Sermon Series: Words of Wisdom for a Whacked-Out Crazy World
Sermon Title: Pride – The Mother Hen of All Other Sins

Text: **Proverbs 16:18-19 -- Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall. It is better to be of a lowly spirit with the poor than to divide the spoil with the proud. Proverbs 18:12 -- Before destruction a man's heart is haughty, but humility comes before honor.**

Introduction: Have you ever heard of the **SEVEN DEADLY SINS**? Just so you know, they didn't originate in Hollywood with the Brad Pitt film from the '90s. They go back quite a bit farther than that. The first such list shows up in **Proverbs 6:16** -- **There are six things that the Lord hates, seven that are an abomination to him**. The list includes ... **haughty eyes (a proud look), a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that make haste to run to evil, a false witness who breathes out lies, and one who sows discord among brothers**. **During the monastic movement of the early church, around the third century, another list came into being**. **Here's the backstory for how it came into existence**. God-seeking men and women began retreating to the desert to escape the evils of the world. **They took refuge in remote caves and huts—alone, at first, but before long in communities. To their surprise, they discovered that no matter how far they removed themselves from the evils of society, those evils had a way of FINDING THEM AND SPOILING THEIR COMMUNION WITH GOD AND WITH EACH OTHER.** And that's because they discovered that those evils were INSIDE THEM: **they brought them with them wherever they went.** Over time, they identified **seven dark tendencies** they believed to lie at the root of their problems (**pride, greed, wrath, lust, envy, gluttony, and sloth**). Dealing with the seven sins became a central theme of the monastic life and community. But it was **Pope Gregory the Great** in **the seventh century** who popularized the list, putting it in its current form and applying it to the daily lives of ordinary people. ***He actually wrote an eight-volume work on the sins!*** Wouldn't that make for some nice family devotional reading?

Perhaps you noticed that the first sin on each of the lists is PRIDE. There is a good reason for this. **Today, more than a few theologians believe it is the HINGE on which all the others turn because pride is the belief that we know more about life than anyone else including God**. **C. S. Lewis** said, "***Pride is the mother hen under which all other sins are hatched***." Once a person comes to the place of putting himself above God, then every other sin becomes a possibility if it is regarded as pleasing to the person committing it. **After all, who does he have to answer to**?

This morning, in our **fourteenth and final message** from the book of Proverbs that I have called **WORDS OF WISDOM FOR A WHACKED-OUT CRAZY WORLD**, I want to look at what Solomon says about this "**GATEWAY**" SIN that opens the door to all the others. **The dictionary defines pride as "a feeling of deep pleasure or satisfaction derived from one's own achievements."** PRIDE AND SELF-CENTEREDNESS GO HAND-IN-HAND BECAUSE THEY BOTH VIEW THE INDIVIDUAL AS THE CENTER OF HIS UNIVERSE AROUND WHICH EVERYTHING AND EVERYONE ELSE EVOLVES That's probably why pride has been referred to as an "**unholy preoccupation with oneself**." It was pride that led Lucifer to rebel against God (**Ezekiel 28:17 -- Your heart became proud on account of your beauty, and you corrupted your wisdom because of your splendor**) and it was pride that led Adam and Eve to eat the forbidden fruit (**Genesis 3:5 -- For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil**). Now let's consider what Scripture has to say about the awful sin of pride and then we'll look at two of its offspring -- **jealousy and division**.

The Word on Pride

- **Proverbs 11:2 -- When pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with the humble is wisdom**. I like the translation of the first part of this verse from **The Message** – **The stuck-up fall flat on their faces. What it's saying is that those who are prideful ultimately lose what they are seeking – the admiration of others. Instead, all they receive is dishonor and shame.** Humble people are blessed not only with the glory that the prideful person was seeking (**Proverbs 3:34-35 -- He mocks proud mockers but gives grace (favor) to the humble. The wise inherit honor, but fools he holds up to shame**) but with wisdom itself.
- **Proverbs 15:25 -- The Lord tears down the house of the proud but maintains the widow's boundaries.** The word for pride here means "**to be lifted up**." It's a picture of a person who elevates his own status by oppressing others, in this case, a widow who is his natural prey. **The proud man accumulates his wealth by taking it from those among us who are vulnerable**. However, it would pay to remember that God is the protector of the poor and helpless. He destroys the house of the oppressor but preserves the boundaries of the widow.
- **Proverbs 16:5 – Amplified Bible -- Everyone proud and arrogant in heart is disgusting, hateful, and exceedingly offensive to the Lord; be assured [I pledge it] they will not go unpunished. Pride is a serious offense against the holy God of the universe.** It is not simply a moral imperfection. IT IS SOMETHING THAT GOD DETESTS. HE WILL BRING JUSTICE TO THE ARROGANT. **So many people today believe they can ignore the righteous decrees of God's Word, treat people any way they want, and get away with it. But God says that will not happen**. I read this week about the incredible perseverance of a team from the **International Justice Mission in Cebu, Philippines** who brought two human traffickers to justice after an eight-year struggle. The difficult case began in 2008 when a teenage girl and two young women were recruited and ferried to work at a brothel on an island far from their home. When they arrived and realized they had been trapped and would be forced to provide sexual services to customers, they escaped. **International Justice Mission, a Christian organization founded on God's Word and the power of prayer, offered aftercare services to help the two girls settle back into the rhythms of life in freedom, and took up what would turn out to be nearly a decade-long battle for justice**. As the case moved to trial, it highlighted what was broken in the justice system. Hearings were frequently canceled when a key party—the judge, the defense counsel, or a witness failed to show up. The courts were backlogged, and hearings would be rescheduled three or four months apart. The trial was painstakingly slow, but IJM social workers were encouraged by the progress they saw in the lives of the two young women. After spending time in aftercare homes for sex trafficking survivors, both young women moved back into supportive communities where they are now thriving. Finally, in November 2016, IJM announced: "**On November 14, 2016, two traffickers were sentenced to 20 years in prison. This conviction ... sends a message to other brothel owners and traffickers across the Philippines—justice will be served, no matter how long it takes.**" THE PROUD AND ARROGANT WILL NOT GO UNPUNISHED!
- **Proverbs 16:18-19 -- Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall. It is better to be of a lowly spirit with the poor than to divide the spoil with the proud. This may be the most commonly quoted verse on pride.** What is it saying? **Solomon is contrasting the person filled with arrogance who targets his prey and then hunts them down until he has taken from them everything, he desires to the poor yet humble person who has nothing to be desired except the blessing of God.** He warns that the proud person should expect to fall because God promises that the person who lifts himself up will eventually be made low. I think of King Herod who wielded his authority so that everyone feared him, including the people of Tyre and Sidon who depended on

Israel for their food supply. So, they did what they could to try to get on his good side. Do you remember that story in Acts 12:21-23? On the appointed day Herod, wearing his royal robes, sat on his throne and delivered a public address to the people. They shouted, "This is the voice of a god, not of a man." Immediately, because Herod did not give praise to God, an angel of the Lord struck him down, and he was eaten by worms and died. Probably not the outcome he had in mind, but it was definitely the one that God did. PRIDE GOES BEFORE DESTRUCTION.

- Proverbs 20:8-9 -- When a king sits on his throne to judge, he winnows out all evil with his eyes. Who can say, "I have kept my heart pure; I am clean and without sin"? **If anyone is subject to pride it is a king.** He sits on his throne and by his powerful look judges the people so that nothing evil stands. But Solomon warns that even royalty is not above doing what is evil in God's eyes. We are all sinners including the most high and lofty among us. **Tragically, David forgot this when he was king**. He committed adultery with Bathsheba and then set it up to have her husband Uriah killed to conceal his sin. But God knew and sent the prophet Nathan to confront him. After telling David a story about a rich man who took the only lamb of a poor man to feed a traveler who had come to be with him, he saw this reaction and heard these words from the king: (2 Samuel 12:5-7) David burned with anger against the man and said to Nathan, "As surely as the Lord lives, the man who did this deserves to die! 6 He must pay for that lamb four times over, because he did such a thing and had no pity." And that's when Nathan said to David, "You are the man!" THIS IS A GOOD REMINDER THAT EVEN THE BEST OF US (DAVID WAS CALLED A MAN AFTER GOD'S OWN HEART) CAN SUCCOMB TO PRIDE AND FALL INTO SIN.
- Proverbs 27:2 -- Let another praise you, and not your own mouth; someone else, and not your own lips. The word for praise is the Hebrew word (Hallel) from which we get our word "**hallelujah**." When a person regularly sings his own praises, you can bet that pride (or insecurity masked as pride) is behind it. He obviously feels the need for everyone to recognize his greatness. The Bible tells us in John 12:43, however, that we should not seek the praise of men, but God. A well-done from our Lord is all we really need to hear in the end.

Two offspring of Pride – When the prideful person puts himself rather than God at the center of his universe, he dooms himself to a life characterized by jealousy and envy. Listen to these verses from Proverbs.

- **Jealousy** – In scripture, this is often regarded as a good thing. That's because we're supposed to be jealous of anything that would disrupt an intimate relationship that is healthy and holy (i.e. with our spouse or God). In these circumstances, it is a mark of love. But in Proverbs 27:4 we see that jealousy can turn into a form of very intense anger. Wrath is cruel, anger is overwhelming, but who can stand before jealousy? The proud person is jealous of all the wrong things. He sees what another has and wants it for himself. This covetous attitude stirs in him a deep-seated resentment that causes him to injure the object of his envy.
- **Division** – Proverbs 18:1 -- Whoever isolates himself seeks his own desire; he breaks out against all sound judgment. The prideful person is selfish. He seeks his glory and doesn't care who he has to trample on to get it. As a result, he is often withdrawn and unfriendly. He divides people because he's thinking only of his own wants and desires. This is contrary to what the Bible teaches in Philippians 2:3-4 – NASB -- Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. This kind of other-centered thinking is beyond the reach of the arrogant person. HE IS IN IT TO WIN IT. He has no interest in putting the needs of others before his own.

How to defeat pride. We accomplish this by humbling ourselves -- **Matthew 23:12 -- Whoever exalts himself shall be humbled; and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted**. What does it look like to humble ourselves?

- **We confess our sins. Nothing humbles us faster than acknowledging our sins to God and others.** IT HAS A WAY OF KILLING OUR PRIDE.
- **We serve others – When we serve others we are serving God's purpose in our lives. Galatians 5:13 -- You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love.**
- **We worship God** -- **Hebrews 12:28 -- ... let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe**. There can be only One person on the throne! It will either be you or God. The choice is yours.
- **We embrace the cross** -- **Matthew 16:24 -- Then Jesus said to his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me**. There is nothing like a little self-denial to keep us in the right frame of mind.

Conclusion: Thanksgiving and Christmas are two celebrations that have a way of stripping us of our pride. **Thanksgiving achieves this by calling on all Americans to express our gratitude to God for the countless blessings He showers upon us each year due to His lovingkindness**. It was **President George Washington** who declared **November 26, 1789** to be a day of thanksgiving and prayer as a follow-up to a national proclamation of thanksgiving issued by the **1st Continental Congress in November of 1777**. Now it is our custom to set aside a day of thanksgiving to God which, at the very least, has a way of banishing our pride if even for a few moments. **Christmas accomplishes the same thing because it marks the historical event of the birth of God's Son, Jesus Christ, who came into the world to save sinners. Author Tim Keller writes this about it**: Christmas is about receiving presents, but consider how challenging it is to receive certain kinds of gifts. Some gifts by their very nature make you swallow your pride. **Imagine opening a present on Christmas morning from a friend ... and it's a dieting book**. Then you take off another ribbon and wrapper and you find it is a second book from another friend, **Overcoming Selfishness**. If you say to them "**Thank you so much**," you are in a sense admitting, "**For indeed I am [overweight] and obnoxious.**" **(*My point is that*) some gifts are hard to receive, because to do so is to admit you have flaws and weaknesses and you need help**. Perhaps on some occasion, you had a friend who figured out you were in financial trouble and came to you and offered a large sum of money to get you out of your predicament. If that has ever happened to you, you probably found that to receive the gift meant swallowing your pride. *(Well, listen to this.)* There has never been a gift offered that makes you swallow your pride to the depths that the gift of Jesus Christ requires us to do so. **Christmas means that we are so lost, so unable to save ourselves, that nothing less than the (birth and subsequent) death of the Son of God himself could save us. That means you are not somebody who can pull yourself together and live a moral and good life**. (*Timothy Keller, 'Hidden Christmas: The Surprising Truth Behind the Birth of Christ' (Viking, 2016), pages 16-17)).* **THIS IS THE ONLY WAY ANYONE CAN BECOME A CHRISTIAN ... BY ADMITTING OUR MORAL FAILURES AND SEEKING FORGIVENESS IN CHRIST. AND THE ONLY WAY TO MAKE SUCH AN ADMISSION IS TO KILL ALL OUR PRIDE AND CONFESS YOUR DESPERATE NEED FOR JESUS TO SAVE US. HAVE YOU DONE THAT?**