

Coram Deo  
Soli Deo Gloria, Soli Deo Gracia, Soli Scriptura  
Agnus Dei, Qui Tollis Peccata Mundi  
Deo Volente  
Sermon preached at  
Stouffville United Church by  
Rev. Captain Dr. John S. Niles MSM CD

# “Have a Slice of Humble Pie”

*August 13, 2023*

*Esther 6*

An older woman was cruising a busy parking lot in her new Mercedes-Benz looking in vain for a parking space. She finally saw someone loaded with packages heading for a car, so she followed him, put on her blinker and waited patiently until he pulled out.

Just as he pulled out a young man in a sleek black Porsche zipped in to the space ahead of her. She was dumbfounded and outraged, and jumped out of her car, shouting, "How could you do that? Didn't you see me waiting there with my signal on?"

He smiled an arrogant smile and replied, "That's what you can do when you're young and fast."

As the young man was about to enter the store he heard the hideous crunch of metal striking metal. He ran back, horrified, to see that the woman had gunned her Mercedes and smashed it into his beautiful black Porsche ended up sitting nearly on top of it. He ran back and cried, "How could you do that?" She smiled back at him and replied, "That's what you can do when you're old and great insurance."

In the 14th century, the numbles (or noumbles, nomblys, noubles) was the name given to the heart, entrails and internal organs etc. of animals, especially of deer. The leftovers that many people didn't really want to eat unless they were poor and that was all they could afford. By the 15th century this had changed from numbles to umbles. Umbles were used as an ingredient in pies the poor would make out of these cast offs and later became known as 'umble pie' and was first seen in print is as late as the 17th century. Samuel Pepys makes many references to such pies in his diary.

'Umble pie' – a meal for the poor became 'Humble pie' – a message for the proud.

Now, Haman was so obsessed with and fixated on hanging Mordecai that he did not care if the king was sleeping or resting, nor did he care to ask the right questions or find out who the beneficiary was. The words coming from Haman's mouth was important. No one, definitely not an attendant, but Haman dared suggest such an extravagant reward. The initial thought of Haman was to benefit no one but himself. Haman buttered up the king so good that the king was so caught up with the scene, the sight and smell of the parade in the streets and agreed to his outlandish, unprecedented and almost impossible request. And then he ended up eating a piece of humble pie.

And found that **pride can stall success.** *6:1 That night the king could not sleep; so he ordered the book of the chronicles, the record of his reign, to be brought in and read to him. 2 It was found recorded there that Mordecai had exposed Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king's officers who guarded the doorway, who had conspired to assassinate King Xerxes. 3 "What honor and recognition has Mordecai received for this?" the king asked. "Nothing has been done for him," his attendants answered. 4 The king said, "Who is in the court?" Now Haman had just entered the outer court of the palace to speak to the king about hanging Mordecai on the gallows he had erected for him. 5 His attendants answered, "Haman is standing in the court." "Bring him in," the king ordered. 6 When Haman entered, the king asked him, "What should be done for the man the king delights to honor?" Now Haman thought to himself, "Who is there that the king would rather honor than me?" (Est 6:1-5)*

When the king could not sleep, he did not ask for the court jester, a night snack or the queen's company. He just asked for a book to read, probably to induce sleep!

Further, the king's book of choice was not a fascinating storybook to begin with, but a boring court document and a palace record.

The lion was proud of his mastery of the animal kingdom. One day he decided to make sure all the other animals knew he was the king of the jungle. He was so confident that he bypassed the smaller animals and went straight to the bear. "Who is the king of the jungle?" the lion asked. The bear replied, "Why, you are, of course." The lion gave a mighty roar of approval. Next he asked the tiger, "Who is the king of the jungle?" The tiger quickly responded, "Everyone knows that you are, O mighty lion." Next on the list was the elephant. The lion faced the elephant and addressed his question: "Who is the king of the jungle?" The elephant immediately grabbed the lion with his trunk, whirled him around in the air five or six times, and slammed him into a tree. Then he pounded him onto the ground several times, dunked him under water in a nearby lake, and finally threw him up on the shore. The lion--beaten, bruised, and battered--struggled to his feet. He looked at the elephant through sad and bloody eyes and said, "Look, just because you don't know the answer is no reason for you to get mean about it!"

## II

Pride can stall your success and **blur your sight.** *7 So he answered the king, "For the man the king delights to honor, 8 have them bring a royal robe the king has worn and a horse the king has ridden, one with a royal crest placed on its head. 9 Then let the robe and horse be entrusted to one of the king's most noble princes. Let them robe the man the king delights to honor, and lead him on the horse through the city streets, proclaiming before him, 'This is what is done for the man the king delights to honor!'" 10 "Go at once," the king commanded Haman. "Get the robe and the horse and do just as you have suggested for Mordecai the Jew, who sits at the king's gate. Do not neglect anything you have recommended." 11 So Haman got the robe and the horse. He robed Mordecai, and led him on horseback through the city streets, proclaiming before him, "This is what is done for the man the king delights to honor!" (Est 6:7-11)*

Haman arrogantly believed that the King was thinking about him when he was asking how he should be honoured. And so he went out of his way in saying how extravagantly he

thought such a man should be honored and to his utter shock after doing so, he found out that the man Mordecai standing on the gallows was who the King was talking about.

One day a six-year old girl was sitting in a classroom. The teacher was going to explain evolution to the children.

Teacher: Tommy do you see the tree outside?

Tommy: Yes.

Teacher: Tommy, do you see the grass outside?

Tommy: Yes.

Teacher: Go outside and look up and see if you can see the sky.

Tommy: Okay. Yes, I saw the sky.

Teacher: Did you see God?

Tommy: No.

Teacher: That's my point. We can't see God because he isn't there. He just doesn't exist.

A little girl spoke up and wanted to ask the boy some questions. The teacher agreed and the little girl asked the boy:

Little Girl: Tommy, do you see the tree outside?

Tommy: Yes.

Little Girl: Tommy do you see the grass outside?

Tommy: Yessssss!

Little Girl: Did you see the sky?

Tommy: Yessssss!

Little Girl: Tommy, do you see the teacher?

Tommy: Yes

Little Girl: Do you see her brain?

Tommy: No

Little Girl: Then according to what we were taught today in school; she must not have.

### III

Pride can stall your success and blur your sight and even **strip your success.** *10 "Go at once," the king commanded Haman. "Get the robe and the horse and do just as you have suggested for Mordecai the Jew, who sits at the king's gate. Do not neglect anything you have recommended." 11 So Haman got the robe and the horse. He robed Mordecai, and led him on horseback through the city streets, proclaiming before him, "This is what is done for the man the king delights to honor!" 12 Afterward Mordecai returned to the king's gate. But Haman rushed home, with his head covered in grief, 13 and told Zeresh his wife and all his friends everything that had happened to him. His advisers and his wife Zeresh said to him, "Since Mordecai, before whom your downfall has started, is of Jewish origin, you cannot stand against him-you will surely come to ruin!" 14 While they were still talking with him, the king's eunuchs arrived and hurried Haman away to the banquet Esther had prepared. (Est 6:10-14)*

Of course, the proud man did not think of repentance, throwing himself at the king's or Mordecai's feet. Nor did he think of making friends with Mordecai or seeking help from his rival even in his despair. Pride again got in the way. As it has been said, "Temper gets you into

trouble, pride keeps you there.”

58 year-old Richard Parsons has been the chairman and CEO of AOL Time Warner Inc. since 2002. He posted the highest score in the 1971 New York state bar exam and was an adviser to New York Governor Nelson Rockefeller and to President Gerald Ford. In 1977, he successfully transformed himself from the legal profession to the banking industry, culminating to his present appointment in the entertainment industry.

When Fortune magazine asked Parson to write on the subject of “The Best Advice I Ever Got” for its 75th anniversary, he revealed to its readers:

“The best business advice I ever received was from Steve Ross, who used to run this company. Steve was a friend. It was in 1991 or 1992, and I was on the Time Warner board. I was going to be coming over to the company from the banking industry, and we were talking about how to get things done. Steve said to me, ‘Dick, always remember this is a small business and a long life. You are going to see all these guys come around and around again, so how you treat them on each individual transaction is going to make an impression in the long haul. When you do deals, leave a little something to make everyone happy instead of trying to grab every nickel off the table.’” (Fortune, 3/21/2005 “The Best Advice I Ever Got.”)

He understood what Haman didn’t, that no one ever choked to death by swallowing their pride. You think about that. Amen.