

Adopting a Humble Mindset *Philippians 2:5-8*

Philippians: Rooted in Joy

Introduction: In perusing the Christian blogosphere this week, two particular articles stood out to me. The first was a short video of the late R.C. Sproul explaining the question "How can I know I'm saved?"¹ for He rightly reminded the audience that it is not we love Christ perfectly or as much as we should, but if we have any love for Christ AT ALL, it is a mark of our salvation. *"Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love."* (1 John 4:7-8). We are assured in our salvation NOT because we loved God first, but because He loved us and sent Jesus as a propitiation for our sins (1 John 4:10). Because He loved us, we love Him, and in loving Him we KNOW Him, we keep His commandments (John 14:15, 21, 23; 1 John 2:3-4; John 21:15-19). It is those who do not know Him that will be confused and revealed on the last day, as God will say those fateful words, "Depart from me, I never **knew you**, you workers of iniquity." (Matt. 7:23). Our love of Jesus and then others is not simply a nice add on but nothing less than the transforming work of Jesus in our lives.

Now, the second article that caught my attention was a poll taken by Ligonier ministries among professing evangelicals (those who claim common belief in the *good news*, or gospel).² What people believe about God, Christ, and the Bible is no small thing, and the trend of this poll done every two years is concerning. Questions ranged from knowledge of the Trinity and if other religions can lead to God, but there was a particular statement that was asked for agreement or disagreement that stuck out:

"Jesus is the first and greatest being created by God."

Perhaps people read the statement wrong or rushed the answer, but this agreement to this statement would nullify the gospel as we know it. If Jesus were a creation and NOT God Himself, He could not be Just and justifier (Rom. 3:26) and could not be our true substitute by taking God's wrath and giving us His righteousness. In 2016, 71% of professing believers agreed with this statement, and in 2018, 78% agreed. I'm no statistician, but this is trending in the wrong direction.

What we believe matters. What we believe about Jesus matters in our eternity and daily lives. We cannot love someone we do not know, and the Bible gives us clear, full, and glorious truth about the person and work of Jesus, not only to love Him, but to be like Him. We come to a section of Philippians where the command is immense and implications overwhelming: live out the reality of the gospel, in unity, by humbling ourselves and selflessly seeking the interests of others. In examining our hearts and motives, this feels impossible. But God never gives us commands that He does not simultaneously give us the grace to obey them. He does not play games. He does not tell us to jump like a dad to his child at the park leaping off the structure, and then turn His back letting us fall. He gives us the resource to do what He calls us to. If we are to love and know Christ, we must see Him for who He is. If we are going to follow Christ in obedience, we need to know what He is asking. This gloriously deep, rich section does both for us this morning.

Adopting the mindset of Jesus in Selflessness (5-6)

¹ corechristianity.com R.C. Sproul, "How can I know I'm saved", Leah Baugh, October 15, 2018

² ligonier.org "The State of Theology: What do People Really Believe in 2018? Nathan Bingham, Oct. 16, 2018

Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped

Philippians: Rooted in Joy
By example and union

Paul builds off his commands to recognize and put off the sin of pride and selfishness with a call to consider others as having surpassing value greater than ourselves and to seek the interests of others, rather than our own. Anticipating the potential deflating motivation from such an overwhelming command, he wisely brought in examples of **what humility looks like**. The first and greatest example is Jesus Himself, so he took time to unpack who Jesus was and what He did. There are **two main principles to glean from looking at Jesus**:

- **Follow Jesus' example** - The call of this verse is to somehow adopt the same mindset that Jesus had when He left glory and became a man. The word "mind" means to "think, judge, or set ones mind on" This means that Jesus is the ultimate model for us in how to live and walk in humble, self-sacrificing, self-giving service, and that the Philippians and we ourselves need to take on the same mindset that we know He had.
- **Remember our Union with Him** - Again, it seems monumentally simplistic to say "just be like Jesus". But we remember that all of this comes out of our union with Christ, that we are "in Him", that we have received encouragement from Him (2:1), and we already possess the "mind of Christ (1 Cor. 2:16). This is NOT some moralistic, duty filled call to action, but a command that flows out of an assured reality that we are saved, safe, and united with Christ.

By refusing to hold onto our own advantages

What do we learn from Christ's attitude and life? In a few short sentences we discover revolutionary truths that are simple enough for us to understand yet will take us a lifetime to sink our teeth into and truly understand. In order to understand these verses, we must understand the unique words used in their context to grasp fully what Jesus did by leaving glory. So let's take some phrases one at a time and then tie them back together:

"who, though He was in the form of God" - There are two words in this section that, when we understand how they work together, helps unlock the whole. The word "form" is the word "**morphe**", which refers to the *outward manifestation of an inner reality*. Here, it does not merely refer to the *external appearance* but pictures the pre-existent Christ as clothed in the garments of Divine majesty and splendor. He was in the form of God, sharing His glory. We see this in John 1:1-4, Hebrews 1:3, and in Jesus prayer in John 17:5, "*And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed.*" The whole thrust of the passage here is that Jesus was equal with God from the beginning, being One with the Father in eternal Sonship (John 5:17-18; 10:30, 38; 14:9; 17:1, 21-22; 20:28)

The other word to understand is in verse 8, where He was found in human **form**. This is an unfortunate translation, since they are different Greek words. The word is human appearance, or "**schema**". This is the outward form that changes from time to time, from circumstance to circumstance. **William Barclay** illustrated the interaction of the two words this way: the essential morphe of any human being is humanity and that never changes, but he **schema** is continually changing, from baby, to child, to boy, to youth, to middle age to old man. In each stage, the morphe never changes, but the outward schema changes all the time. Jesus was, is, and forever will be God, divine, pre-existent, and sinless.

"Did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped"

Here is where the explanation truly picks up steam. Though He was equal with God, existing in glorious splendor and majesty, lacking nothing, He made a voluntary, loving decision. The language means that He did not regard being equal with God as something to use for His own advantage and refused to use for His own glory that which He had from the beginning. He did

not cling to it. He gave up power, privilege and possession, that were His rightfully. **WHY???** Because humility thinks of others and their interests, not our own. Love lays down its life for others. Leaders use privilege to help others and build them up, where lesser men use their privileges to promote self. Humility demands that we view ANY privilege, power, gift, ability, resource NOT as our own to hold onto, grasp, and cling to, but to leverage it for the sake of others. This is the epitome of love for others, which is the central reality of the gospel.

Challenge of Humility: *Remembering life is not about us, but about Christ, the gospel, and others*

Adopting the mindset of Jesus as a servant (7)

but emptied Himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men

By willingly laying down our rights

Because Jesus refused to cling to His favored position, He was willing to **empty Himself, laying down those rights**. Now, it must be made abundantly clear here that He did lay down His divinity or become less than God. His morphé did not change, but His schema did. But the reality is that the God who created, sustains, and holds the entire universe together put Himself under it, emptying Himself of a rightful position to become a servant. But what was it that Jesus did empty Himself of?

What Divine Rights Did Jesus Empty Himself:

- **Temporarily Divested Himself of Divine Glory (John 17:5)** - Jesus possessed glory with God the Father before the world existed. He gave that up to become a man, moving from the aroma of incense for worship for the spit of soldiers, from the worship from angels to the jeers of created man, from divine pleasure to human pain.
- **Laid aside the independent use of His Divine Attributes** - Jesus exercised the power on earth that only God possesses, from knowing what was in man (John 2:25), to healing disease and raising the dead. However, He did not exercise the full use of these attributes as a man, but only at the direction of the Father or Spirit. Jesus functioned like you and I do on this earth, so that in the midst of temptation He did exercise divine right but used the resources available to us (the guiding of the Holy Spirit and God's Word), so that He could truly be our High Priest (Heb. 4:15) who sympathizes with our weaknesses, having faced them as a man.
- **Independent Divine Authority** - In a mystery, Jesus gave up doing anything on His own (John 5:30), instead only doing the will and submitting to the Father (John 6:38), and even learning obedience as a man (Heb. 5:8)
- **External Riches** - The One who created and own everything became poor. "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though **He was rich, yet for your sake became poor**, so that you by His poverty might **become rich**."
- **Unique, face to face, intimate relationship with the Father** - The One who existed as and with God from the beginning became a curse (Gal. 3:13), becoming sin (2 Cor. 5:21), and experiencing the forsaking of the Father (Matt. 27:46) as He received the full brunt of God's wrath.

By becoming a servant

He emptied Himself of these and took on the **form of a servant**. Remember, this is the word "morphé", meaning he did not dress Himself as a servant, but **became by nature a slave**. The problem we have with **Superman**, other than the fact that the DC Universe is terrible compared to Marvel right now, is the fact that when he is disguised as Clark Kent (amazing how glasses or a mask over your eyes fools everyone), we know he's NOT REALLY A NORMAL GUY, but Clark Kent is really Superman. But Jesus did not just dress up like a servant (like

many will dress up next weekend), but took on the nature of one. **He did not exchange the nature or form of God for that of a slave. Instead, He displayed the nature of God in the nature or form of a slave, showing clearly not only what His character is like but also what it means to be God.**

A slave had no rights of his own but existed in the service of the master (see Luke 17:7-10). He was required to do the lowliest of tasks with no thanks or even reward, and he did this day in and day out. Jesus did not come a **King**, although He is **KING OVERALL**. He did not come as a **Master**, although He is our Lord. He did not come **owning anything**, even a house, even though He **OWNS** everything. No, He took the form of a servant, who was willing to wash the grimy feet of His disciples as they bickered over their placement and position in the Kingdom (John 13).

Why? Because that is exactly what He called us to, knowing that there is NO GREATER CALLING in this life than being a slave or bondservant of Christ. He owns us, and that brings the greatest freedom we've ever tasted. **True humility, then, sees oneself as a servant on top of seeing others as having surpassing value greater than ourselves.** Jesus did not come to **be served but to serve**, and to give His life as a ransom for many (Matt. 20:28). So we are called to empty ourselves of our privileges, rights, and power. We willingly give up our lives for others, seeking their needs even over ours.

Service is simple and easy until the people we serve actually treat us like servants...its then that we know if we have truly emptied ourselves

Adopting the mindset of Jesus in Sacrifice (8)

*And being found in human form, **He humbled Himself** by becoming **obedient** to the point of death, even death on a cross.*

By our willingness to humble ourselves

Perhaps one of the most bewildering statements in all of Scripture is the fact that God the Son **humbled Himself**. Humility comes when we realize that others have surpassing value greater than ourselves, but there is none more valuable or glorious than God. He is a Jealous God (Exodus 34:14) who refuses to share His glory with anyone (Isa. 48:11). Most false deities or those in power will force humility from everyone else, and though God demands that of His creation, in order to bring fallen humanity back to Himself, He was the one who **uninitiated and self-emptied in humility**. He demonstrated this in several clear ways:

- **Born in the likeness and appearance as a human man** - Only God could save us from God, but only a man could take our place. Jesus becoming a man was essential for Him to satisfy all the Law of God in perfection, and then die as a perfect sacrifice for those who could not. The first Adam plunged humanity into sinful darkness, while the second Adam came to bring life. This meant that Jesus had to take on all the frailties, limitations, problems, and suffering that are the effects of the Fall without being tainted by sin. This meant He was born like all the rest of us, felt pain, hunger, thirst, temptation, sadness, weariness, and happiness as a man. But He also had to endure wicked and Fallen humanity treating Him merely as a man. The God who created it all placing Himself in the hands of those who **SHOULD HAVE FALLEN DOWN IN WORSHIP**, saw Him as nothing more than a mere mortal.
- **He obeyed to the point of death** - No one took Jesus' life from Him, since He freely laid it down (John 10:18). **Hebrews 5:7-9** explains something intensely amazing, "*In the days of His flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to Him who was able to save Him from death, and He was heard because of His reverence (fear).* Although He was a son, He learned obedience through what He suffered. And being made perfect, **He became the source of eternal salvation to all**

Philippians: **who obey Him."** What's amazing about this is that in His humanity, Jesus was filled with the same dread of death and pain that we are, yet He was willing to endure in **His humanity**, entrusting Himself to His Father, so that He could offer Himself as a perfect sacrifice. Yes, there was joy in moving toward the cross (Heb. 12:1-3), but it was willingness to obey the Father to the point of death that sets the example

- **He Died on a Cross** - Death on a cross was excruciating, long, and intended to bring public shame. Rome had devised a plan to put down sedition by crucifying any and all who would rise up against the government, and they wanted everyone coming into a city what would happen to them if they crossed Rome. Jesus was not only willing to expose Himself to death, but set up the means by which He would die, becoming a curse while hanging on a tree, being lifted up that any and all who would see Him would LIVE!

In the narrative of Jesus march toward the cross, we keep waiting for vindication or rescue. Sure Jesus was humble, but when would He or the Father say, "ENOUGH", "That's it", and stop the whole procession. When would all the wrongs be made right? When would Jesus be avenged? The reality is, it would not happen until AFTER Jesus died, and for us it may not happen that way either. That's why we will look at what God did to Jesus after death and what we can anticipate at His return next week. But what are some things to consider about the humble sacrifice of Jesus?

By a willingness to die to ourselves

- **Ministry & Service Requires Sacrifice** - True service and ministry does not exist in the margins of life. It is our life. Notice that the humility shown by Jesus in His condescending down to put on humanity cost everything and WAS everything. It meant that He could not be half-hearted or nominally committed. Here is the immense consideration for us: *do we view service/ministry to each other a marginal importance?* We learned from our **families moving to Rancho** that they viewed where they lived and their jobs as **secondary** to the call to ministry and service. When it comes to serving and even giving, we want to engage just enough before we get to the pain threshold, just enough before it begins to hurt, and then we stop. I've noticed that generationally, people will serve, but not commit long term. They will give to causes, but not on a regular, sacrificial basis. Jesus did not just give everything at one time on the cross, the whole of His taking on humanity required sacrifice. Our lives in Christ are given to Christ as instruments of service but also sacrifice, and whatever He wants to do with them is up to Him. This is the challenge for every believer here this morning: is your life a reflection of humility in the service of others? Is service what you do, or is it **who you are?** **Do you see your life as a minister of the gospel or one that participates once in a while?**

Ministry that costs nothing accomplishes nothing. Dr. J. H. Jowett

- **Salvation** - If you have never given your life to Jesus, or think you are a Christian even though there has never been any change of affection, attitude or action, I call you today to humility. Salvation requires that we humble ourselves, recognizing that we are NOT the Lord of our life. We are sinful. We have offended a holy God, so we need to **ask for forgiveness**, admitting our sin and turning from our sin to follow Christ in obedience. This morning can be a time for you to stop trying to do it all on your own, stop living for yourself, and know the love that God has for you in Jesus. In turning to Christ, we receive a new love, a love for Jesus that

breeds obedience, sacrifice, and service, which is the greatest freedom we could ever know.

Philippians Rooted in Joy
Do we know and love the Biblical Jesus? Will we follow His example of humility in serving and sacrificing for others?

Questions to Consider & Discuss:

- Take some time and reflect on the person and work of Jesus. Consider that the glorious God of the universe stooped down to become a man in order to humbly serve so that we could have forgiveness of sin and life eternally. Take some time and read over **Colossians 1:15-23, Hebrews 4:14-16, 5:7-9, and Romans 5:1-11** and reflect on His goodness, love, and sacrifice for you.
- What is the difference between **serving** and **viewing ourselves as servants**? What changes in terms of attitude and motivation (see Luke 17:7-10). How does this mindset shape the way we view our identity?
- Why is the sacrificial part of service so difficult for us? How do we cultivate it?
- Gospel ministry plays out in our own personal lives, our home, our church, and in the community (work, neighborhood, etc). What does humble, sacrificial service look like in each of these areas?

Counseling Thought:

As you examine your own mind and heart, where are areas that you have wanted to *be served* rather than *to serve*? When we are treated like a servant, it reveals our heart. These give us opportunities to confess and repent of areas that we are still holding onto our pride and selfishness. In finding areas of pride, first confess and ask for forgiveness from the Lord, and then confess to the one you have been selfish with, asking for their forgiveness as well. This will free you up to potentially serve with joy and sacrifice.