

The Snare of Honor Seeking in the Church

by Jeremy Utley

This sermon delves into the topic of what keeps us from having faith, focusing on the danger of seeking glory from one another rather than from God. It emphasizes the importance of rejecting the desire for recognition and appreciation from people, highlighting the need to seek only God's approval. Through examples from the Bible like Gideon and Jesus, the sermon encourages a deep devotion to pleasing God alone and warns against the subtle trap of unconscious honor-seeking.

Scripture: John 5:44, Hebrews 11:6, Judges 7:2, Matthew 6:22

Topics: "Faith", "Seeking God's Approval"

Description

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Transcript

What keeps us from having faith? You know, we know it's so important to believe in the Lord Jesus. What keeps us from having faith? Something that the Lord's been reminding me of in this last week, and I want to mention it because there can be a lot of things that we think about keep us from having faith, but Jesus says something that is a little bit surprising to me. We can think maybe what keeps me from having faith is fear, or what keeps me from having faith is doubt, or maybe I don't know God's Word well enough, so I can't have faith.

All of those things may be true, but there's something that Jesus mentions in John chapter 5 that's been coming to my mind, and I wanted to mention it because I feel there's a special danger to us who, if you're members here of NCCF, one thing I know about you, by God's grace, you want to do your part to build the body of Christ. You've seen the glory of the body, and that's a good thing, but there's something that can prevent us from having faith and from growing in faith, and it's something that Jesus warns the Jews of in John chapter 5, and so if you look with me at John chapter 5, in verse 44, Jesus says these words. He says, how can you believe, how can you have faith, when you receive glory from one another, and you don't seek the glory that is from the one and only God? And I thought, could it be said of us? How can you have faith? How can you believe if you receive glory from NCCF, and you don't seek the glory that is from the one and only God? Jesus is telling us that receiving glory from each other is a great barrier to growing

in faith, to having true faith.

We can think, I don't want to receive glory from this world, and we can shun the glory of this world, the honor of this world. That's good. We must, but have we seen that there's great danger of receiving glory from one another? I was thinking about how it says in Hebrews chapter 11, in verse 6, it says, without faith, it's impossible to please God.

Do you know that verse? Hebrews 11, verse 6. Without faith, it's impossible to please God. And I was thinking about combining these two verses and say, you know, in Jesus, in John chapter 5, says, how can you believe when you receive glory from one another? And we know without faith, it's impossible to please God. So one way we could read these two verses together is, how can you please God when you receive glory from one another? If you seek glory from anyone, if you seek appreciation from anyone other than the Lord Jesus Christ, you can't please God.

How can you please God when you receive glory from one another? We know that God wants all the glory, that he's zealous for his name, he's jealous for his glory. And there's a story in the Old Testament I wanted to mention. It's, I was reminded of it this week in Judges chapter 7. If you want to look there, it's the story of Gideon.

And this, and to me, what's, what spoke to me is how subtle the danger of receiving glory from other Christians is. If you look with me at Judges chapter 7 in verse 2, we know that Gideon's army started really big, right? Children, pay attention please, especially. He had how many people in his army? Do you remember to begin with? Does anyone remember? 10,000.

Sorry, 32,000, even more, 32,000. And what did it end with? He ended with 300. That's 1% of what he started with.

Yes, thank you. And why did God reduce his army from 32,000 to 300? Does anyone know? It's in Judges chapter 7 in verse 2. The Lord says, the people who are with you are too many because Israel would become boastful, saying, my own power has delivered me. So Gideon, when he's called to serve the Lord, the Lord makes it very clear to him, I got to get all the glory.

And I'm going to reduce your army. I'm going to reduce your ability so that when you win, you won't say, I did it. You'll say, for sure, God did it.

We only had 300 men, right? So who in all of Israel knew God wants all the glory in that generation? For sure, Gideon knew. He watched God take his army from 32,000 to 10,000. And then God said, that wasn't good enough.

And he reduced it again to 300. Gideon had a great appreciation for God's passion for his own glory. And yet, what do we see? Just one chapter later, if you look with me at Judges chapter 8, in verse 22, it says that the men of Israel, after this victory over Midian, it says, the men of Israel said, rule over us, Gideon.

But Gideon said, I'm not going to rule over you, and my son shall not rule over you, because the Lord shall rule over you. So we think, that's good. He knows that God wants to be the king of Israel.

He doesn't want a ruler other than himself. So that's good. But then look at what Gideon says in verse 24.

Yet, Gideon said, I would request of you that each of you give me just an earring. And the way I thought about that earring is just a token of appreciation. I don't want to rule over you.

I know that God wants the glory. I know God is a great king. I don't want to be king, but I would just like a token of appreciation.

Why do I mention this story? Because it says in verse 27 at the end, that it became a snare to Gideon and his household, and Midian rose up and subdued the sons of Israel again. We see that these just small tokens of appreciation, even to a man who was impressed with God's desire to get all the glory and all the credit for his work, these small tokens of appreciation ended up being a snare, not just to Gideon, but also to Israel. And I think about that when we think about John chapter five, Jesus says, how can you believe when you receive glory from one another? We go, oh, I wouldn't receive glory from one another.

And so we can think we're okay because we're not interested in getting glory. But do we want a little bit of appreciation? It's the same. Do we see it's the same thing? And for me, it was really challenging to see that it just starts as a little small token.

If left unchecked though, it doesn't just slow us down a little bit. What's the cost of receiving glory from one another? What's the cost, so to speak, of just liking tokens of appreciation? It's not that we're just slowed down. Look at Satan.

I was reminded of Satan in Isaiah 14. It says that he said, I will ascend. I just, I want more glory.

I want to be like God. And he who was the most glorious of all created beings became the devil. And for us, what we have to see is it's not just that seeking glory from men is just going to slow us down a little bit.

And I don't mean glory from this world. I mean, even glory in our church, just a little appreciation, just wanting to be recognized, just wanting to be included, just wanting to be asked for help or asked for advice or appreciated, whatever it is. It's not just that it's going to slow us down.

It's that if that attitude is left unchecked, that was the attitude that was in Lucifer's heart and it was left unchecked. And he was banished from God's presence. And it produces death.

Whenever we see this desire in our flesh, just a little bit of appreciation. That's all I want. We have to have this violent attitude towards it.

We have to have a violent attitude and crush it just like the head of a snake and say, I don't want this in my house. I don't want it in my heart. I want to reject it.

I want to repent of it. Lord, I want you to get all the glory. I want to renew my passion for you to get all the glory.

And I want to be really careful. And what I see with Gideon is even though God had impressed on him the desire to get all the glory, this little unconscious desire for honor snuck in. And he never repented of it.

And yet we can see, I thought, what an amazing difference in the life of Jesus our Lord. We know so little of his life. He lived the most glorious life that was ever lived on the face of the earth.

And all we have are just these few pages. 90% of his life is not even almost recorded at all. And even the three years that are recorded, it says that if everything was known that could be known, the books of the

world couldn't be filled.

Or the world would be filled up with the books. What can we know for sure? We know very, very little of the amazing life that Jesus Christ lived. And what does that show us? He delighted to be hidden.

He delighted not to get attention, but to be willing to be hidden. And as we heard, I think a couple of weeks ago, Brother Sandeep mentioned to us that after he fed the 5,000, what did he do? Immediately, it says, he compelled the disciples to go. And he went up on the mountaintop to pray.

Why? To give God the glory. And that was the immediate response of his heart. And I thought, I want to have that same attitude.

Anytime that I want a token of appreciation, I want that immediate response of, one, reject it and repent, and then immediately give God the glory. Lord, you deserve all the tokens of appreciation. Even the crowns, as we saw in the birthday celebration, the crowns that the elders have, they laid them at the feet of the Lord.

How much more of these little earrings? I shouldn't want any earrings. Certainly, I don't want a crown, let alone an earring. I want to give glory to the Lord.

And Jesus had that immediate response. One thing that blessed me, I was just kind of using my imagination, but in Mark chapter 1, I think in Matthew and in Luke as well, there are records of Jesus' trial in the wilderness. And there's a lot of verses in both Matthew and Luke.

They're very detailed. And that's good, because we benefit tremendously from them. We wouldn't know that Jesus said, man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from God's mouth, unless Matthew had diligently documented that interaction.

So I appreciate that. But I was thinking, I had heard, I don't even know if this is for sure true, but I had heard that Peter had dictated the book of Mark to Mark. And I thought if Peter, say, you know, he's one of Jesus' closest disciples, one of his closest friends.

And if he did, in fact, dictate the book of Mark, I was blessed to see, if you look with me at Mark chapter 1 in verse 12, there's almost no verses dedicated to the temptation of the wilderness. It says immediately, there's just two verses here. The other books, there's like 12, 20 verses.

Here, the spirit impelled him into the wilderness, and he was in the wilderness 40 days being tempted by Satan. He was with the wild beasts, and the angels were ministering to him. We don't learn any details about the temptation.

We don't even learn here that he was fasting. I thought, wow, to me, it just showed me a little bit of Jesus' heart. When he talked with his close friends, the details of the trial weren't what was important.

How much struggle he went through. It's, you know what? The Lord helped me. I was being tempted, but the Lord helped me.

He strengthened me abundantly. And I see even what's interesting, again, if it's true that Peter dictated the book of Mark, in Mark chapter 6, it's there where Jesus is walking on the water, but there's no mention of Peter walking on the water. I thought, wow, what if Peter had really gotten close to Jesus, and he had really started to the details of my own experience aren't the important thing.

Let some other disciple document the fact that I got to walk on water too, but when I'm having Mark write down my thoughts, don't put me in that. I don't need honor. I don't want tokens of appreciation.

I don't even need to be mentioned. Where did he learn that? He learned it from Jesus. He wasn't making a big deal of his trial in the wilderness.

I just, again, I was just using my imagination, but I love thinking about the difference between Jesus and Lucifer. Lucifer wanted more attention. Even Gideon, who God wanted all the glory, he still wanted these tokens of appreciation, but Jesus was happy to have most of his life not recorded.

He was happy to what? He wanted to please his father. That was it. He only wanted to please his father, and it's amazing to me, if you think maybe one percent or two percent of Jesus' life was recorded, how little of a fully surrendered life has to be seen in order for God to shine through.

God was able to shine through Jesus' life more than anybody else's, and it wasn't because everybody knew all the details. It was because the father was well pleased with him, and the little bit that we know is so brilliant, so wonderfully perfect that it's enough for us, and I thought, could it be said of us? We don't want people to know the details of our lives. We don't need it.

We don't need all that to be known. Let the Lord be honored, and the Lord can do more to show forth his glory in our obscurity view than in our getting honor and credit. It's, I've noticed for myself, I'll say just practically, unconscious honor-seeking can be difficult to identify.

It can be, and so it can be natural to say, I'm probably okay. I don't think I'm seeking honor, so I wanted to share a few practical weeds I have identified in my own life, so I'm sharing these all from personal experience. I haven't read your diary or overheard any conversations.

This is just for me. What I've noticed, the Lord's shown me there's a little bit of unconscious honor-seeking here, so I wanted to share these practical examples. If another is asked to do something, do I feel disappointed that I wasn't asked? It's a little bit of unconscious honor-seeking there.

If I find out that someone got asked for advice or got consulted about something, but I didn't get consulted, am I bothered by that? That's a weed of seeking glory from men. If someone gets credit for something that maybe I helped out with or didn't, but I just wish I got credit, there's a little bit of unconscious honor-seeking there. It's a weed.

If I've done something and I don't feel it was sufficiently recognized, that's not even a subtle thing. That's blatant. Do I wish for more recognition? That's seeking honor.

If I receive correction, am I hurt or offended? Then I'm seeking the honor of man. If someone says, you know what? I was really blessed from something someone said in the last Bible study. Is there a hope? I hope it's what I said.

Then I'm seeking honor. And all of those things, we should rejoice that the Lord, His kingdom is being accomplished in all those things. We should praise the Lord even if we aren't used, even if we aren't mentioned, even if we aren't appreciated.

And for me, what I realized there is I lack the heart of a bride. Because if I was truly a pure bride of Jesus Christ, I would rejoice that His kingdom was going forth, that He saw fit to entrust someone with

responsibility. Praise the Lord.

My bridegroom's kingdom is going forth. That if someone is trustworthy to get advice from, praise God, my bridegroom's kingdom is going forth. If someone blessed someone else, praise God, right? His kingdom is my kingdom.

And if His kingdom were my kingdom, I would be rejoicing regardless of who gets, especially when he gets credit. And anytime I find I want that credit, what it should reveal to me is I'm not a pure bride. I'm not totally, I was thinking about, you know, what would you think if you heard of a couple where the wife always wanted to invite people over for dinner because she loved getting compliments on her cookie? She's always inviting people because it feels great to be complimented.

I think we'd say there's probably something wrong with that marriage. I don't know what the issue is, but there's probably something wrong with that marriage. But then if you learned her husband was the most appreciative, loving husband imaginable, what would you say? Why is she wanting other people's compliments? If her husband is complimentary, isn't that enough for her? What would it show you? What would it show me? She's not really satisfied with her husband's love.

She's not really satisfied with her husband's affection. And for me, what do I need? I need to be truly married to and devoted to Jesus Christ. I need to hear his voice.

You know, like it says in the Song of Solomon in chapter four, it says, let my beloved come into his garden and eat of its choice fruits. It's all for him. It's all his.

You know, I need to hear and I need to ask the Lord, Lord, help me hear your voice of appreciation. Help me delight to hear your voice. In Romans chapter eight, it tells us that the Holy Spirit testifies with our spirits that we are children of God.

As we've heard so many times from Brother Sack, Jesus heard the voice from heaven saying, this is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased. I believe he was totally satisfied with that. He didn't need anybody else to hear it.

He didn't need appreciation from anyone else. And he had heard, I don't think that was the first time he heard his father's pleasure. I believe he lived a life where he was convinced of his father's pleasure, good pleasure.

And that was just one example that we got to eavesdrop in on, so to speak. But Jesus Christ was totally satisfied. And for me, I want to mourn when I see how little I am satisfied with my bridegroom's appreciation.

I want to say, Lord, let me hear your voice. I want to hear your voice. When a jealous thought arises, when some pleasure at some thought of, you know, a job well done or pity, self-pity at correction comes, I want to reject them in the name of Jesus Christ.

I want to despise them and stomp on the weed and pull the weed out completely. I want to tell the Lord in my heart, I don't agree with that thought. I hate that thought.

I reject it. And I want to seek for you to tell me in my spirit this, you're my beloved son. I'm well pleased with you.

And Lord, would you please let my heart be totally satisfied with your appreciation. I don't want any tokens of appreciation other than those which come from the Lord. The last verse that I'll mention is Matthew chapter 6. Maybe we can just end with that.

Jesus here is, it's in a Sermon on the Mount, and Jesus has been speaking about how there are Pharisees. There are people who pray to be noticed by men, and who give alms to be noticed by men, and who fast to be noticed by men. And we see there that the problem is our intention.

Whose attention do we want? Whose attention are we seeking? And there's a verse here in Matthew chapter 6, verse 22 that blessed me. It says, the eye is the lamp of the body. So then if your eye is clear, or single-minded, if you're single-minded, your whole body will be full of light.

And I thought that's a wonderful promise to grab a hold of. If your intentions are pure, if what you're only looking for is God's approval, if you're not interested in, and you're not receiving glory from anyone else, then your whole body will be full of light. And so to me, it's a good question to say, whose attention am I seeking? Do I want the Lord to be looking? If the Lord is looking, if the Lord is pleased, that's enough.

I'll end with the verse I started with, John chapter 5. If you receive glory from one another, and don't receive glory from God, you cannot have faith. And if you receive glory from one another, it's impossible to please God. It was a serious warning to me.

And I pray that the Lord would help us to really be tuned to his frequency, to only to seek the glory that comes from God, and to reject the glory that comes from man. It's good for us to show glory. It says many times, we bestow abundant honor on the member which lacks.

So for sure we should show honor, but receiving glory, receiving honor, I'm not interested. Bestow abundant honor on those who've taught you, and those who've led you, definitely. Bestow abundant honor on the member which lacks, definitely.

But when it comes to receiving it, I'm not, I don't want it. I only want the honor and the glory that comes from God. If that's true, then we can grow in faith.

If we grow in faith, then we can be confident the Lord will give us the grace to make our whole body full of light, that we can please the Lord every bit as much as Jesus did, who showed us the perfect example of what it means to be totally concerned with, and totally consumed with, pleasing his Father. I pray that the Lord would help us all.

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