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Heavenly Father, I thank You so much that You're not just a God who we have to come to and then meet and then leave, but that You are a God who goes out with us into the world, who goes out with us wherever we go. I thank You that You want to be involved in every part of our lives, that You want to redeem our pasts and our mistakes and our relationships and everything that's not yet right with You. I thank You that You have chosen to involve us in Your work. I thank You that You've allowed me to share a message today now with my brothers and sisters, and I ask that You will please put Your words on my lips and please confirm in everyone's heart here what it is that is from You and what it is You want them to take away. I ask in Jesus' name, Amen. Well, good morning. We were talking last week about how this could be a John the Baptist time for our church. John the Baptist in Matthew 3 was described as someone who was commissioned to prepare the way for the Lord, and he made straight the paths of the Lord. And we are in a bit of transition right now, and we have a new pastor who's going to be coming in, for those of you who weren't at a monthly meeting, that decision was made last week, and now I'm working on getting a visa, so pray for me, because that's U.S. immigration. And anyways, he's going to be coming, and we want to be ready when he gets here. We don't want to have him show up on our doorstep and just hand him all of our baggage. We want to make straight the way for him so that we can begin to grow and blossom and step out and become the church that God has destined us to be in Carmel, Indiana. Amen? All right. So I was praying about how can we make the most of our John the Baptist time, and I felt God saying, "Let's deal with the little foxes." And then that comes from Song of Songs 2.15, which says, "Catch us the foxes, the little foxes that spoil the vines." And so we are talking about the little things in our lives that we can deal with that seem minor and insignificant, but that are robbing us of our fruitfulness and of becoming everything that God wants us to be. So last week's little fox that we talked about was gossip. And we talked about how gossip was speaking words that hurt others in order to edify yourself. And that includes when you put a nice Christian veneer on it and say, "Please pray for so-and-so because..." and then you start gossiping about them, it's still gossip even if you start with, "Let's pray for them." And we talked about how there's a little test that you can give yourself. And if you're about to speak about someone, stop and say, "Would I be saying what I'm about to say if they were standing right here?" Maybe you'd have to change what you're going to say. Maybe you just have to stop saying it. But it's a good test. And I caught myself giving myself a test this week because people were asking me about, "You know this person and you know that person." And they start asking me questions about people. And I have to stop and think, "Okay, what if they were standing here?" And it works. I find myself speaking about people with more love and more grace. So after our message last week, we had monthly meal. And I was sitting in there next to Aranda. And she asked me a question which I had meant to speak, talk a little bit about, and I forgot to make a note, so of course I forgot it. But I'm going to just spend a couple minutes talking about it right now. And her question was, "Where is the line between gossip and talking about people and dealing with the issues that need to be dealt with?" And that's an excellent question. So to begin with, you can talk about yourself. It's not gossip if you talk about yourself. Now if you find yourself constantly airing your dirty laundry to everyone you meet, like some MTV show, then that's a problem. And that's a different problem. It's not gossip, but you need to work on that. But if you have a problem, and we all have problems with something, we all struggle with stuff, none of us can do this life on our own. And that's why God brings other people into our life to, as they say, "Iron sharpens iron," and to lift one another up. That's when you go to your spiritually strong brothers and sisters, and you say, "Here is something that is my weak area, and I need you to pray for me, and I need you to hold me accountable, and lift me up and make me strong." And that is a very healthy thing to do. It is not healthy to get a stiff upper lip and keep it all inside, because that will wreck your life. So find someone, if you don't have someone, find someone who you can be open and honest with and ask for prayer from. So yeah, gossip about yourself, that's fine. But what if the problem that you have is with other people? Well, so in Matthew 18, Jesus lays out some steps for conflict resolution if someone sins against you. Step one is you go to that person and no one else, and you talk to them directly. Step one is very counter gossip, because it does not involve anyone other than the person you have a problem with. And we all know how it is when someone does something that offends us or that disappoints us or whatever, and the first thing we want to do is go tell our friends, "Oh, I can't believe they did this to me," and we want to talk about someone. The first thing you should do is go to the person who's sinned against you or hurt you or whatever and say, "Look, you said this or you did this and it hurt me," or "You did this thing and that's not healthy," and then the Bible says that's sinful. You go to them and you try to work through it. And the Bible says that the point of going to the person and bringing up those issues is to win your friend back, to gain back your brother. And that is totally opposite of what people are trying to accomplish when they gossip. When you gossip about someone, you're not trying to win that person back into your life. So step one is you go to them in private and you bring it up and you deal with it and you talk honestly, and if we are all Christian brothers and sisters, then we should be able to do that. And then he says step two is if that doesn't work, if they refuse to listen to you, then you find one or two witnesses, good, strong Christian, wise people to bring with you and say, "Look, we need someone to kind of arbitrate this. We need to work through this and you're not listening to me, so let's bring in some wise Christian counselors and let them hear what's going on and let them give their unbiased opinions." And then if Jesus says, "If they hear you, then yes, you've won them back." Good, that's the goal, to win them back. You're trying to reestablish your brotherhood with this lost person. And then finally it says if they won't hear any of that, that's when you bring it up. He says you bring it up to the church. And in our case, that would probably be a monthly meeting. You wouldn't want to air that up here during quiet time. Don't do that. But if someone is caught and really grieves a sin and really has a problem in their life, then if you follow the steps, don't skip steps. I did that once and I got in a lot of trouble. But if you've gone to them by themselves and then you've gone in with one or two witnesses and they're still in a problem, then maybe it's time to bring in church eldership. So that's how you deal with someone without it being gossip. And it's all about the motivation of the heart. You're trying to win back a friend. You're trying to take someone who's making a mistake and restore them and bring them back into that loving brotherly relationship. And if you're someone in this church right now who there's something between you and them and it's preventing you from feeling about that person like a brother or sister in Christ, then maybe you need to do a two-step warning. And I know we all hate hearing that, but we want to deal with the little foxes. So anyways, that was the conclusion of last week, which was gossip. This week we're going to talk about pride. And well, what is it? And one of the first things almost everyone says is, "Oh, does this mean I can't say I'm proud of you?" That's not what it means. That is not biblical, sinful pride to tell your little child, "I am proud of you." So you can continue to be proud of your kids or your grandkids. It's okay. Yeah. That's not biblical, sinful pride. What the Bible says when it talks about pride is, "When you give yourself more value than you deserve, especially in relationship to others or God." And in 1 Timothy chapter 3, it talks about how they're talking about, if someone wants to be an elder in the church, they need to be sober and temperate and the husband of one wife. And he's going through this list of, if you want to be an elder, if someone wants to be an elder, you can go to the church and say, "I'm not going to be an elder. I'm going to be an elder." And he's going through this list of, if someone wants to be an elder, here's what they should. And then suddenly he slips in this line about, "lest they be puffed up with pride and fall into the same condemnation as the devil." And so here we have this sudden little piece of Christian Hebrew history just snuck in in a description of elders that we learned that the devil, his fall came from pride. And there's other places in the Bible where it talks about how the devil was an angel and that he was a very high-ranking angel, but that through pride he fell and he was cast out of heaven. So pride can be a little thing, but we need to deal with it because it can cause big problems. But when we think of pride, a good example of what biblical pride is all about is when you hear about that movie starlet and she's at the restaurant and someone brings her warm soup instead of hot soup and she just flies into a rage and says, "How dare you? I started with Pacino." And she says, "Oh, have you fired? Don't you know who I am?" And that's an example of the heart of biblical sinful pride. And you're probably thinking, "Well, that's not me. I've never flown off the handle in a restaurant." But again, we're dealing with just the little foxes and they're sneaky. Have you ever had that feeling like, "Don't you know who I am? How could you say that to me? Or how could you do that to me?" Or someone tries to tell you how to do your job. And I've had that feeling just running the sound board. I mean, someone says, "Turn it up or turn it down." And I'm just like, "I know how to run the sound board. Thank you." And that's pride. It's in all of us at some point or another. Something's going to hit you and rub you the wrong way. It's going to smack into your pride. It's the opposite of humility. I don't know for sure. I've never met a truly humble person. But I suspect that a truly humble person is never offended. I think... I don't know if I ever meet one I'll ask him. But... Yeah, good luck with that, right? I don't think a truly humble person can be offended because they're like a little child. You tell a little child, "Do this or don't do that." They don't say, "How dare you?" They just say, "Okay." Or they cry about it, but they're not offended by it. Because they know that they are not the authority. They know that they are unwise and they accept it. So what offends you? Have you ever... I mean, I hope you take some time this week to stop and think about that. And I wrote a little space where you can... A little worksheet on your thing where you can jot down ideas and then, you know, take it home and shred it so no one sees it. What offends you? Is it when someone assumes something about you and someone says, "Oh, we can get her to volunteer for that project. She won't mind." Or, "We can borrow this from him. He won't mind." And you're thinking, "Yeah, but she could have asked." Does it offend you? I mean, even if they were exactly right, you know, that you would volunteer. What offends you? What gets your goat? What just makes you say, "Oh, how do they treat me like that? I deserve better than that." At one point I was thinking a slave or a servant couldn't have pride, but then I was like, "No, that's completely not true." I mean, even in these roles of servitude and humility, you can still have very proud people. You can still have someone saying, "I'm the servant of the king," or whatever. You can still have people who have something where they unjustly give themselves too much value. You can have someone who is homeless and living on the street with nothing, can still be proud, and they can still say, you know, "I won't take handouts," or, "I won't eat that because I still have my pride." And they'll even say, "I still have my pride." And that's what it is. People can starve to death over pride. It's such a little thing, and yet it can just completely derail our lives. I think a person, if you want to see a person who's really close to being really humble, is to find someone whose reputation has been completely destroyed. And I'm not going to name any examples, but we've all heard of people in the news who've been caught doing something terrible or in some egregious sin, and they're just completely destroyed. They lose their job and their marriage and all that stuff. Those are the people who are on the path to being really, really humble. And I've met some people like that, and it's not always true. Sometimes, you know, even when the whole world knows they're guilty, they continue to deny it, even though there's, you know, incontrovertible evidence, they say, "I don't know, I don't know." It was circumstantial. But some people just finally own up and say, "Yes, it was me. I did it, and I messed up." And people in that situation, they describe it as having this weight lifted off their shoulders, because they've spent all this time pretending to be high and mighty and all this stuff, and finally the bubble's been popped, and all that just falls off, and it's just like, "Oh, yeah, oh, that feels great. I don't have to keep up pretensions anymore." Well, what does God think about pride? We're going to go back to our same verse that we read for Gossip last week, which is Proverbs, Chapter 6, 16 through 19. "These six things the Lord hates, yes, seven are an abomination to Him. A proud look, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that are swift in running to evil, a false witness who speaks lies, and one who sows discord among the brethren." So right there, top of the list, number one, a proud look. Pride is something the Lord hates and is an abomination to Him. I tried to speculate on why, and I don't have any really good answers. I thought perhaps it's because it is God who set the universe in order and set everything in its place, and in pride we are trying to rearrange His perfect order for things, and I could definitely see why that would be offensive, because we are the creation and He's the Creator. It could also be because all glory and honor are His. We talked about how Westminster's shorter catechism says that the chieftain of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever. And if the chieftain of man is to glorify God and you start living your life to glorify yourself, then you're stealing glory from God. But these are just speculations as to why He hates it. Why He doesn't really matter, all it matters is that He does, and so we should deal with it. It steals our fruitfulness. So you've got to make yourself humble. I had a friend when I worked at a job, I worked at Chuck E. Cheese once, I worked at Chuck E. Cheese twice. But they were different, they were in different states. And one time, the one in Indiana, I make a really terrifying Chuck E. Cheese when I dress up, because I'm 6'2" without the mask on. I'm enormous. And little kids, they just look up and they're terrified. It was not a good idea to put me in that suit. I'm off topic. But I had a boss there, I had a manager who they said, "Never pray the prayer, God make me humble, because boy will He do it." And we kind of think, "Oh, if we pray God make us humble, that He's going to humble us by embarrassing us." And you should not think that way, because that's not the loving Father that He is. Don't think that way. He can put humility in your heart without having to expose or embarrass you. But make yourself low, consider yourself less. And you might think, "Well that sounds like you're just letting yourself get walked on." You have to draw the line somewhere, don't you? Well, I don't know, do you? Because when we look at the Bible, when we look at Jesus' life, He's the greatest, He is the ultimate, He is the highest, and He made Himself the lowest. There's a verse, and I didn't write it down, but it says that, "He did not consider it robbery to be counted equal to God, and yet He made Himself humble to the point of death, even the death of the cross," which is a terrible death. In John chapter 13, we have the account of the Last Supper, and Jesus is there, and He goes around and He starts washing His disciples' feet. And that was the picture we found for the front of our bulletin. Jesus starts washing His disciples' feet. And when He gets done with that, He says, "If I then, your Lord and teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example that you should do as I have done to you. Most assuredly I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master, nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him. If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them." We are Quakers, and we understand that there is symbolism in the Bible. I always think it is kind of funny that other denominations talk about how, at the Last Supper, Jesus said, "Eat the bread and drink the wine." And they are quick to do that, but when Jesus says, "Wash each other's feet," then they are quick to realize that it is symbolic. And we are like, "Well, duh." But He is not saying we need to start washing each other's feet, although it would be a great symbol. But the point is that He says, "I have become the lowest servant to you. You now become servants to each other, become servants to the people in your lives." No matter how high you actually are, no matter how much you actually deserve, consider yourself lower. Consider yourself less and as a servant. And do not be upset and indignant when you don't get what you deserve, because a servant doesn't deserve anything. And when you have that mindset, you don't get upset if you don't get what you came for. In John chapter 3, which is written by the disciple John, but we are talking about John the Baptist in John chapter 3, Jesus' ministry is flourishing. And John, who was preparing the way, a lot of his followers were leaving him to go follow Jesus. And John's disciples were saying, "This isn't really cool, John. All our followers are following this guy now. What about our ministry here?" But John understood that his job was to prepare the way for the Lord. And he said, "He must increase, I must decrease." That's John 3.30. "He must increase, I must decrease." So let us decrease. Let us deflate. Let us release our perceived value. Let's pass on all of the honor and reward and everything that we work for and that we expect. Let's just pass it all on to Jesus anyways. Let's just make ourselves of no account and just point back to Jesus. Can you give other people the credit for the stuff you've done? It's difficult to do. When we see someone thanking that person for something I did, we want to rush in and say, "Well, actually, that was me. I'm the one who did that." Or if we're short-changed, we say, "Excuse me, you owe me a little bit more." And of course, if we're over-changed, then we just say, "Oh, thank you, Jesus." And we don't worry about correcting that mistake. But if we're short-changed, if we don't get what's coming to us, then we're going to have to go. Are you approachable? If someone has a problem with you, can they actually walk up to you and talk about it, or do they know they're going to get their head bit off? Part of being humble is being able to listen to people's criticism about you. That's not pleasant or fun, but that's part of being humble. So let's talk about how we become humble in just a couple more minutes here. First of all, like I said, pray for humility. And God hates pride. He says it's an abomination, so he wants to deal with it. So that is a prayer that will get answered. Don't worry. Pray for humility. But in addition to that, begin to learn the truth about who you actually are. Spend more time in the Bible. Spend time seriously, honestly evaluating yourself. And I don't have a magic sentence that's going to just fix everything in your head. But a good place to start is to, on one hand, seriously, honestly, understand the depth of your sin and your depravity and the punishment you're deserved. Get a hold on that. You had a death sentence that is a very true thing. You sinned against the highest, holiest, most perfect God. So hold on to your depravity. And then on the other hand, get a sense of that in Christ, you have been blessed with every spiritual blessing and that you were seated with Him in the heavenlies and that you are the inheritor of everything that Jesus was going to inherit. And that God chose you and that He saved you and sanctified you and gave you grace and mercy. And let these two ideas form a tug of war in your mind. If you find yourself getting too depressed about your sinfulness, start reminding yourself about who you are in Christ and the blessings God has given you. If you start getting too full of yourself, go back and think about what you did and what Jesus had to go through because of what you did. And let these two find a balance. And then you'll realize that you don't think too highly of yourself because you remember how low you were, but you also won't be destroyed with guilt because you've got this wonderful blessing, this God who has blessed you and loved you and chosen you for no reason of your own. And let that just, let that free you because you can stop worrying about performing and being and accomplishing and finding your identity and your value and your status through what you've accomplished or who someone else says you are or any of that nonsense. Worry about who God says you are. God says that you're a wicked sinner and that I love you so much that I would die for you. And just let go of anything else. Let go of anything else that would try and tug your identity away from that balance, that perfect spot. Let that pride go. Let it be replaced with humility, but let the humility be balanced with God's love for you. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, this is a tricky issue. This is one that we all deal with. It doesn't matter how long we've been going to church or how many good or bad decisions we've made. We all at some point become offended. We all struggle with pride. And so we ask Father that you will give us a healthy dose of truth and grace, that you will remind us exactly who we are and that you will comfort us when we feel low and that you will remind us of our lowness when we feel too high. Help us to be humble with everyone that comes into our lives. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen. [BLANK\_AUDIO]