

## Our Pedestal

The desert is vast stretching as far as the eye can see. It is humbling. We become aware of how small we are in the vast scheme of things. So it is when we encounter the barren waste places in our lives. There is no-one to bolster our self esteem. There is nothing and no-one to exploit.

Yet how blessed are those the Lord leads into the wilderness – the place of humbling and humiliations. At heart we are all proud. Even on the smallest of stages we maneuver for position and status. We may smile at the woman we met who was so possessive of her position pouring out tea at church functions that no-one else dare touch the teapot. Many of our disagreements are caused by such minor things.

We heard of two others who had not spoken for years and it started with a disagreement over a bottle of milk. Neither would climb down. The phrase we use, “climbing down” suggests that somewhere we climbed up and so we are back to the old enemy pride. If we were not up there in the first place life would be far less complicated! We use the phrase, “beneath us”, suggesting in this way that some work is too menial for us or that we are so good that a person or some act is beneath us. We are on our pedestal. Spiritually speaking that is a very precarious place to be.



We find it difficult to take criticism even when it is well meant. Sometimes we even find it difficult to accept if someone disagrees with us. We are touchy. We become sullen or moody. What about always wanting the last word or flaunting our knowledge in front of others? All these things are indicative of pride, deep down and often hidden.

Yet Jesus spoke often about humility. He advised – don’t head for the top table where the important guests are seated. Make for the lowest place. If you do that you won’t have the embarrassment of being told, “You are in the wrong place”. (Luke 14:9 – The Message)

One of the great strengths of the Desert Fathers was that they endeavored to live out in their lives the words of Scripture. The Abbot, for instance, would wash the feet of dusty travelers. This wasn’t the self-conscious act that we see sometimes performed in church on Maundy Thursday which, a reminder though it may be, is often forgotten by the next day. In the desert it was for real; humbly serving by washing hot sweaty feet.

When Jesus spoke about humility, he lived what he taught and he expects us, his followers, to do the same. If we are honest we are not very good at being meek so thank the heavenly Father when in his mercy and love he leads you into the desert place where you are humbled.

That is not the end of the story. Jesus tells of a host at the banquet (the heavenly Father) who when we willingly and gladly take the lower place will say, “Friend, join me at my table!”

