

“CLASSIC TV AND FAITH: IV - THE ANDY GRIFFITH SHOW
‘PRIDE GOETH BEFORE THE FALL!’”

Karen F. Bunnell
Elkton United Methodist Church
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Proverbs 16:1-5, 18-20

Luke 12: 32-34

Anybody here watch the British Open golf tournament on television last weekend? Well, I did and it was something that I and the millions of others who watched it will never forget. Why? Because there was a golfer, a very gifted young golfer by the name of Adam Scott, who was playing unbelievable golf - I mean, on Saturday the announcers kept saying, “He’s giving a clinic on how to play golf.” He was doing everything right.

Going into the last day, he had a pretty good lead, and going into the last part of the last round, he was up by four strokes. That’s huge! And then, he fell apart. Bogey after bogey after bogey, until on the very last hole, he missed a putt - and lost the whole thing! It was one of the greatest collapses in golf history! It was incredibly sad, and took the bloom off the rose for Ernie Els, who ended up winning, but who also is a good friend of Adam Scott. He couldn’t completely rejoice, because he felt so bad for his friend.

It reminded me of something I once read about that had happened to the great Arnold Palmer a number of years ago. It was the final hole of the 1961 Masters Tournament and Palmer had a one-stroke lead. He had just hit a great tee shot off of the 18th tee, the last hole, and was walking down the fairway to hit his next shot. As he did, he saw an old friend standing in the gallery. The friend motioned him over, so Palmer went over to him, and his friend stuck out his hand, and said, ‘Congratulations.’ Palmer shook his hand, and he says, that at that very moment, he knew he had lost his focus. On the next shot, he hit a sand trap, then on the next one, he put the ball over the edge of the green, and finally, he missed a putt and lost the Masters. Just like that.

Oh, like the sermon title and scripture says, ‘pride goeth before the fall.’ By his own admission, Arnold Palmer got so wrapped up in himself and caught up in pride, that he blew it. He lost focus, he forgot what really mattered, and he blew it all.

Pride is like that. Pride is the theme of this sermon, and the focus of today’s television clip. But before we see that, let me explain what I mean by pride. I don’t mean pride like saying “I’m proud of my children,” or “I’m proud of what we’ve

accomplished.” The pride I’m talking about is inordinate self-esteem, conceit. The author James W. Moore says that “arrogant, self-centered pride is a sin that seems little - but it’s not. It can ruin your life.” (James W. Moore, *Yes Lord, I Have Sinned But I Have Several Excellent Excuses*, p. 57) That’s the kind of pride I’m talking about today - inordinate self-esteem, conceit, arrogant, self-centeredness.

So to look at that more closely, we’re going to look today at a clip from one of the greatest classic television shows of all times - The Andy Griffith Show. I know a lot of you have seen this show - and you’ve had ample opportunities to do it of late, since they’ve been running marathons of the show since Andy’s death a few weeks ago.

At any rate, for those of you who don’t know about the show - Andy Griffith played Andy Taylor, the sheriff of a town called Mayberry. Andy was a widower with a young son named Opie, played by Ron Howard. Living in the house with them was Aunt Bee. There were a number of other memorable characters in the cast - most notably Deputy Barney Fife, played by Don Knotts - but in today’s clip we’ll mainly see Andy, Opie and Aunt Bee.

So, about this clip. Andy has just been approached by a woman named Annabelle Silby. She’s in charge of the annual charity drive to benefit underprivileged children, and she’s come to Andy to enlist his help. Take a look at the screen and see what happens.

Clip 1 - 4:43 - 9:45

(Andy learns about the charity and also learns that Opie only gave three cents toward it, while other children gave up to a dollar. He then confronts Opie about it, with mounting frustration.)

Clearly, Andy’s pride has been hurt. He’s the sheriff, he’s a town leader, people look up to him, and he’s fit to be tied that Opie’s giving (or lack thereof) will embarrass him. I want to suggest to you this morning, that his reaction portrays very well what pride can do to any of us.

First of all, pride can make us self-centered and self-absorbed. Look at what happened to Andy. All he could think about was how it made him look. That’s what pride does - it puts us at the center of everything. Our first thought is about ourselves.

It has been a temptation to human beings from the very beginning of time. I mean, wasn’t it pride that caused Adam and Eve to sin in the first place? Sure, God had given them so many beautiful things, but there was one thing God didn’t give them - and sure enough, that’s the one they wanted. It was all about them -

pride.

And wasn't it pride that caused King David to turn to Bathsheba in adultery. "I'm the King, I can do what I want when I want. The rules don't apply to me." Total self-centeredness, and unbridled pride.

And how about the Pharisee who stood in the temple, and put down the tax collector who prayed with humility. He was puffed up with pride over his mastery of scripture, and following the letter of the law, and he made sport of the humble way the tax collector approached God.

Pride makes us think of ourselves before anything or anyone else, and it makes us think more highly of ourselves than we ought. Some of that was going on with Sheriff Andy Taylor that day. More than anything else, Andy seemed to be most concerned about his reputation.

But pride did something else to him that day as well, which it does to us too. Pride makes us ignore reason and people. Somehow, when we're wrapped up in self-absorbed pride, we become blind and deaf to those around us. We don't really listen, and if we do, we don't really hear what's being said. We hear what we want to hear, and we only hear half of what is being said. We don't bother to gather all the important information. We just skim the surface, because in our minds, we already have the answers.

In Andy's mind, he knew the answers. In his mind, he thought he knew why Opie had given what he had given. And he went off from there.

Adam and Eve didn't listen to God. They listened instead to the serpent, who basically told them what they wanted to hear - that they were important enough to eat of that tree that God told them not to eat.

And David surely didn't listen to his advisors, who would have told him how disastrous and wrong an extra-marital affair would be.

Pride renders us incapable of listening to reason, because we're so sure we know everything anyway.

A third thing that happens when we succumb to self-centered pride, is that we misplace our priorities. We forget what's really important, and who's really important. I read some really, really powerful and frankly, chilling words this week about that by a writer named Robert Raines. Here's what he said:

"Hell is total preoccupation with self. Hell is the condition of being tone deaf to the world of grace, blind to the presence of God, unable

to discern His image in another person. Hell is that state in which we no longer catch the fragrance of life . . . when the taste buds of life are so dulled that there is no tang or sparkle to living. Hell is to live in the presence of love and not know it, not feel it, not be warmed by it. Hell is to be unaware of God's world, God's people, the reality of God in oneself; it is to have the doors in life closed tight, to abide in one's own darkness."

(Ibid, p. 58)

Clearly, Raines believes that self-centered, self-absorbed pride is hell. When we become so absorbed in ourselves, we forget so much else - most especially God's love and God's gifts in our lives.

In their thirst for having the fruit of the tree God had told them not to take, Adam and Eve totally missed the joy of the abundance of beauty and gifts God **had** given them.

And in his desire to be with Bathsheba, David forgot the grace of God and the responsibilities of his kingly office, indeed, the privilege of serving as King.

And in his desire to look like the best in the temple, the Pharisee forgot that what matters most is one's personal relationship with the Lord, not facts, figures, law or scripture.

Pride causes us to lose focus, to forget what really matters. As the Gospel lesson said, "where your heart is, there will your treasure be also." With unbridled pride, the treasure you treasure is you.

It is so easy to fall into pride's trap - especially in this world of our's, which is so geared to everyone trying to be the best, and have the most, and be the most important. It is so easy to make ourselves the center of the universe, and for pride to rear its ugly head. I mean, if it can happen to Andy Griffith, dear sweet Sheriff Taylor, it can happen to you and me.

Take a look now at what finally happened on the show.

Clip 2 - 20:00 - 23:40

(After sending Opie to his room in frustration, Andy is confronted by Aunt Bee about his lack of confidence in his son. When Opie returns, he finally reveals why he gave only three cents.)

Oh my - pride does indeed go before the fall. You see how easily pride can get in the way of love and understanding? You see how easily we can forget what's

important, and who's important?

Friends, it is only by the grace of God that we can keep a lid on self-centered pride - only by the grace of God. May you and I be so focused on the blessings that God has given us that we may keep our lives in proper perspective, live with humility and be the kind of people He created us to be. May it be so.

Amen.