside and we just got him a couple of cans of chunky soup and some bread—you can email me on this one—and we got him a carton of cigarettes, not cheap ones like Doral 100's or anything like that. We got the straight up real deal cigarettes, and then we took them outside and handed them to him. And he just started sobbing. He just sobbed...and then opened up the cigarettes first. But he was sobbing. I mean, where do you have to be where your only hope to have anything in your belly is to sit outside of a gas station and plead with people walking in to help? That's a pretty humble estate, is it not? Now listen to me. "He fills the hungry with good things."

I tried to define humility. It's definitely not easy to do. I think what humility is, is an understanding of your sinfulness while at the same time understanding the holiness of God and how those two things can never be in the same room

together. And here's just a tell-tale sign for me and maybe I'm wrong on this. If I am, as I get older, life will beat this out of me, so don't worry. I think anyone who brags about where they are morally or what's happened in their life or how successful they've become or how their kids turned out right because they did this, I think anyone who is braggadocios about those things doesn't understand the holiness of God and their own sinfulness. Humility is understanding how clean and perfect He is and how even our righteous acts are filthy before Him. Have you thought about that? Because the big one is, "Oh, we've done bad things. Don't bring those bad things in front of the Lord." And God's going, "Your little righteous acts disgust me." If you're new to church, if you ever wonder why we sing so much and lift our hands, it's because of that. You want to know why we love Jesus so much? It's because of that, that our little petty righteous acts, God's going, "Get that dirty sponge out of My throne room. Get your dirty clothes out of My throne room. Get that out of My face." And when we come in and just go, "I plead the blood of Christ," He goes, "That's what I'm talking about." This is humility.

But that's not all she sings about at all. Let's go to verse 51. Verse 51 to me might just be one of the most terrifying passages of Scripture in the entire Bible. Look at this. First of all, it's unbelievably poetic, but it's also terrifying. "He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts;..." This word "thoughts" is the Greek word for imagination of their hearts. This is a horrifying idea. He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. Let me give you examples to prove my point. I've used this example before, but I always want to use it because it's such great, great illustration of how it happens. On Christmas Eve, two years ago, I wore some slacks, Banana Republic slacks, baby. I'm not an ad for them, that was just where they were from. And I tucked in my shirt, and I wore a nice shirt. It was like a red shirt, because it was Christmas. And I got up here and we did it, man. We did the Christmas thing in my slacks and in my tucked-in shirt. I thought it was a great night. That next week, I get an e-mail from a little girl, basically calling me a sell out, and here was her e-mail. We can laugh, but it happens to all of us. She told me that she grew up in a church that said you had to wear this and you had to wear this and this is what God found pleasing and you should wear a suit and you should wear a tie and you should wear a dress and your hair should be done..."and now I feel like I'm back at that place, and I don't know what..." That was her e-mail. Now, let me tell you what's happening there. Simply on the surface, let me just say this. She is her parents now; she just changed the dress code. So now the dress code is it can't be slacks. "People who wear slacks don't love Jesus" in what used to be "People who wore jeans don't love Jesus." It's the same thing. It's what almost always happens when rebellion is the root of change. You just become what you hate with a different dress code. That's a whole other message. But let me tell you what happens here. What happens here is the reality is she's got bitterness and hurt in her heart. That's it. That's reality. But because of her pride and her imagination, what's the problem? My slacks. And she is, in the imagination of her mind, going, "You know what the problem is? The problem is all these people who think that they dress this way and because of that... and Chandler's selling out...and I'm not..." But the reality is she's a hurt little girl with bitterness on religious parents who showed her no grace. Now here's why it's so sorrowful. She can't heal because she can't see what the problem is. She's blind and running around in this imaginative place, and she can't see reality. This plays itself out all the time in jealousy, when ladies get together and they're like, "Well, she's just that because of this...or she's just this because of that." Here's what's really happening. "I'm insecure, fearful and don't trust God in my life." That's what's happening. The bottom line of all jealousy is insecurity and fear, always. There has never been a moment of jealousy in the history of the universe that was not rooted in insecurity and fear and a mistrust of God. And so what happens in reality is you've got insecure, fearful—and it could be men, too, men definitely do this, too—fearful junk going on that roots itself in, "Oh, how lucky they are...or they just got there because of this...oh, aren't they lucky...aren't they that...aren't they this...they don't deserve that...they don't deserve this." When in reality what's really going on is, "I don't trust God with my life. I don't trust Him in my marriage, so I'll attack that one. I don't trust Him in my finances, so I'll attack that one. I don't trust Him in my own heart, so I'll attack that one." And what reality is can never be handled because they're dancing around in an imaginative place.

I'll give you one that just happened to me recently. When I first got into ministry, I worked for a boss who was unbelievably controlling, I mean looking over your shoulder. He was just controlling. Like everything you do gets graded. And so, I began to go, "When it's my turn, I'm not doing it like that." And that's been the mantra of my heart. So here I get to the Village and so basically what I do is build out this team and I'm just letting them do their deal. And even when I disagree with it, I just kind of come in and lovingly go, "Hmm, maybe we ought to think about this. Maybe we should..." And then I'll back away. And in the end, that's made me on some areas here at the Village a very poor leader. Because in the end, I've prayed and I've sought the Lord's face and He's been very clear and I've gone, "Okay, now I need You to tell them." And He's like, "No no no, I told you, fool. I've put you in this position. Let's go. You do this. You lead this. That's what I've asked you to do." And then I wouldn't do it; I'd walk in disobedience. And then something would break or it wouldn't be what I wanted and I'd get frustrated and angry. And my reality was that I had bitterness and pride, the reverse amount of pride, "I'm not going to do it like that; I'm going to do it the right way," that was causing me to walk in sin and what my imagination was was, "I wish they would do it the right way. If they would do it the right way, it would work better." Or we could go on and on. Marriage is a big one. Marriage is always a big one. How crazy is it when one spouse says, "Let's go get help for our marriage. Let's go see a counselor. Let's go," and the other one goes, "Nah, we're alright." If someone's saying that, you're not alright. Okay, please don't giggle, because this is a reality for so many people. It's not a joke; it's pride. It's you're playing in this imaginative world where everything's burning and on fire and you can't see it. I mean, the lunacy of that, a spouse going, "We need help," and the response, "No we don't." "Well no, we do." "Oh no, we don't. We're going to be okay. We'll make it work." "No, we're not making it work. That's what I'm telling you. Let's get help." "Nah, we'll fix it. We'll do it. I'll get better." This is what this text is talking about. And let me just tell you how much sorrow it creates. Because those who are walking in this kind of pride, they can't see it because they're in their imagination. They're never at fault, and if they are at fault, they'll acknowledge their fault but only as they show you who caused that fault in them. "No, I need to take ownership of this. I know I am to blame. But you know what, if they would just \_\_\_\_\_, then I'd be better." So, they kind of took blame but not really. That game. And here's the big part. Full, rich, deep life will always elude them. They'll never get there, no matter how many Bible studies, no matter how much they learn. Why? Because it just keeps feeding the imagination. That's why sermons on pride are so unbelievably difficult. Because all you're doing, if the Holy Spirit doesn't do something very, very mighty, is feeding the ego of pride-filled people, giving them ammunition basically to use on others. It's why I prayed so hard this week. This is just impossible. Because you know the pride's going, "Oh, this is good. Oh, she's going to hear that one. You only take ownership when you say where ownership really belongs." And that's what you're feeding. It's very, very difficult.

Alright, look at this one. This one's unreal. I hate the Bible; the Bible reads you. That's what makes it so difficult...Did I just say I hate the Bible? I see at least three elders. This might be my last sermon. Here's what's difficult about the Scriptures. What's difficult about the Scriptures is if you just read them, they're easy. Like if you just do your little daily devotional, you just open it up, you just read the Bible, that's one thing. But if you let it read you, it'll own you. Because it gets you, which is what's so unbelievable. It gets humanity. Over and over and over again, it will just nail humanity to the wall. You just can't get around it. So I mean, if you just read it like you're reading the newspaper, meh. But if you let it read you, it's unbelievably painful. Like look at this next one. Look in verse 52, and I love the Bible. That's why I want you to look there, because I love it. "...he has brought down the mighty from their thrones..." Now listen to this one. People who are filled with pride walk with a false sense of control. They believe that they can control things. It's almost always based out of fear, but they're going to control it. So they sit on the throne of their lives and they try to control all they're really afraid of. "I'm afraid of this, so I'm going to control it. I'm afraid this might happen, so I'm going to control it. And I'm afraid of this, so I'm going to control it." And this is a reference for those who sit on their thrones, do not trust God and instead try to control the world around them. Now, let me tell you why this is such a problem.

Because people who struggle with pride that works itself out in control issues become self-fulfilling prophets. Here's why. If you've got this fear that your kids are going to do something out of control or get crazy and you try to control

their entire environment and squeeze them down, what are they going to do? Rebel. They're going to rebel. If in your marriage you're terrified that your spouse is going to do this or going to do this, so you start squeezing down and making rules and creating checklists, what you're going to do is push your spouse away and you're going to get the very thing you're terrified of. This is how He can with absolute confidence say, "I'm going to blow up your throne. In fact, I might just not intervene and let you blow up your throne." Because sometimes it just goes really bad and then what do we end up doing? The funny thing about controlling people is they think they are prophets. They're like, "I told you so. I knew it." And because they're filled with pride, they can't even see their own fault. This is why this is so devastating. We won't spend any more time there. Let's go. I have some issues there myself.

Verse 53, "...he has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty." I always worry about rich people who come to church, because there's so much in the Bible that seems like it attacks them. It's like, "I'm sorry. I'm successful." Let me try to explain what's happening here, because in the same way when He says, the hungry are filled with good things, and yeah, He's probably talking about people who don't have any food and then get filled, but I think what's happening there is there's a deeper level of things where you've got men and women in their richness who feel full, feel satisfied, and so they're not pursuing the Lord anymore. And so what this text is talking about is those who believe they have enough of whatever to not need the Lord.

So you can fill in the blank with whatever it is. They've got enough love in their spouse, they've got enough money in their bank account, but here's what I'll absolutely guarantee you. And you can believe me now, especially if you're older, some of you will believe me now. Some of you will have to wait a little while. Your body and your bank account will eventually betray you, from the top down, everybody in this room. You're either going to get a ton of cash...in which case, we're trying to buy an Albertson's...and find out that it doesn't satisfy. And you've got all your trinkets and all your toys and still you're kind of bored. So it will betray you there. Or what will happen is you'll put all your time or energy and effort into your body, and it will start to fall apart on you, no matter how well you take care of it. This is what He's saying, that the rich, they're eventually going to be hungry.

And listen, we could say more about pride. Let me give you just a couple of texts. There's much more we could say here. Proverbs 6:16-17 says the Lord hates haughty eyes; they are an abomination to Him. Proverbs 8:13 says, "Pride and arrogance...I hate." Proverbs 16:5, listen to this, "Everyone who is arrogant in heart is an abomination to the LORD; be assured, he will not go unpunished." If you know the Scriptures, you'll find rarely God speaking as heavy as He does against pride. Then I'll try to tie these two ideas together in James 4:6. "God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble." As best as I can define pride, I put here, "We think we are God and we refuse to acknowledge our need and dependence." "So we take care of our marriage, we've got our kids, we'll handle our resources, we've got our health, we'll handle this problem, we've got this situation, we'll overcome this sin..." All you're doing is going, "I'm God, I can heal. I'm God, I can fulfill. I'm God, I can bring joy..." And all the things that He wired the universe to come and flow from Him, you take on yourself. That's pride. That's what it is. Now not just occasionally and not just under certain circumstances but at all times and in every sphere of life, pride is our greatest enemy. At all times and in every sphere—marriage, work, neighborhood, home—at all times and in every sphere, pride is our greatest enemy.

I was in Atlanta this past week and I was doing a little thing for the Catalyst Conference. And one of the things they asked me was, "What's your greatest leadership challenge now at the Village Church? Is it communication lines? Is it spiritual formation? Is it figuring out how to create synergy among two campuses?" And my answer was, "No. Those things are difficult but not the greatest challenge at all. The greatest challenge right now by far is keeping a young staff humble and holy before a terrifyingly huge God when everything we seem to do works." So then what ends up happening is we develop the language of humility but we don't really walk in it. Oh good, so a couple of you know that. That's happened to you, where you've got the language of humility, you know the right answer, you know the way you should walk, you

know the way you should live, but in the end, there's a swagger. Nobody walks with a limp in front of the living God—nobody—not unless He broke your hip. That's the only way you get to limp. By far this is the most difficult thing, to keep a people hungry and humble before a living God when everything around you looks successful. That's what makes difficulty such a beautiful thing. It keeps you humble before God, it keeps you crying out. That's why health and wealth and prosperity can be such damning things. God opposes the proud. Are you hearing that? "I am against you." But He gives grace to the humble, to the hungry, to the lowly in estate.

Do me a favor. Would you just kind of get in a position where you can think for a second. Maybe that's bowing your heads and closing your eyes. I'm going to ask you to just kind of look into your own heart tonight. Do you have pride that needs to be confessed, a swagger that needs to be dealt with? I mean, I don't know if you can see it, but I want to ask are you living in reality or are you running around in imagination? It has always been and it will always be this way, that God will exalt the lowly and He will work against and bring low the haughty, in church, out of church, in pulpits, out of pulpits, in the workplace, out of the workplace. In fact, even if you would think about it in the business world, in Jim Collins' book "From Good to Great," I don't know any businessman who hadn't read that book, and one of the things they found about all dynamic, catalytic leaders is that they walked in humility. That was the biggest surprise of their study, that those guys that took companies from good to great were these unassuming, self-deprecating men and women who constantly pushed off the credit to others. So I'm telling you, the Bible gets how the universe is wired. Are you walking humbly before Him? I wish there was a sermon we could preach on how to get there. I think that's the first act of dependence, asking God to help us get there.

"Father, I thank You for today and I thank You for these men and women. And I thank You for once again the opportunity to open up the Scriptures and be read by them. I'm asking for Your help tonight, that You would give us eyes to see where we've walked in pride, where we need to ask for forgiveness, where we need to repent, where we need to deal with You, where we need to step out of imagination and into reality, where we need to humble our hearts before You. Help us. Even those who can't pray right now, help us. Bring us low. It's for Your beautiful name that I ask these things and because I believe our only hope for deep and abiding joy is in that place that I've prayed. Amen."