

**Theme:** **SLIDE** Don't think too highly of yourself

**Object:** "Yertle the Turtle" by Dr. Seuss

**Scripture:** "... for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted." (Luke 14:11b NASB)

Have you ever known someone who thought they were much better than everyone else and deserved special treatment? Dr. Seuss wrote a story about a turtle who was like that. Perhaps you have read the story. The title of the story is "Yertle the Turtle." **SLIDE**

Yertle was ruler of a little pond on the island of Sala-ma-Sond. All of the turtles at the pond had everything they needed and were quite happy. They were happy, that is, until Yertle decided that his kingdom was too small. "I am ruler of all that I see, but I don't see enough. My throne is too low down" complained Yertle.

So Yertle lifted his hand and gave a command. He ordered nine turtles in the pond to stand on each other's backs so that they could become his new and higher throne. He climbed up onto the backs of the turtles and he had a wonderful view. But Yertle still wasn't satisfied. "Turtles! More turtles!" he called from his lofty throne, Yertle swelled with pride and feelings of importance as turtles from all over the pond came to climb on the stack of turtles, which made up Yertle's throne.

At the very bottom of the stack was a plain and ordinary turtle named Mack. He struggled under the weight of all the turtles until finally, he decided that he had

taken enough. That plain little turtle named Mack did a very plain little thing. He burped! His burp shook the throne and Yertle fell right into the mud! And now the great Yertle is King of the MUD. **Blank**

When you think too highly of yourself, you often wind up taking a big fall, don't you? In our Bible lesson today, Jesus tells a story about a man who thought he was better than everyone else. In the story that Jesus told, two men went to the temple to pray. **SLIDE** One of the men was a Pharisee, a religious group that was very strict in obeying the law of Moses. The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself: "I thank you, God, that I am not a sinner like everyone else. I don't cheat, I don't sin, and I'm certainly not like that tax collector over there! I fast twice a week, and I give you a tenth of all my income."

The tax collector stood at a distance and would not even lift his eyes to heaven as he prayed. Instead, he bowed his head in sorrow, saying, "Oh God, be merciful to me, for I am a sinner."

Now, which of these two prayers do you think was pleasing to God? You are right. The prayer of the tax collector. Jesus said, "The tax collector, not the Pharisee returned home justified before God. For those who exalt themselves will be humbled, but those who humble themselves will be exalted." **Blank**

When we are tempted to brag about ourselves, we need to remember that other people are not impressed -- and neither is God!

Dear Father, we pray that you would help us to remain humble so that we would not think more highly of ourselves than we ought. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

**Slide Honor God, NOT man**

We saw beginning in chapter five Jesus taking compassion for the infirm man at the pool. Jesus heals this man by His word alone and instantly. The man immediately stands and walks for this first time in 38 years. The problem is soon revealed that Jesus violated the Sabbath as the Jewish leaders saw it, not as God ordained the Sabbath. In verses 10 to 17 we see the response by both the Jewish leaders and the healed man. Look in your bibles at verse 10, **Slide** “So the Jews were saying to the man who was cured, ‘It is the Sabbath, and it is not permissible for you to carry your pallet.’ ” One would naturally expect the Jewish leaders to rejoice that miraculously after 38 years this man is healed. But instead they were upset that he had been healed on the Sabbath and as they saw it, this violated their petty laws concerning carrying his mat. Judaism had become a false religion that was unable to change the hearts of people spiritually so it attempted to control the outside behavior of people. However, these narrow minded leaders were not the only ones that faltered after Jesus performed this miracle.

This man who had been unable to walk for 38 years answers the Jewish leaders in verse 11 saying, “He who made me well was the one who said to me, ‘Pick up your pallet and walk.’ ” Caught in the act of violating the Sabbath man-made laws he defends his action of carrying his pallet by, as we will soon see, throwing Jesus under the “preverbal bus”. His fear of the authorities is a stark contrast to the blind man Jesus healed in John chapter 9. The Pharisees were upset because Jesus had again healed a man on the Sabbath. They confronted the man who had been blind and he responds to the Pharisees, **Slide** “He is a prophet.” (John 9:17 NASB) The second time the Pharisees try to get the formerly blind man to accuse Jesus the man says, **Slide**

“Whether He (Jesus) is a sinner, I do not know; one thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see.” (John 9:25<sub>NASB</sub>) This man knew what happened to him was a miracle and was of God. **Blank** On the other hand the man at the pool here in John 5 is afraid and cowardly trying to save himself from the wrath of the Pharisees. He is more afraid of men than he has fear of God. Not to be put off in their hunt for the man who would dare violate their Sabbath laws, the Pharisees then press the healed man again, “Who is the man who said to you, ‘Pick up your pallet and walk?’” They were more concerned with the “traditions of the elders” than the commandments of God. Mark makes this clear in his gospel, in chapter 7. In Mark the Pharisees observed that Jesus’ disciples eating bread without washing their hands. **Slide** “(For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they carefully wash their hands, thus observing the traditions of the elders...)” (Mark 7:3<sub>NASB</sub>) Jesus responds to their criticism by quoting the prophet Isaiah, **Slide** “Rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: ‘THIS PEOPLE HONORS ME WITH THEIR LIPS, BUT THEIR HEART IS FAR AWAY FROM ME. BUT IN VAIN DO THEY WORSHIP ME, TEACHING AS DOCTRINES THE PRECEPTS OF MEN.’” Jesus adds that the Pharisees are, **Slide** “Neglecting the commandment of God, you (in order to) hold to the tradition of men.” (Mark 7:6-8, quoting Isaiah 29:13<sub>NASB</sub>) Their traditions were important to them, traditions of men and they were unrelenting to find who had violated their Sabbath and nail this person. **Blank** They were disappointed as we continue in verse 13, “But the man who was healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had slipped away while there was a crowd in that place.” This man may be going to throw Jesus under the bus to save himself, but Jesus does not abandon the man. Later in verse 14 Jesus “found him in the temple and said to him, **Slide** ‘Behold, you have become well; do not sin anymore, so that nothing worse happens to you.’” Our Lord’s warning to this man is a sobering biblical truth. Although scripture is clear that illness is **not** always an immediate

result of personal sin, the scriptures also teach that some sicknesses are directly related to deliberate disobedience, which is sin. King David, who in scriptures is called a man after God's own heart understood the cost of unrepentant sin. **Slide** David cried out to God, "When I kept silent *about my sin, my body wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; my vitality was drained away as with the fever heat of summer.*" (Psalms 32:3 NASB) This is not just an Old Testament understanding of the scriptures and unrepented sin. In the church age Paul wrote to the Corinthians concerning examining oneself prior to partaking in the Lord's Supper and the effects of unrepented sin saying, **Slide** "For this reason many among you are weak and sick, and a number sleep." (1 Corinthians 11:30 NASB) Paul is saying some of the Corinthians are weak and sick, both physically and spiritually and some have even died because of unrepentant sin. In the context of both Old and New Testament scriptures the most natural understanding of Jesus' warning to this man healed by the pool, is that the man's illness was the result of specific personal sin and if the man persists in unrepentant sin, then Jesus warns **Slide** "do not sin anymore, so that nothing worse happens to you." Think about it, Jesus is saying to this man if you continue to sin, something worst than being paralyzed for 38 years will happen to this man. What could be worst than 38 years of being crippled? The answer is eternal punishment in hell! One would think this warning by Jesus would be a sobering thought for this man who could newly walk. **Blank**

However, the man's response suggests he either failed to understand what Jesus was telling him or he choose to ignore Jesus' warning since in verse 15 he "went away, and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well." It is astonishing to me that this man would accept the miraculous healing of Jesus after nearly four decades and then walk away from Jesus and show his loyalty to the Jewish leaders

who had done nothing for him and who hated Jesus and throw Jesus under the Bus. This is one of the greatest acts of ingratitude and blind unbelief found in the scriptures. This man made a conscience decision to show allegiance to corrupt men rather than God. He sought earthly status and position instead of eternal salvation. Today, we see the same thing; men desire to have power and position for the short span of their mortal lives in exchange for their eternal damnation. Jesus was not only guilty of violating their Sabbath, but He caused this man to carry his pallet and violate their Sabbath as well. The Jewish leaders ignored the miracle, as the scriptures show they always did. The result was predictable, we continue in verse 16 – “For this reason the Jews were persecuting Jesus, because He was doing these things on the Sabbath.” So began the open and aggressive opposition towards Jesus, for Jesus threatened the Pharisees power and position. This problem with the man-made Sabbath would ultimately lead to Jesus’ crucifixion. It is hard to imagine the blindness of the Jewish leaders to the miracles and powerful teaching of Jesus. Their opposition to their own Messiah would harden and intensify until they satisfied their wicked hearts and **Slide** “crucified the Lord of glory.” (1 Corinthians 2:8 NASB) **Blank**

Jesus’ response to these arrogant Jews after the formerly crippled man identified Him, was straightforward, “My Father is working until now, and I Myself am working.” Now, Jesus had done it – He refers to Himself as being either on the same level with God or having been sent by God, thus declaring Himself to be the long awaited Messiah. It may have begun here, but it continues, throughout the centuries that have followed; scholars and skeptics have given many different answers to the question, “Who is Jesus Christ?” History clearly demonstrates that Jesus’ is the most influential person to have ever lived. His influence continues to grow to this day and at the same time so does resistance to His divine nature. When

we look at human wars, currently there are 34 official wars being waged on our planet and another 30 to 40 military conflicts, we observe wars come and go - this is the nature of fallen man. The only thing that keeps the world from plunging into total chaos is God's divine intervention and the faithful who follow Jesus as their Lord and Savior. History shows beginning with Israel and continuing until today that when a nation moves away from God their destruction will come. Our own nation is moving gradually and some would argue the USA is no longer moving gradually, and steadily away from its Christian foundation. The simple laws and guidelines we find in the Bible to bring people into relationship with God and to worship Him are being replaced with man-made laws that make no more sense than the Sabbath laws of the Jews. The leaders of Israel claimed to be transparent and teach the Word of God to the people in order that they would worship God and live their lives honoring God. We know from the scriptures and history this did not happen, they taught the traditions of men. Our own government and its current leadership claimed that this administration would be the most transparent in history and they have proven this not to be true - not in 20 or 50 years as history looks back, but in 5 short years during their administration. The Jewish leaders of Jesus' day were motivated by their own jealousy and desire for power. Has anything changed? As we look at history we see all the wars and their tragedy that have come and gone over thousands of years, but there is one war that began in the Garden of Eden and will continue until the return of our Lord and Savior. It is the war of good vs. evil, the war of truth vs. lies, the war for the very souls of mankind. When people reduce Jesus to a great teacher and prophet and bring Him down to the level of good and great men – like Gandhi, Martin Luther or Martin Luther King, in doing so they have given their souls over to the evil one – for Jesus is God! We are to model our lives after Jesus, not because He was a great teacher and prophet, but because He is God very God.

My brothers and sisters do you believe Jesus' simple claim in verse 17? **Slide** "My Father is working until now, and I Myself am working." Not intellectually as an exercise of philosophy, as Plato, but do you believe in both your mind and heart? The world considers Jesus' testimony about Himself as absurd. However, Jesus leaves no doubt of who He is in the scriptures – we can see that many institutions that call themselves "Christian" are working hard to change and modify the scriptures, they are doing so to appeal to mankind. I remember before I became a Christian I left Joyce because of my selfish self-centered attitude, filed for a divorce. Even though I was not a Christian I knew I either had to be married or divorced. I went to a Church in Albuquerque that will remain unnamed to see a counselor to help me sort this out. The "Christian" counselor said I should not get a divorce; it would be better for my family to stay married and occasionally have an affair. I was not a Christian, but I knew this was not right. Here was a man who was bending God's word to meet the needs of fallen man instead of changing the fallen man to the Word of God. These "pseudo-Christians" are in truth servants of the evil one, working to take people eyes and hearts off of Christ, just as the Jewish leaders replaced worship of God with man-made ritual. Let me ask you, "Do you believe Jesus is God and working this very day in the world and hearts of people?"

Jesus claimed to have control over people's eternal destiny. Jesus said, **Slide** "... everyone who confesses Me before men, the Son of Man will confess him also before the angels of God; but he who denies Me before men will be denied before the angels of God." (Luke 12:8-9 NASB) Do you understand what this means? Do you believe this? Are you living this? Jesus also claimed He was the Lord of the Sabbath and has authority over the Sabbath. He said in the Gospel According to Mark, **Slide** "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath." (Mark 2:27-28 NASB) Is this transparent



truth or a clever lie presented as truth - as we hear from so many today? The scriptures are eternal truth, the only eternal truth that exists. So many in the world make so many claims as truth, but their truth is they desire to get people to worship anything, anything but Jesus. Jesus claimed because He is God - He hears all prayers and as God answers all prayers. **Slide** “Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it.” (John 14:13-14<sub>NASB</sub>) Jesus is God and God answers prayers, not always as we wish, but in a ways that is best for us. At times the answers to prayers are hard to deal with and hard to understand. I believe in my heart that the answers God gives are right and best and serve His plan. Is this how you understand prayer? Jesus claims as God the Son incarnate He alone had the right to receive worship, faith and obedience. Jesus told Thomas and His disciples, **Slide** “Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father’s house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, *there* you may be also. And you know the way where I am going ... **Slide** I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me. (John 14:1-4 and 6<sub>NASB</sub>) Could this really be true? Is He preparing a place in heaven for you, for us? Can Jesus be the only path back to God the Father? If so, this means Christians are islands in a violent sea storming through the nations of this world. Jesus claimed that He had the right and authority to forgive sins. Jesus showed the Pharisees His simple transparent, but divine power, but they were blinded to it. Jesus said to them, **Slide** “Why are you reasoning about these things in your hearts? Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, ‘Your sins are forgiven’; or to say, ‘Get up, and pick up your pallet and walk’? But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins”—He (Jesus) said to

the paralytic, 'I say to you, get up, pick up your pallet and go home.' " (Mark 2:8-11<sub>NASB</sub>) Is it really that simple? If this is true and by faith one is saved – then, my brothers and sisters, you will live a life the world does not understand and have a peace the world does not know, but you will also be persecuted for His name. **Slide**

"Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 5:10<sub>NASB</sub>) Simple but hard, living as a Christian is the greatest challenge in the world today. To live in faith by the precepts of the scriptures, not becoming legalistic like the Pharisees, but instead to live as Jesus did - to live with love, mercy and concern for those who hate us. How do we live with awe of Jesus and live for the glory of God in a fallen world? **Blank**

The Jewish leaders did not like Jesus' claim to be the Messiah and the same is true of the world, at large, today. Jesus' favorite description of Himself was **Slide** "Son of Man." This title stresses His humanity, but it also speaks of His deity. This title comes from the Book of Daniel, which we are studying on Wednesday nights. This title speaks of Jesus as the Son of Man who is equal to God the Father, the Ancient of Days. In Daniel chapter 7 we read of Daniel's vision, **Slide** "I kept looking in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven One like a Son of Man was coming, and He came up to the Ancient of Days and was presented before Him. **Slide** And to Him was given dominion, glory and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations and *men of every* language might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion which will not pass away; and His kingdom is one which will not be destroyed." (Daniel 7:13-14<sub>NASB</sub>) The Jews believed they were sons of God by birthright. Jesus claimed to be God's Son by His very nature. **Slide** Jesus claimed, "All things have been handed over to Me by My Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father; nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal Him." (Matthew 11:27<sub>NASB</sub>) Jesus is equal with God

and Jesus is God or he is a fraud. What is it you believe? **Slide** **What you believe will be what you live and what you live is evidence of what you truly believe.**

As for me and my household and my prayer for us and for our community of believers in Christ is that **Slide** “WE SHALL LOVE THE LORD OUR GOD WITH ALL OUR HEART, AND WITH ALL OUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL OUR MIND, AND WITH ALL OUR STRENGTH.” And we “SHALL LOVE OUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF. There is no other commandment greater than these.”

(Mark 12:30-31 \*rbv)

\* Revised Bill Version