

Jeremiah 2: 4-13; Hebrews 13: 1-8, 15-16; Luke:1, 7-14

There was panic at the airport. A flight had been cancelled. A slow-moving queue of passengers was waiting to book on another flight. One man was getting increasingly annoyed. Finally, he marched to the counter and demanded a first-class ticket on the next available flight. "Sorry, I must serve the people in turn." said the girl at the counter. The irate customer banged his fist on the counter, and asked, "Have you any idea who I am?" Without a moment's hesitation, the girl picked up the P.A microphone and announced: "There is gentlemen here who does not know who he is. If anyone in the airport can identify him, please come to the counter." The people waiting in line burst into applause, while the queue jumper experienced one of the most embarrassing moments of his life.

Indeed, it is hard for us to be humble always. Therefore, we either misinterpret it or ignore it as if it is injurious to human growth. The word of God teaches us that humility is the basis and source of success in human life, and the lives of great people in history prove this.

The prophet Jeremiah reminded his people that they had forsaken their God and worshiped other gods, and through which they lost their humility before God. They forgot that the divine election was not to privilege but to responsibility. Therefore, God condemned the priest and the lawyers. The priests cultivated and encouraged the cults of other gods at Israel's sanctuaries, and those who handled the law had misinterpreted God's law.

Therefore, God used an image of cracked cisterns to describe the relationship between God and His chosen people. The cracked cisterns that can hold no water. The cisterns were widely used in Palestine to hold water, especially for use during the long, hot and dry summer.

The porous limestone rock of Palestine had to be lined with plaster to make the cisterns watertight. A cistern whose lining was cracked was thus useless. So also, Jeremiah announces that the Jews were like cracked cisterns, and therefore, they were useless. It happened, as they were not able to be humble before God and before one another. This tendency led them to run away from God and embrace other gods.

They exalted their privileges, positions and possessions. As they wanted to uphold human glory, they could not humble themselves before God. When we humble ourselves before God, He will strengthen us in such a way that we will be able to think productively, and react sensibly.

Charlemagne was the greatest Christian ruler of the early Middle Ages. There is a story historians tell about his funeral. After his death a mighty funeral procession left his castle for the cathedral. When the royal casket arrived, with much pomp and solemnity, it was met by the bishop, who barred the cathedral door.

“Who comes?” The bishop asked, was the custom.

The emperor’s proud herald proclaimed, “Charlemagne, Lord the King of the Holy Roman Empire.”

The bishop replied, “I don’t know him.” The bishop asked again, “Who comes?”

The herald, a bit shaken, responded, “Charles the Great, a good and honest man of the earth.”

“I don’t know him.” The bishop said again.

The third time the bishop asked, “Who comes?”

The herald completely crushed, replied, “Charles, a lowly sinner, who begs the gift of Jesus.”

To which the Bishop promptly responded, “Enter, Receive Christ’s gift of life.” Even Charlemagne in all his glory and good works could not assume a position of honour.

In the modern world humility is seen as a rare term and for modern people it is a worse subject. And today people are hesitant to accept the very idea of humility. They wrongly judge it as the opposite of freedom and human dignity. Rather, today Jesus invites us to think correctly about the virtue of humility by relating it to the reality of human life.

Jesus went to a Pharisee’s house to eat a meal on the sabbath day. He saw guests choosing the places of honour. Jesus said parable. “When you are invited by someone to a wedding banquet, do not sit down at the place of honour, in case someone more distinguished than you has been invited by your host; and the host who invited both of you may come and say to you, ‘Give this person your place,’ and then in disgrace you would start to take the lowest place.

But when you are invited, go and sit down at the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he may say to you, ‘Friend, move up higher’; then you will be honoured in the presence of all who sit at the table with you. For all who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.”

Through this parable Jesus teaches us that a true honour and glory comes to a person only when he/she is humble. It is true that humility is not our birthmark. It is rather cultivated and not inherited. When a person cultivates a genuine virtue of humility, automatically the honour he yearns for, enters into his/her life. Humility is not having a performance showing a poor self-image.

It is a genuine life emerges from our commitment to the honest obedience to the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. This way of approach will always remind us that we are His people and are called to lead a humble life and proclaim His kingdom. In this approach to Christian life there is no room for self-glory or self-esteem. Rather, we try to reveal true humility in all our approach to care for all our fellow being, all other living beings and non-living beings.

True humility is depended on how we treat others. Humility is not some kind of ribbon or medal we wear on our uniform. The only way to reveal our humility is if we treat others more highly than ourselves. Paul says in Philippians chapter 2, "Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves.

Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave."

Jesus humbled Himself to step down from the throne of heaven to become one of us—a human being. The night before Jesus was crucified, Jesus displayed His humility and His servanthood. Jesus humbled Himself and went to the disciples and washed their dirty, dusty, stinking feet. He humbled Himself again and became obedient unto death—He died the death of a common criminal.

What did God the Father do? Scripture says, "God highly exalted Him and gave Him a name that is above every name." In this way God wants to build up His kingdom. The more we humble ourselves, the more we love God and build up His kingdom. May God teach us and lead us to humble ourselves and treat others with kindness and respect to build up His kingdom. Amen.