Today is 15 days after the High Holy Day of Christmas. 62 days before Lent begins.

Today is also Blue Jeans Sunday! A high holy event that I, Saint Dan, have started.

Once a year or so I mention that I want people to come to church in a way that is comfortable to them but at the same time honoring to God. If that means blue jeans, t-shirts, shorts, coat and tie or a nice dress – I want you to know that are all fine.

With our church building being a former exclusive golf club and looking so nice, I don't want people to think that it's just for affluent people.

People might look at our nice campus and think we are all affluent. But the reality is that most of Hawaii is affluent compared to 95% of the rest of the world.

The reality is that the people of FPC are a bunch of hard-working people who, in their imperfection, strive to love God and love people with all of their heart, soul and mind. We are always trying to find our destiny in Jesus Christ.

That actually is our mission and vision statement: "love God, love people and reach the world for Jesus Christ."

If you are new to First Prez or if you are a veteran at our church, today is a good day for you because we are starting a sermon series on the 10 Core Values of our church, beginning with "humility."

So maybe Blue Jeans Sunday is a good day to talk about humility, which is looking at life as it really is, instead of thinking highly of ourselves while looking down on others.

You can find our core values on our church website, but here they are. These are values we strive to have, and values that are hopefully reflected in our ministries. These are the values that are incredibly important to what First Prez is or desires to be.

If you are thinking of joining this church, this is a great time for you to look at this to see if this is a community you want to be a part of.

The 10 Core Values are:
• Authenticity
• Humility
• Excellence
• Evangelism
• Disciplines
• Worship
• Small Groups
• Spiritual Gifts
• Biblical Literacy
• Stewardship

The first three are what we hope to be in terms of character and attitude. The final 7 are things we value in having or doing.

Each week we will focus on one core value, and this morning we will be looking at humility – a value that if we strive to have will transform our life in an incredibly healthy and spiritual way.

If humility is a foundational value in our life, there is no stopping us in terms of strength, wisdom, gratitude, friendships and a peaceful state of mind.

The bottom line is that life is not all about you.

If you're a leader, humility will enhance your leadership. If you are an employee, you will find more purpose. If you are married, it will strengthen your marriage. If you are single, you will find wholeness. If you are a worrier, you might just chill out more.

Wow, if humility is that powerful then how do we define it?

So get ready for the best sermon on humility ever preached! (See how delusion can seep in? Actually, that title came from my staff.)

Humility is a silent friend. It is not a loud trait that says, “Here I am, Mr. Humble!”

If we have humility in our lives ever so quietly it is a tremendous help.
You don’t often see humility as a corporate value, although Zappos, the highly successful Internet shoe business, has it as a value, as a matter of fact.

Here are some helpful definitions of the different facets of humility. Humility is ….

- A modest and accurate view of one’s self.
- A state of being a life-long learner and authentic.
- The ability to see life as it really is and act accordingly.
- To live knowing that God is God.

If I truly acknowledge that God is God and I live that, I must bow down and worship and put all things aside in deference to and reverence for Him.

Notice I am not saying that being humble is saying, “Everyone else is better than I, and I am just a jerk compared to everyone else, so I’ll just be a doormat and let everyone else walk on me.”

That is not what I am saying. Humility begins with an accurate view of ourselves. It’s NOT seeing ourselves higher than we are, nor lower than we truly are.

The opposite of humility is not arrogance but ignorance; ignorance of who we are and who God is.

Let’s start with an accurate view of ourselves.

We sing “Amazing Grace” all the time, and what is the first verse? “Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me.”

The biblical view of people is a lot different from how the world views people today where we are all good people who just make mistakes.

The biblical view says that in many ways we are wretches saved by God. We are indeed sinners. We may not be totally depraved, but we are sufficiently depraved to need God in this world.

Given to our own means, we will destroy this earth through our wars, our disregard for the environment and our cruelty to people. Without God’s help and direction, we will hurt ourselves.

And when we think we are perfect, we are brought down back to earth with the words of the Apostle Paul:

Rom. 7:14 For we know that the law is spiritual; but I am of the flesh, sold into slavery under sin.

Rom. 7:15 I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate.

Rom. 7:16 Now if I do what I do not want, I agree that the law is good.

Rom. 7:17 But in fact it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells within me.

Rom. 7:18 For I know that nothing good dwells within me, that is, in my flesh. I can will what is right, but I cannot do it.

Rom. 7:19 For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do.

Rom. 7:20 Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells within me.

That’s pretty heavy. But that’s the accurate view of ourselves. Is it not true that we often do the things we don’t want to do? There’s a fight inside of us of right versus wrong, and the bad often wins out.

We might put on a good face to everyone in public, but our best friends and our spouses really know how selfish we can be. We are innately selfish when no one else is looking. That is part of our sinful nature that God talks about. That’s the real humble view of ourselves.

If we are humbly honest with ourselves, we will admit that we are not that smart. Only by God’s grace did we often have the opportunity to accomplish what we did. Only by coincidence did we bump into that person who gave us the right contact for that doctor or therapist or book or church that helped us.

Christy Pierce, a friend of our church, once said, “We are not smart enough to be successful without God, but we are not dumb enough to mess it up if God is in it.”

Don’t take arrogant credit for the success we have in life. But be relieved that if we have prayed and God is truly in that project or that position then we are not dumb enough to mess it up.

In Malcolm Gladwell’s book called “Outliers,” he makes a great case for opportunities that come to us that had nothing to do with our ability.

He said Bill Gates happened to be born into an affluent family near a university that gave him access and practice with computers. If Gates was born in Rwanda, he might not have had that opportunity.

Gladwell talks of the reason why some high school hockey players excelled over others. It is because they were born on a month that makes them older than the rest, and therefore more instructed and practiced than others in hockey leagues.
Time of birth made a significant difference. It wasn’t just skill and hard work.

We found our Ko’olau campus because someone had a dream of me preaching here. It wasn’t because we were so brilliant in research, although we did look at 500 different properties. It was a case of God saying, “Hey, Cuz! Yoo-hoo! Big hint time! Try look over here!”

And we could afford buying this Ko’olau property because of our first property in Makiki that was paid for by our forefathers and many of you who helped pay off that purchase. They enabled us to get within reach of almost paying for the whole thing.

Now it’s true that we need to finish off the debt this year and we will have a capital campaign later in the year to do that. (Plus, not to forget that about half of you were not with us then, so this is a chance for you to be part of God’s plan. Yes, God’s plan for this church.)

Humility directs us towards an accurate view of ourselves. When we have that we should not be arrogant but thankful for how God gave us the opportunities to be where we are today.

Humility should surround us with thanksgiving. If it were not for God putting us here in Hawaii, we would not have clean air, clean water, a good health plan, low crime rate compared to other places, beautiful scenery and breath-taking sunsets.

Humility should also cause the sense of entitlement that some of us may have to evaporate.

If we are really in touch with our sinful nature, we should, of all people, be the ones to say to our family, friends and co-workers, “I’m sorry. Please forgive me,” every time we are made aware that we have done something wrong.

See how humility will make our jobs better? Don’t we all want employees or bosses who are humble enough to say, “You know, I messed up on that one. Sorry, my fault. I was so off on that. It was so NOT Jesus of me to say that.”

In fact, the biblical view of life says we should be WILLING to talk about our weaknesses. Willing!

2Cor. 11:29 Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to stumble, and I am not indignant?

2Cor. 11:30 If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness.

Why would anyone boast of one’s weaknesses?

Because if life is not all about you but all about God, then telling people of your weakness and how God saved you is giving glory to God. You actually build a bridge with others who share your weakness and tell them how God made a difference in your life.

At my very first meeting with the singles at Menlo Park Presbyterian Church in California as their new Singles pastor, a man named Chuck raised his hand and asked, “Why should you be our pastor? You come here married to Pam and she’s pregnant with your first child. The perfect family! You don’t know the pain we have had as someone divorced, widowed or never married.”

I responded, “Well, first of all thank you for sharing. Next time don’t pull your punches. Second, I was once divorced and, therefore, have been single twice, and I know the pain of betrayal and rejection and loneliness and despair. And it happened while in seminary so add humiliation and embarrassment and professional crisis.”

And then Chuck said, “Well, in that case, welcome aboard!”

I boast of my weakness all the time if that can build a bridge with someone and show him or her how God can help us all in our weakness. Plus, the dark times are part of my life.

January 5th is my spiritual birthday. I recently wrote in my blog (danchun.com) of lessons learned these past 44 years of being a Christian. I also wrote of the dark times. There have been a lot of ups and downs.

Humility also should give us an accurate view of God.

We are nothing compared to God! As Pam, a gift and proof of grace and my wife of 29 years, says, “God is God.”

He is in control. He is the Lord. He should be on the throne of our lives and not us. We are not the co-pilot, He is the one and only pilot. And He is the navigator, too. Maybe we are the flight attendants who are called to serve the people within our arenas of influence.

Therefore, we should live lives where 100% of the credit goes to God. Sure we work hard and have successes as a result, but God should still get all the glory.

Here’s the strange thing. You have to have good self-esteem to be humble. If we have low self-esteem we are often so hurting and so desiring of credit that it is hard to be humble. We tend to always want to toot our own horn and be arrogant.
But when we get to a place where we really know how great God is, how much He loves us, how He has chosen us to be His child and how all the good things in life come from Him, we will find improvement in our self-esteem.

So here’s a question: What does God think of humility?

He’s all for it in His people. He wants us to seek it, live it, be it, and woe to the one who chooses not to live that way!

Listen to this litany of verses that shows what God thinks of humble people and how He blesses them.

These verses also reveal how God ACTIVELY WORKS AGAINST those who are not humble. Isn’t that scary? These verses just might revolutionize your life.

Psalm 18:27 For You deliver a humble people, but the haughty eyes You bring down.

Psalm 149:4 For the LORD takes pleasure in His people; He adorns the humble with victory.

Proverbs 11:2 When pride comes, then comes disgrace; but wisdom is with the humble.

Prov. 3:34 Toward the scorners He is scornful, but to the humble he shows favor.

Isaiah 66:2 All these things my hand has made, and so all these things are mine, says the LORD. But this is the one to whom I will look, to the humble and contrite in spirit, who trembles at my word.

What does humility look like? Just like God, we actually like humble people. We don’t’ like arrogant people.

We like people who say, “I’m sorry, forgive me.” We like people who make fun of themselves, who don’t unnecessarily toot their own horn. We like those who build up people and not tear them down. And all that comes from a humble heart.

We are so used to people who puff themselves up so when someone is humble and is thinking of others, we are amazed and are in awe.

Our Elders are our ordained officers who lead our ministry teams and the vision of our church. Part of all of the Elder training is that humility above all must rule their meetings. They need to be models of humility for the entire church.

When someone on their team wants to share their opinion or idea of what our vision or ministry plans should be, they should precede the statement with, “I’m probably right, but I might be wrong.”

No one should say, “I am sure I am right on this and you are all wrong,” but rather in humility, we should say, “I’m probably right, but I might be wrong.”

And that should be the attitude for all of our membership including me, a sinner like everyone else.

What does humility look like? Let’s take someone like Joseph Prueher as an example.

Joseph and Suzanne Prueher used to attend First Prez when Joe was the Pacific Commander of our Armed Forces. The Pacific Commander has the largest geographic command of any armed forces of any country.

As a four-star admiral he was in charge of all air, land and sea military services from the western United States to the Indian Ocean.

Truly one of the most powerful men on earth!

I was asked to say a prayer at his retirement and change-of-command ceremony to celebrated the end of his 30+ years in the Navy.

Pam and I were at Red Hill on the field at the Pacific Command Headquarters on that rainy day. Tons of dignitaries, generals and admirals and enlisted men were there. It was raining so hard that day that an Admiral lent Pam his raincoat with the four stars on the epaulet. (We inadvertently went home with the raincoat! That’s another story – I’ll save that for Christmas Eve.)

This retirement ceremony was huge! So huge that they had a huge 4-inch binder that explained in great detail what every person was supposed to do; when the cannons are to be shot, when officers are piped onto the stage, where everyone was to sit, how one should wear his/her sword and timelines. This was formal to the max.

I was to sit on stage about 15 feet behind the main row of dignitaries, which included the Secretary of Defense William Cohen, Senator Daniel Inouye, Admiral Dennis Blair, who would replace Admiral Prueher and who would later become the Director of National Intelligence.

And there I was standing in the back next to my chair.

Well, all the dignitaries are piped on to the stage one by one. There are ruffles and flourishes by the band, one by one they come up, and then up came Admiral Prueher, the guest of honor, the man of the hour.

This was his day.
It was all about him; 30+ years of service, a 4-star admiral, hundreds of people there to honor him … when suddenly … he broke protocol!

He was supposed to march in front of the row of dignitaries and go to his seat. But he saw me and broke stride, walked past the row of dignitaries and walked behind and came up to me.

By now I am horrified. What’s wrong? Do I have food on my lip? Is my zipper down? Dandruff on my suit? And then he looked at me and said, “This isn’t right,” and picked up my chair! Then I was really horrified!

He walked over to the row of dignitaries and put my chair right next to Senator Inouye, and the Admiral said to me, “Sit here.”

Yes sir! And I sat there thinking, “Wow, I’m in the front row!”

And next to me Senator Inouye was probably thinking, “There goes the neighborhood.”

I couldn’t believe it! At a time when it was all about 4-star Admiral Joseph W. Prueher, and if anyone had the right to be self-centered, he had that right at that time. But now he was still thinking of others and how to honor others and affirm them.

Then when it was time for him to give his last speech – what did he talk about? His great accomplishments? His success in a military career? His influence?

He could have. But instead he talked about how he and his best friend both went into the Navy, went to Vietnam but how his friend got shot down and died while he was spared. Joseph Prueher voiced his question of why he had the opportunity and the chance to have the career he had while his friend did not. He spoke of his gratitude for a life that was not all his to make.

Prior to the ceremony his wife Suzanne, got a distinguished medal for her service as she should have, and the military knows that no man or woman in the service makes it on his or her own without friends or a spouse. Humility. Gratitude.

Joe and Suzanne were committed to always lowering boundaries to give other people opportunities that they might not normally have.

When Joe was asked to throw the first ball at Hawaii’s first Major League baseball game in 1997 between the St. Louis Cardinals and the San Diego Padres, he was escorted out to the mound by an enlisted Air Force man.

Just before Joe was to pitch that first ball in the first major league game in the history of Hawaii (a major event!), Joe turned to the Air Force man next to him, tossed him the ball and said, “Here you throw it,” thereby giving that man a memory of a lifetime.

That’s humble Joe. A man who, after being the Pacific Commander, was asked by President George H. Bush to be the U.S. Ambassador to China.

Finally, what does it look like when Jesus shows humility?

If the Almighty God, the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords, can show humility, shouldn’t we?

This is what is so great about the Christian faith. We believe in God who is not distant but One who really cares and One who is here with us. Jesus is God, and yet was fully man who came to earth to not only share our pains, our sorrows and our betrayals but to also exhibit the humility of God.

Here’s Jesus surrounded by crazy, sinful apostles, and says:

Mark 10:45 For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.

Even His favorite name for himself – the Son of Man – was a title of humility to be one among us.

And what does humility look like for Jesus? (A painting of Jesus washing Peter’s feet was shown.)

This is one of my favorite pictures of Jesus. This was painted by one of my favorite artists, the 86-year-old German Sieger Köder.

We see Jesus taking the role of a lowly servant and washing the feet of the apostle Peter who Jesus knew was a loud mouthed, verbal thinker who was also impulsive and would eventually betray him.

On the night Peter betrayed and deserted Jesus, He stooped down and washed the dust off of Peter’s feet.

If Jesus could do that, should we, who bear the name “follower of Christ” strive for a core value in our life of humility? Shouldn’t we have an accurate view of ourselves – not lower than we are or higher than we are?

Shouldn’t we see God as God …. the Almighty God? Shouldn’t we live humbly and love God, love people and reach the world for Jesus Christ?

And all of God’s people said, “Amen!”