

# FIVE FORKS BRETHREN IN CHRIST CHURCH

9244 Five Forks Road

Waynesboro, PA 17268-9612

Tel: (717) 762-2991

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*SERIES: Less of Me, More of You*

*SERMON: "O To Be Like Thee"*

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*(Acknowledgment to "Anonymous", author of the book Embracing Obscurity.)*

Good morning! Our Sermon Series is called **Less Of Me, More of You**. We're taking the month of October to talk about this desire that many - if not all - of us have to be seen, noticed, dare I say...*maybe even envied*.

You might say that this "Look at me!" mentality has reached epidemic proportions in our culture, and I think that it is so common that many of us don't even realize that the church has become caught up in it as well.

But as we read the Scriptures, we see that God is unapologetically committed to His glory. For instance in the book of Isaiah He says...

**Isaiah 42:8 "I am the LORD; that is my name! I will not give my glory to another..."**

And as you look at the life of Jesus, it would appear that every day of Jesus life was spent bringing glory to His Father. And so this morning's message is titled **O To Be Like Thee**...because just like Jesus, I'd like to make much of God and less of myself.

We're going to start out by taking a close look at ourselves, and **Our Tendency For Self-Promotion**. And then we're going to turn our attention **The Example of Our Humble King**, who appears to have cared little about His own reputation, instead was committed to bringing glory to His Father by loving and serving Him...and by loving and serving others. So first...

## 1. OUR TENDENCY FOR SELF-PROMOTION

I think it goes without saying that when it comes to self-promotion, social media such as Facebook, twitter and Instagram provides us all kinds of opportunities. So I'd like to begin by reading an excerpt from the book "Embracing Obscurity". It details the battle taking place within the heart of the author, poised over his or her computer, struggling to take that step of permanently unplugging from Facebook.

*My right index finger paused mid-air, frozen in indecision.*

*The morning of Facebook D-day, I started the process completely half-heartedly. Rather than just delete my account, I first tried whittling down my friends list. A monumental waste of time. I realized I could waste days trying to decide who should go and who should stay. So I made the jump, and nervously clicked on my account settings.*

*In my quest to close my account, I was funneled through a maze of questions in an effort to get me to stay. "Are you sure you want to do this?" It asked. "What are your reasons for leaving?" "Worried about your privacy? No problem, Just enable more privacy settings." "Spending too much time on Facebook? We can fix that too."*

*I'm happy (though slightly embarrassed) to say that after another twenty minutes sitting at that computer, I did it. I clicked the final button, and the aftermath was completely anticlimactic.*

*The final page came up on the screen: "If you ever want to come back, just sign in to reactivate your account."*

*What? Sign right back in? You mean to tell me that after all that, I didn't even get the satisfaction of finality? I think I was hoping they'd be mad or something. Heartbroken to see me go would have been a little more rewarding, considering the tremendous internal battle I had been waging for months over the decision. But the nonchalance of Facebook's final good-bye forced me to see how insignificant my presence on the website really was.*

*The repercussions of my decision to unplug from social media had a much more profound effect on me that I had anticipated. After a few days I caught myself wondering if anyone really knew I was "gone." I also came to realize that I had actually let triple-digit "friends" become a status. I had taken pride in getting responses to witty things I'd post or compliments from long-lost acquaintances about my beautiful family or my relative "success" in life. Once again I saw that the depth of my pride knows no bounds.*

I know that I'm walking a bit of a tightrope here. I said last week, I know that social media sites aren't going anywhere, and so I don't want to make them out to be the path that leads straight to hell.

Social media sites can and do play a valuable role, and incredibly valuable role. Here at Five Forks we have our own FB page and we use it to promote and communicate what is going on around here. And so this is not about getting rid of social media...it's about how we view and use social media.

For instance, for all the possible good that can come from it, many times I'm afraid that instead of social media, it often turns into social comparison. I think it's so easy to end up comparing our lives to each other rather than sharing our lives with each other.

The temptation is great for those doing the posting to do a little self-promotion when it comes to our families, our vacations, any aspect of our lives. And can breed a spirit of discontentedness for those who find themselves reading about how great other people's families, vacations and lives are.

But what God is looking to teach us, I believe, is not limited to social media. I have virtually no presence on social media, and yet I have the same battle as everyone else...that is, like the author, the depth of my pride knows no bounds.

And I think that for most of us, any self-promotion we do is pretty subtle. I for one am not going to go around beating my chest...but if I want to let others know that a good idea was mine, I know how to do it in a way that doesn't come across as proud.

If someone pays me a nice compliment, I don't want to keep that to myself. I want other people to know what was said about me...and so I am quite skilled at working it into a conversation.

Does this mean that I should never think or speak well of myself. Of course not. Jesus came to bring us life to the full...Genesis 1 is about how you and I have been made in the image of God.

Having said that, I know how easy it is for *me* to cross that line from being the man that God made me to be, and slide over into a realm that is far from where He made me to be.

I can even clothe my self-promotion efforts in religiosity - dropping Jesus' name into my story - but underneath the God-speak is my true motivation, and that is to make myself look good.

Why is this? What is it within me – within us – that makes us so desperate for the approval and admiration of others? Maybe Proverbs 29:25 hits the nail on the head...

**Proverbs 29:25 Fear of man will prove to be a snare, but whoever trusts in the LORD is kept safe.**

This does not appear to be the fear of physical harm...but an anxiety, fear, concern about what other people think of us. To the point that it ensnares us. Keeps us thinking we need to always be proving ourselves worthy, when Jesus has already made us so.

And so what steps can we take, what steps *must* we take in order to deal with the temptation that we have to promote ourselves and build up our reputation? I think the answer is found in...

## **2. THE EXAMPLE OF OUR HUMBLE KING**

Last week we talked about how incredibly vast our universe is. Think about this: The One who spoke the universe into existence and knows the stars by name...the One whose face cannot be looked upon without the loss of life...the One who is responsible for each breath you have taken since this message began – and every breath before those...this is the One who took on flesh, and not just that, He came in the weakest form of our humanity.

**1 Timothy 3:16 Without question, this is the great mystery of our faith: Christ was revealed in a human body...**

Listen to what the author of the book “Embracing Obscurity” has written about the fact that God Himself took on human likeness: ***“How can the magnitude of this escape us? How can we get through a complete day without falling on our knees in awe of this truth? What keeps us numb to the jaw-dropping implications of Creator becoming creature?”***

And the author goes on to make this point: It’s because we have made this earth shattering event – we call it...

### **A. The Incarnation**

...to take on a sense of normalcy. To the point where we have become somewhat numb to it.

Think about it. God Himself taking on flesh. God Himself coming to us *in order to serve us*.

And what do we do with this? We do concerts and caroling and decorating and gift trading. In order to celebrate it. We do it every year. For more than a month. To the point of exhaustion.

Perhaps the most incredible about all this – and it’s speaks to the humility of Jesus – is that He allows all of this to happen.

Christmas is coming, and soon – if not already – Christmas merchandise will appear on the shelves of many stores. Here’s what I’d like to ask you to do is – when you go into these stores – be on the lookout for a nativity scene. You know what I’m talking about? These figurines...Joseph and Mary, a few shepherds, some cattle, with Jesus in the middle of the scene. Chances are that if they are not sold by a certain time, they’re sure to be on sale.

Look around and see what else is there on the shelves. Chances are you’ll see a Santa Claus figure occupying some space on the shelf nearby.

If and when you see that this Christmas, stop and think about it. The birth of our Savior and Lord being reduced to holiday merchandise – discounted merchandise at that - sharing the same space with Santa Claus.

Which brings us to this question: **What kind of God would allow for His incredible act of grace to become common fare at a retail store?**

And the answer is, **an incredibly humble God.**

Who not only refrains from sending down bolts of lightning...but instead sends us His Son,,,,,

**Philippians 2:6-8 Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.**

An incredible act of humility on the part of our Humble King.

Let's move on to...

## **B. Jesus's Childhood**

For those of you who have been blessed with children, has your child ever asked you to tell them the story of their birth?

Can I take a moment and share with you Karen and my experience with our adoption of Olivia?

We were to fly out of Baltimore at 2pm on a Wednesday afternoon and arrive in Guatemala that evening...stopping in Houston to change planes. Then, the next morning we would go down to the lobby of our hotel in Guatemala City where we would see and hold our daughter for the very first time. And from that moment on, she would be ours.

So Karen and I are sitting on the plane on the tarmac at the Baltimore airport...right around the 2pm departure time, and I look out the window of the plane and see a crew working on something under the wing. I looked at Karen and said, "This can't be good."

A flight attendant stood up front and said, *“Nothing major, and we’ll be on our way within a short period of time.”* I was sharing this story with Shaun, and he laughed and said, *“Nothing major? We’re talking about the wing!”* It’s kind of important.

Anyway...hours passed and eventually they got us off the plane in order to get us on another one. By this time any hopes of getting to Houston in time to catch the flight to Guatemala that night were shot.

We finally arrived in Houston around midnight that evening and the airline put us up in a hotel. We weren’t able to get access to our suitcase which remained in the hold of the plane...so we slept in our clothes, getting to bed around 2 and getting back up around 5 to head back to the airport.

Just about the time we were preparing to head for the plane that would take us to Guatemala City, the storms came. Storms so strong that no planes were allowed to take off. So at the airport we sat, a bit sweaty, and by that I mean somewhat odorous by this point. The only good thing about all of this was they kept giving us these food vouchers...I ate a lot of really, really good chicken sandwiches in Baltimore and in Houston.

Throughout all of the delays we were in communication with those on the ground in Guatemala, and our “get-together” with them and Olivia was going to have to get pushed back a day. That was both bad and good. We had been waiting 6 months for this day, but we were so exhausted and a good, refreshing night’s sleep would be helpful before our lives changed forever.

Anyway, the storms passed, we took off for Guatemala City and landed around 5pm Thursday afternoon. Took a taxi from the airport to the hotel looking forward to a shower, fresh clothes and a good night’s sleep...and as soon as we walked through the front doors of the hotel I looked across the lobby, saw a lady holding an infant girl that I knew from pictures was Olivia.

The first time I held her I remember walking her around the lobby, pointing out this and that and just letting her begin to get familiar with me.

It was a moment, a day, a time I'll never forget, and a story that I will – from time to time – recount to Olivia when she wants to hear the beginning of our story...or just when I want to tell it. And yet, even though these were two of the most memorable days of my life...long periods of time can go by without me even thinking about those days.

I wonder if this is how Mary and Joseph felt.

If Jesus – as a boy – would ask his parents to “Tell me again the story of my birth”... I'm sure they would recall how incredible it all was...from the long and exhausting trip to Bethlehem to their inability to find accommodations once they arrived. From the first time they held him to the appearance of these shepherds out of the blue.

But I also wonder how often – in the course of what would appear to be a perfectly normal childhood – they would think about those days. Yes, there were those strange words from Simeon when Jesus was circumcised....there was that time when Jesus was 12 and He more than held in own talking with some religious leaders at the temple in Jerusalem. But from the time Joseph, Mary and Jesus returned from Egypt when Jesus was 2...to the time of His first miracle in Cana, a period of close to 30 years, all we pretty much know is that Jesus grew up.

**Luke 2:52 Jesus grew up in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.**

And if you've ever wondered what transpired during that 30 year period between Egypt and Cana, it wasn't anything that the Gospel writers were inspired to write about. And so it follows that Jesus' childhood was very much like our own...He grew taller, His voice changed, He became a carpenter. A small town boy with a love for God. Just like many other boys from Nazareth. Nothing that would caused anyone to think that here was the long-awaited Messiah, growing up right in their midst.

And maybe this is exactly how God wanted it.

**Then there was Cana.**

This first miracle that Jesus performed began a 3-year period that has been the focus of the Church for the past 2000 years. These were 3 years that were...

### **C. Anything But Normal**

And one thing that is easy to miss in light of the many, many other things that we focus on, is that during this incredibly important 3-year period...**Jesus appears to have a complete lack of concern over His reputation.** In fact, instead of doing any sort of self-promotion, Jesus appears to have intentionally set out to remain obscure.

The blunt way that He would often respond to those who *did* have status showed that He wasn't all that concerned about what people thought of Him.

He wasn't about numbers...that is, there is no indication that He focused on how many followers He had. He wasn't about accolades. He would often go into seclusion in order just to be with His Father. And as I said back at the beginning of this message, the one thing that Jesus did pour His time and energy into was bringing glory to His Father by serving Him and serving others.

He appears to have had one primary ambition, and that was to submit completely and totally to His Father's will.

In contrast, it would seem that - at times - our primary ambition is to free ourselves from submitting to the Father's will. Yes, even for those of us who say we want to follow the example of our Humble King, it is so easy to become self-sufficient...relying on ourselves and leaving God over on the sidelines.

So...here we have the example of our Humble King. Continually making less of Himself - coming as a baby and even into His 3 years of Ministry - in order to bring glory to His Father.

### **How can we apply this to our lives?**

Let's begin by taking in these words found in Proverbs 15:33...

**Proverbs 15:33 The fear of the Lord teaches a man wisdom, and humility comes before honor.**

Focus on those last few words. Humility comes before honor.

With those words in mind, I'd like to read two passages of Scripture...the first describes One who had little concern for His reputation but willingly became less so that His Father would be known more. Humility before honor in other words. And I'm talking about Jesus of course.

Remember what we've looked at so far in the key passage for this series? Jesus made Himself nothing...took on the very nature of a servant and died on a Cross.

**Philippians 2:8-11 Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.**

**Humility comes before honor.**

Coming as a servant...dying on a Cross...and then came the honor: God exalted Him to the highest place and gave Him the name that is above every name.

Now let me read this second passage of Scripture...it describes one who had great concern for his reputation and whose attitude stands in direct contrast to that of our humble King...from Ezekiel 28...

**Ezekiel 28: 'You were the model of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone adorned you...Your settings and mountings were made of gold...you were on the holy mount of God...you were blameless in your ways from the day you were created till wickedness was found in you....Your heart became proud on account of your beauty, and you corrupted your**

**wisdom because of your splendor. So I threw you to the earth; I made a spectacle of you before kings...you have come to a horrible end and will be no more.'**

The difference between the two passages couldn't be more pronounced, could it? The first passage: Humility before honor. The second passage? Exalting self...followed by humiliation.

Now listen, and this is very important...left to ourselves, we will continually feed that same pride found in the second passage. Left to ourselves, we will promote ourselves. Left to ourselves will take the good gifts that God has given us and use them to make much of ourselves.

But here's the thing: As followers of Jesus we have not been left to ourselves. He is with us and He wants to help us walk in His ways.

And so let me suggest 3 practical ways where you can seek His help this week:

**First, will you look to Him to help you abandon the desire to judge the thoughts and the intentions of others?** I can begin by seeking His help when it comes to what I see on social media. While I think it has the potential to be dangerous and the potential to ensnare many, I am not in the position to judge the thoughts and motives of those who do post.

**Second, will you look to Jesus to help you refrain from boasting and any type of self-promotion.** Either outwardly, or even within the attitude of your heart? For example, don't you find it tempting to let others know just how busy you are? In an effort to establish our worth, our importance. How about this week we never say a word when it comes to all that's on our plate?

**Finally, will you look to Jesus to help you refrain from rebelling against God's will for your life,** that is, choosing your own way over His?

Any of us can choose to imitate the enemy, that is, elevate and promote ourselves, and in the end, invite humiliation to come knocking.

However, we can also choose to embrace a different attitude, and follow the example lived out by Our Humble King, who showed no desire to enhance His own reputation...but instead lived to make much of His Heavenly Father. May we all look to Jesus to help us do the same this week.