

Sermon: Brokenness

Text: Daniel 4

Discussion Questions:

There are times when pride can be a good thing. It is good to take pride in our work. We often take great pride in the accomplishments of our loved ones. As parents, one of the best things we can say to our kids is, "I'm so very proud of you!" I encourage you to speak these words TODAY to someone you love—it will make their day!

On the other hand, pride can be a VERY destructive thing in our lives.

C.S. Lewis calls pride "the great sin"—and for very good reason. It is the sin that led to the fall of Satan. It is the sin that led to the fall of humanity and drove Adam and Eve from the garden of Eden. Have someone in your group read out loud these words that C.S. Lewis wrote in his book "*Mere Christianity*"—

There is one vice of which no man in the world is free; which everyone loathes when he sees it in someone else; and of which hardly any people, except Christians, ever imagine that they are guilty themselves. I have heard people admit that they are bad-tempered, or that they cannot keep their heads about girls or drink, or even that they are cowards. I do not think I have ever heard anyone who was not a Christian accuse himself of this vice. And at the same time I have very seldom met anyone, who was not a Christian, who showed the slightest mercy to it in others. There is no fault that makes a man more unpopular, and no fault which we are more unconscious of it ourselves. And the more we have it ourselves, the more we dislike it in others.

*The vice I am talking of is Pride or Self-Conceit: and the virtue opposite to it, in Christian morals, is called Humility. ...According to Christian teachers, the essential vice, the utmost evil, is Pride. Unchastity, anger, greed, drunkenness, and all that, are mere fleabites in comparison: it was through Pride that the devil became the devil: Pride leads to every other vice: it is the complete anti-God state of mind. (*Mere Christianity*, 121-22)*

- What stands out to you about this quote?
- Do you agree with Lewis—that only Christians acknowledge the sin of pride?
- What is it about the sin of pride that makes it so evil and destructive?
- In Proverbs 8:13, we read: "*To fear the Lord is to hate evil; I hate pride and arrogance evil behavior and perverse speech.*" Why do you think God has such a hatred for pride?
- Why is pride so difficult to detect in ourselves?
- Think about someone in your life that you might consider to possess a measure of pride. Don't name them out loud! But—think about what it is ABOUT them that seems to give off a "pride vibe"? In other words...what does pride LOOK like? How does pride ACT? Create a list of what you observe.
- Now the \$10,000 question: Do YOU ever act this way? Are there things from the list you just created that are true in YOUR life?

Examination:

- Read **Daniel 4:1-3**
 - Who is the “speaker” in this chapter? Whose voice do we hear?
 - Who is King Neb speaking (or writing) to?
 - What is the first thing that he “wishes” for those listening to him? What does he want for us? What do you think he means when he says “prosper”?
 - According to verse 2, how does King Neb feel about saying all of this?
 - Who does King Neb want to shine light on? Who is the hero of his story?

- Read **Daniel 4:4-18**
 - In verse 1, Neb states that he wants us (his listeners/readers) to “prosper greatly.” Here in verse 4, we see that Neb is “prospering” greatly. Do you think he is talking about the same kind of “prosperity” in these two verses?
 - How does this scenario (the dream, the lack of understanding, the summoning of advisors) remind you of Daniel chapter 2? Why do you think Neb chose NOT to have the advisors tell him the content of the dream?
 - The parenthesis in verse 8 is VERY telling. Which god was King Neb worshipping at the time? What did Neb acknowledge to be true about Daniel? What “spirit” do you think Neb is describing here?
 - There is a significant shift in the middle of verse 15. It goes from talking about “the stump”—to talking about “him.” Why is this important?
 - According to verse 17, why was Neb given this dream?

- Read **Daniel 4:19-37**
 - Why do you think Daniel was so perplexed and terrified in v. 19? Thinking about chapter 3, what was Neb prone to do to those who crossed him?
 - How do you think Neb felt when Daniel told him that he was the luxuriant tree?
 - Do you think Neb thought there was even an ounce of truth to the possibility that he would live with wild animals and eat grass for seven years?
 - What was God’s purpose behind this drastic “humbling” of King Neb? (v. 26)
 - What, in verse 27, does Daniel tell King Neb to do?
 - Talk about how this dream is actually serving as a warning to King Neb. God is giving Neb some time to correct his ways. Daniel is telling him precisely what he needs to do to AVOID the outcome of the dream. Do we see God’s MERCY in this warning? Why do you think Neb fails to act on Daniel’s advice?
 - What happened to King Neb is actually a thing. It’s called “boanthropy”—and it actually happens to people. Can you imagine anything more humiliating? OK, now remember who is telling the story. Think back to verse 2. Why do you think Neb calls it a “pleasure” to describe for us his utter humiliation? Is King Neb “broken”?
 - In verse 34, King Neb describes praising “the Most High.” How many times is God called “Most High” in this chapter? Why do you find meaningful about this continual reference to God as “The Most High God”? How do verses 34 and 35 expound upon what this means?

Application:

The obvious application for all of us is that we take honest inventory of our own lives. Are we guilty of pride? Take Daniels’ advice to heart: Renounce your sin by doing what is right. Repent of your wickedness by being kind to the oppressed. Allow God to break your heart and give you life.