

Pentecost 18
Numbers 12: 1-15
October 4, 2009

“I hate pride and arrogance.” That’s a quote of God. Why do you suppose God so hates pride? Because it destroys people. Pride gets between a person and God. That is death, spiritual death, leading to eternal death!

That is why God tackled the sin of pride so hard and so quickly when it showed up here in Moses’ brother and sister. God literally is working to rescue them from destruction. Not only that, but it says that Miriam and Aaron began to talk against Moses. You know how ‘talk’ goes! When ‘talk’ is bad, it moves faster than a wildfire in southern California!

It is recorded here in God’s Word because God wants this incident to be used as a preventative medicine. We need to guard against pride, arrogance, haughtiness. We want to encourage our new self in its humility and lowliness of spirit.

Let Christ’s Humility Defeat Our Pride!

As one read the Bible and comes to these verses, they strike one hard. They come as a shock! Aaron and Miriam are Moses’ older brother and sister. When these names come together elsewhere on the pages of Scripture, there seems to be nothing but harmony and unity in the Lord.

These are disturbing words even though we find the people in a critical, complaining, rebellious frame of mind over and over again ever since Moses, in the name of the LORD, had lead the people out of Egypt on the way to the promised land. It still shocks us to see this come from Miriam and Aaron.

The excuse they used to attack their brother was his marriage. We don’t now if Moses’ wife, Zipporah, had recently died and Moses had remarried a Cushite woman, or if Miriam and Aaron are just insulting Zipporah, actually a Midianite woman, by calling her a Cushite.

Whatever the case may be, that excuse was just that. This attack on Moses by his own sister and brother did not really come from any concern about keeping a pure Jewish bloodline. It came from jealousy.

It’s amazing hoe often people will sin against somebody in the name of religion, as if concerned about God or God’s will when actually it is just mean spiritedness.

They were envious of Moses’ position and of Moses’ close relationship to the Lord. They conveniently forgot that it was the MORD God who had given Moses his position and had established the relationship. Think about this! In fact, they were being critical of what God had done!

They felt they deserved more say in Israel. They wanted the honor of being teachers of Israel like Moses. Please note the words 'deserved' and 'they wanted the honor.' There is the pride. They actually show here the sinful and very foolish notion that they deserved high honor from God, in fact, higher than God had given them so far.

Please note the contrast with Moses' attitude. Moses did not seek his office of leader of Israel and prophet. Indeed, God needed to do some pretty powerful persuading to get Moses to accept God's call. Just before this incident, when God confirmed 72 men as helpers of Moses, when Moses had gathered 70, Moses was delighted! Joshua got all worried and worked up about those two extra men, but not Moses. In fact, Moses publicly stated that if God had called all of God's people to serve in this way that would have made Moses very happy.

Moses did not see Moses as the main character here. He saw the LORD God as the Most Important One and himself as His servant. Moses also truly rejoiced in whatever God gave to others and in however God had others serve.

Here is the secret for each of us to defeat pride, arrogance and haughtiness. 1.) We deserve nothing good from God. As God's people, we all have so much. We have a Savior. We have God's favor, love, mercy and kindnesses. We have His forgiveness. We have a place in His family as His sons and daughters. Indeed, we have by faith in Jesus, been called as prophets, priests and kings. We have eternal life by faith. It is a sure promise! But we deserve none of this! It's all from God's undeserved, unearned by us kindness, love, and favor. Jesus earned it; Jesus deserved it and all for us. 2.) What all of us deserve is quite something else. We, too, are sinners and we, like Miriam and Aaron and all the Israelites and yes, like Moses, too, frequently give plenty of evidence of our sinfulness. The wages of sin is death!

God had used Miriam and Aaron as His servants. We see Miriam leading the women in worship. We see Aaron standing next to Moses in Pharaoh's presence and later see Aaron called as the very first High Priest, an office that also foreshadowed our Savior Himself.

Well, God bluntly reminded Miriam and Aaron that He, the LORD, made the decision to use them and to use Moses as the LORD saw fit. Moses has been a faithful servant among God's people. God would not have them finding fault with how God used Moses and how He used them.

Miriam's very brief case of severe leprosy -- a disease in the Old Testament that separated her from worship and God's people (in an outward way) -- symbolized what sin, like pride, does spiritually. Sin pulls people from God and from one another.

Aaron immediately, humbly confessed his pride and presumption as sin and spiritual foolishness, immediately acknowledged Moses' place as mediator for him and the people with God, and asked Moses to seek Miriam's healing. This Moses did, holding no

Rev. Dale R. Schulz
www.stjohnsde.org

St. John's Ev. Lutheran Church
Newark, DE

grudges, seeking no vengeance, leaving matters of punishment to God. Miriam was healed and after the required seven day waiting period, rejoined the rest of the people.

Let us react to any of our sins, be it pride or whatever, with the same fast, humble repentance and rely on our Savior for forgiveness and help. That was God's goal all along, to forgive, to rescue, to restore. When the guilt of our sin hits us hard, thank God and cling to His full, free forgiveness for Jesus' sake. Let His humility defeat our pride. Amen.