It is good to see you this morning.

The original plan for me this morning was to be in the back room with the Sunday school kids. I was looking forward to arts and crafts and colouring sheets and snack time, while Dave shared a message from God’s Word and Shar led everyone congregationally in songs of praise and worship. But since Shar is quite ill this week she’s taking the Sunday off, so Friday afternoon we decided to switch things around, so Dave is doing Shar’s job and I’m doing Dave’s job and Melissa is doing my job.

While I certainly wish I had more time to put into this morning’s message I do see God’s hand in this. There has been a theme that has been settling deeper and deeper into my heart in these past several months. That theme is humility. Or rather, it is my own lack of humility.

A verse that I came across in my Bible reading plan this week is:
He leads the humble in what is right,
And teaches the humble His way.
Psalm 25:9

There are two rewards that come from humility.
1. He leads us in what is right.
2. He teaches us His way

I want that! I want to be taught His way. In a world of so many possible alternative ways, so many seemingly good choices out there, I just want to know what God’s way is. He teaches the humble His way.

But I don’t just want to know His way, intellectually (although that is important) I want to walk in it. I want to be obedient to it. I want to go down the right way. God’s word says that He will lead us in what is right.

I’m going to talk this morning about true humility, but I don’t want to present myself as someone who has arrived. I am pursuing humility. Please understand that about me. I am not under the impression that I am humble. And I am not under the impression that you are humble either. The Bible wouldn’t go out of its way to warn us against humility to regularly and so consistently if pride were not a deadly sin and a constant snare to each of us. Humility is elusive and I am not under the impression that I am talking to a congregation of humble people, so I’d prefer you engage in some honest self
assessment, or at least give yourself permission to consider that perhaps you are not humble.

Pursuing humility.

Mark 9:33-35
The disciples were arguing about who was the greatest. They saw servanthood and humility modeled by Jesus, but yet they were arguing about who was higher in rank than one another. Jesus wasn’t present for the argument (they knew better than to do it in front of Him) but he still was aware. He knew their hearts, just as He knows ours. He spoke to them and talked about their selfish ambition (35)
He radically redefines greatness. Nothing wrong with wanting to be great, but to the Christ follower, it is different.

The point didn’t sink in though….

Mark 10:32-45

James and John ask for Jesus to settle a dispute among them and to show them once and for all who has the highest rank. They’re brothers and this is some sibling rivalry, but they are pulling rank and asking Jesus to settle it for them.

Once again He speaks about a different path to greatness, not through exaltation, but through service. He gives a striking contrast, the powers of Rome and the example of Jesus.

The ruler s of this world lord their authority over people. This is evident in the pomp and power and violence of the roman Emperor Caesar and his armies. Jesus, the true Lord, doesn’t lord His authority over people, but comes under them, to serve them. We see this in so many ways, we see the way that He chose to be born in poverty and obscurity,

The way He spoke, not in eloquent rhetoric, dazzling the crowds with His vocabulary and power of the tongue, but He spoke in parables, telling stories about seeds, plants, and families. Instead of speaking up high over their heads, he gets down low and speaks to them.

We see this in the way He treats His disciples, most notably in the upper room as they are (once again) squabbling over rank and honour, Jesus slips away and gets a bowl and washes their feet. He gets down on his knees and He serves them.
Ultimately we see this the next day, the day we call Good Friday, when Jesus serves His followers by going to the cross for them. At the moment when He physically is being lifted high upon the cross, He is in reality going lower than He ever had before. Paul in Philippians 2 says that He submitted Himself to death “even the death on the cross.”

I love the imagery from Les Miserables, Jean ValJean is mayor of a village in France and one of the citizens, Fauchelevant (fowch-ele-von) who hated him, slipped in the mud and was being crushed by the weight of his own horsecart. Victor Hugo describes how the townspeople are standing watching helplessly as he is being slowly pressed deeper and deeper into the filthy mud. They’re trying to help but they can’t. VelJEan comes and gets under the cart, and with his colossal strength, he lifts the cart off of him with his back. Likewise, Jesus comes down to us, he comes low, he’s down in the mud with us, and he lifts the church out of hell.

When I was sinking down, sinking down, sinking down, Christ laid aside His crown for my soul, for MY soul.

This is how Jesus exercises His greatness, by going down low: to experience our life, to be understood by us, to serve us, and to save us.

And that is exactly what He goes on to say in v45 The Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.

What humility is and isn’t.

It is necessary to define both humility and its opposite - pride. They are often contrasted in Scripture so its helpful to understand one in order to properly understand the other.

Pride is an exalted self understanding. Understanding ourselves through warped lenses. Funhouse mirror. The Hebrew word translated pride in the Old Testament has to do with height. We see ourselves as taller (spiritually speaking) than we actually are. One of the titles that the Lord is called is “the Most High” - and proud people are competing with Him for that title. “pride is the anti-God state of mind”

It is complete self reliance, and causes us to view our own sin too lightly,
our own ability too highly
Our own potential too mighty,
And our capacity to fall into sin far too peripheral.

So simply put - humility is the opposite of pride.
Accurately understanding ourselves, our weaknesses, and our capacity
to fall and complete reliance on the grace of the Lord Jesus.

And additionally - true humility is distinct from false humility.

This doesn’t mean that we go around moping and putting ourselves down all
the time.
Humility doesn’t mean thinking less of yourself, it means thinking of yourself,
less. - C.S. Lewis

**Pursuing humility in a social media age.**

Humility is hard to pursue in every age. It is not the age that we live in that
makes humility hard, but our prideful, self exalting hearts that make it hard.
Yet, being alive in 2014 brings its unique sets of challenges to humility.
The decades before us had a focus on self esteem, making sure that people
thought that they were special, unique and wonderful. Self esteem: **108,360**
Books on amazon.com

Amongst Millenials (those born in the early years of the 1980s onward [which
is a lot of us in this room,] ) there doesn’t seem to be a big self-esteem push,
because we all tend to think that we’re pretty important already. Perhaps a
cause or an effect of our heightened self esteem is social media.
And the ever present world of social media presents A particularly unique
challenge to those of us who want to pursue humility.

Websites exist that provide us with unhindered ability to distribute information
about ourselves to large groups of people very quickly. Most of the time the
information that we share is insignificant and inane, yet we are rewarded for
sharing them with our “friends” and “followers” with “likes” “stars” “hearts”
“thumbs up” “favourites” “re-blogs” “comments” and “shares”
This creates a false universe where we are the super stars, everything that
we do finds instant approval and support from our audience, and we are the
centre of a self-perpetuating media blitz. We become our own paparazzi, and
we love it.

Opportunities arise for us to share insights from our day and we are made to
feel like the centre of attention for a few brief moments as the notifications roll
This is dangerous to us, because it increases our temptation to boast of our own greatness and to engage in sinful self-promotion, which are both dangerous habits of the heart and mind.

If humility truly is, as Lewis defined it, thinking of ourselves less, then our social media obsessed zeitgeist that we are living in is going to be a challenge for us. And we ought to thoughtfully engage in it.

Rachel and I took a month long break from social media in January, and now we are very carefully wading back into it now that its February.

Practices to guide you toward humility.

Meditate frequently, often, and deeply upon the cross of Christ.
In Mark 10, Jesus speaks of the cross as the antitode to pride.
In an interview between two renowned scholars (DA Carson and Carl F Henry) one was asked the other what it was like to be hailed as a genius by many, but not to fall into the temptation of intellectual pride. Carl Henry said “how can I be proud when I stand next to the cross?”

So linger on its message. Realise what the cross is teaching you.
That you are far more sinful than you could ever imagine. So sinful that no price could be paid to cover your sin, no good deeds could amend for your debt, no animal could be sacrificed, no negotiation could be reached. None other but the sinless Son of God could pay the price for your sin.

You are more sinful than you could ever imagine, but also you are more loved than you could ever dream.

The Son of God went to cross for you, and He did it willingly. Hebrews calls you “the joy set before Him” that motivated to go there.

So as we take communion - give careful thought to that.