

Christ-Centred Humility

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[0 : 00] Great. Good morning, Watermark family. It's wonderful to be back with you. If you are watching us for one of the first times, my name is Kevin, one of the leaders here, and it's really wonderful to be able to serve us this morning as we look at this amazing passage in the book of Philippians.

I wonder if you can join me as we just pray for a few minutes. Let's start our time in prayer before our Heavenly Father. Heavenly Father, Lord Jesus Christ, Holy Spirit, we come before you this morning to this amazing, amazing passage of Scripture, and we really do desire, God, that you will speak to us.

God, we are not here to listen to the opinions of an individual, the opinions of man. We are here because we want to hear your word. We want to hear your voice. We want to encounter the living God.

Father, for those of us that are maybe still on a spiritual journey or wondering what we believe about faith, we want to know whether you are real and whether you still speak.

We pray, God, that today your word will speak to us. Those that are spiritual seekers, those that have been saints for many years, Christ, come and speak to us today, we pray.

[1 : 12] Father, as we gather in Hong Kong, we are also just mindful of what's going on in our world. We want to bring our world before you. We want to pray, especially this morning, for those in Beirut and Lebanon and all the trauma that they've gone through this last week.

We pray for those, God, who have lost loved ones and are grieving that. We pray for those that are injured and hurting in hospital or elsewhere. We pray that you will be with them and comfort them.

We pray, God, as there's lots of anger and frustration in the streets. We pray for wisdom, God, and that justice will be done. But we pray, God, that more bloodshed won't be spilled in that city.

Father, this morning, we want to pray especially for the Christians there, for the churches, for those that are seeking to be salt and light in that city, those that are wanting to offer forth the good news of Jesus and the hope of the gospel in the midst of this tragedy.

God, won't you give them wisdom, those brothers and sisters whom we do not know and have never met, and yet we are united to them by a common head of a church, a common father, by Christ our Lord.

[2 : 18] God, won't you strengthen them? Won't you encourage them? Won't you be with them today, Father? So we want to pray for our brothers and sisters there. Father, we pray all these things in your wonderful name. Amen. Amen.

Well, this morning, as a church, we are continuing to work through the New Testament book of Philippians. It's an amazing book of the Bible in which Paul writes to these bunch of Christians to encourage them in their faith and their devotion to Jesus.

And what we have in the book of Philippians, amongst many other things, is an incredible description of the Christian life. I wonder if you've ever wondered about that.

What does the Christian life actually look like? If you're here this morning and you wouldn't call yourself a Christian, maybe a friend of yours sent you this link, or maybe someone has invited you to watch this service with them.

I wonder if you've ever given thought to, what does the Christian life actually look like? Maybe you thought of it as a strict moral system. Something that says no drinking, no sex, no gambling, anything that sounds like fun is automatically outlawed in the Christian faith.

[3 : 28] Maybe you've thought of Christianity as a Western ideology. Or maybe it's a political system. Something to impose conservative values on society.

Well, in the book of Philippians, which we're looking at for the next couple of weeks, gives us an amazing picture of what the Christian life looks like. And one of the things that we find is that the Christian life, in all of its circumstances, whether you are wealthy or not wealthy, whether you are suffering or not suffering, whether you are facing life or facing death, the Christian life is one that is shaped by the life of Jesus Christ.

And specifically, what it means is laying down your life, laying down your self-interest and your self-centered ambitions, maybe even your ego, that in doing so, we actually find fullness of life and fullness of joy.

And the book of Philippians is all about that. And Paul, the writer of this book, actually demonstrates that with his own life. He is constantly saying that in following Jesus, he's chosen to live this life of sacrifice.

He's laying down his life for the well-being of others. But as he's done so, he's actually found the fullness of life and overflowing joy.

[4 : 50] And so this is the big idea for today. That the Christian life, particularly Christian community, the communal life of the Christian, is shaped by the humility and the selflessness of Jesus Christ.

The Christian life, particularly community life, is shaped, informed by the humility and the selflessness of Jesus Christ. Now, last week, Chris showed us how Paul writes, and he says, I urge you that your lives will follow or be worthy of the gospel.

And he says that has two ramifications. One, when opposition and persecution come your way, stand united, fearless. And secondly, see suffering as a grace gift from God.

God's got a plan for you in the midst of his suffering. The question is this now. What happens when the Christian community or a bunch of people experience division, conflict, but not out there when it's in here?

What happens when the conflict and the division is not external? It's not persecution or suffering or opposition. It's internal. When there's division or discord or disagreement within the Christian community.

[6 : 10] What does the gospel have to say about that? How does the Christian life look when there's differences of opinion, conflict, or division within our relationships? One of the things we know about the church in Philippi is that it was a culturally and socioeconomically diverse church.

We know this because of the way it started. In Acts chapter 16, Paul goes to the city of Philippi, and he meets a bunch of ladies. And the first person to become a follower of Jesus is this lady called Lydia.

She actually comes from another city 400 kilometers away called Thyatira. She's a wealthy businesswoman that trades in fine material and cloth. And she hears the gospel, becomes a follower of Jesus, and opens up her home to Paul and his companions.

A few weeks later, Paul is in the city preaching the gospel, and he gets thrown in jail for his work. And while he's in jail, miraculously he gets released from jail, and the jailer invites him to his home, listens to the gospel, and becomes a follower of Jesus himself.

And so here you have the two founding members of the church of Philippi. This wealthy trader, this businesswoman Lydia from another city, and this working class jailkeeper coming together to form the early church.

[7 : 29] Talk about a church of diversity. Now, we all know that diversity is a beautiful thing. It's a wonderful thing. But diversity also has the ability to bring about disagreements.

You've got different backgrounds, different cultures, different understandings. Diversity, for all this wonderful gift that it gives us, also creates the opportunity for conflict.

When Paul writes this letter to the Philippians a couple of years later, something of this kind of disagreement has taken place in the church. And Paul is writing to encourage them to deal with the disagreement.

Friends, we live in one of the most divided and fractured times in living memory. Families, churches, society, groups of friends, sports groups, all are feeling the effect of a fractured and divided world.

The division that we see out there and we read about in the newspapers and see on the streets is coming into our homes and into our churches. People are divided around politics, what's happening in Hong Kong, what's happening in other parts of the world.

[8 : 39] People are divided over opinions around COVID, how the government should handle it. Should schools open? Should schools stay shut? What about restaurants? Should those open? Should those be closed?

Not to mention matters of social justice, race, inequality. And then there's just normal difficulties that normal people experience. Families, marriage, parenting, work.

One of the realities of our world is we live in a fractured and divided world. And one of the reasons for this is because our ideas have become intertwined with our identities.

And so when you disagree with my idea, I don't just take that as a disagreement. Our world, the day in which we live, I see there's an attack on my identity and who I am.

And everyone feels like a victim. What does the gospel have to say to this? Well, look at what Paul says here in chapter 2 of the letter to Philippians.

[9 : 36] He says in verse 1, If there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.

So essentially Paul is saying, since you're in Christ, since you've experienced the grace of God and the comfort of Christ and the love of God and you've participated in the fellowship of the Spirit, I'm asking you to be of one mind, one heart, one spirit, to be united as a church body.

Now, notice a couple of things here. He uses the word one mind a couple of times. He actually says it twice here in verse 2 and again in verse 5. When Paul says, I want you to have one mind, he's not saying that we should just switch off our brains and all just think the same thoughts.

Christianity is not about switching off your intellect and just believing what somebody tells you to believe. He's talking about having a common purpose, a common ambition to strive for a common goal, for our thinking to be aligned and to be heading in the same direction.

Notice also, he says, he's not saying, listen, we all have differences, but let's just not talk about those things, right? Let's just keep peace here. So, anything that's meaningful and that really is on your heart, don't talk about those things.

[11 : 02] Let's just keep the superficial peace. That's not real unity. That's just superficial peace. Paul's not asking them to lay aside their culture or what they believe or where they come from.

Rather, he's asking them to choose, to be one in heart, one in mind, while they still hold on to their cultures and their backgrounds and even their distinctives. Now, that sounds good, right?

We all like unity. Sounds like a good idea. But how do we actually do that? Well, Paul gives two really practical ideas. Look at verse 3 with me.

This is where the idealism gets grounded a little bit. And Paul writes in verse 3, he says, Do nothing from selfish ambition or empty conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourself.

What's Paul saying here? He's saying the key to this countercultural uncommon unity is for each member of the community to, in everything they do, do their best to remove the selfish ambition, that means putting your own desires or your own interests above those of others, and to remove what he calls empty conceit.

[12 : 18] That means a sense of superiority, a sense of self-importance, and rather to consider others more significant, better than yourself.

Now, that doesn't mean that we go around saying, Woe is me. I'm so insignificant. I'm such a loser. I'm so unworthy. Woe is me.

Right? Because what are you doing if that's our attitude? Well, we're still just thinking about ourselves. Remember, C.S. Lewis famously said, Humility is not thinking less of ourselves.

It's not thinking how lowly and insignificant and unworthy we are. Now, true humility is just thinking about yourself less altogether. It's about forgetting about yourself and being more interested in the lives of those around you.

In fact, that's exactly what Paul says in the next line. He summarizes it in verse 4. He says, Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.

[13 : 18] Now, again, Paul is not saying here that our interests or our concerns are illegitimate or that they're not even real. And he's not saying that you're not really entitled to them.

It may be that we really are entitled to them. We really do deserve them. But what he's saying is that the kind of humility that is involved in disarming division, in diffusing conflict and animosity, is the kind of humility that doesn't insist on what you are rightly entitled to or what you deserve is rightly yours.

And if you think about it, very little conflict really occurs in the world because somebody is just trying to be unreasonably difficult. Most conflict happens because somebody really does believe that what they're saying or what they want is rightly theirs.

They're entitled to it. I may feel like I really do deserve that apology and I'm not going to forgive you until I get it. I may really feel that I'm entitled or deserved to be treated a level of respect.

And if you don't show it to me, that's the end of our relationship or friendship. Paul's not saying that we should put aside only the things that we're not really entitled to.

[14 : 39] Sometimes the humility that's required to disarm the conflict means willing to lay down, willing to give up, even that which is rightly ours or we rightly entitled to.

Notice that Paul is not just saying that this kind of unity is a matter of personality. Someone says, you enjoy serving others.

I enjoy being served. We're going to get along just fine. It's not a matter of resources. Someone might say, look, you've got a lot of resources. I need a lot of resources.

It's a match made in heaven. We're going to get along just well. It's not a matter of common interests. You say, I like Japanese food. You like Japanese food. We have the same heart, same mind, same stomach.

We're going to get along just well, right? No, what Paul is talking about here is a unity that's not based on personality, not based on common interests. It's a unity that is based on a humility, on a hard attitude that says, I'm not here to insist in my way.

[15 : 44] I'm here to think about your interests over and above mine. I'm interested in your desires, your concerns as much as my own. Now, on the one hand, this is really not rocket scientist.

You don't need to be a genius to work this out. And yet at the same time, our world is so fractured. There's so much division, so much conflict.

How do we take this really simple idea and actually get it to be a reality in our lives? How do we become the kind of people who neither fight over our own ideas or points of view, but also the kind of people who don't just retreat into the community that agrees with us and just thinks like us?

How do we become the kind of people that really can have friendship and opinions and community with those that have diverse opinions and backgrounds and cultures and those who even disagree with us and yet still have a commonality, a unity of heart?

The answer is actually found in the life and the death of Jesus Christ. And so look at the second thing that Paul says. Look at what he says here in verse 4 to 11.

[16 : 58] He says, Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Okay, we looked at that. Then he says, Have this mind amongst yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus.

And now he's going to describe this Christ Jesus. He says, This Jesus Christ who, verse 6, Though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped.

That means, though Jesus was God, he didn't demand or insist upon his right to be treated as God, nor did he exploit his godness, his status as divine.

Rather, verse 7, he emptied himself. He poured himself out and took on the form of a servant. Jesus taking on the form of a servant.

And what did he do taking on this form of a servant? He came being born in the likeness of humanity. Think about that.

[18 : 01] We just spoke about earlier that the way to disarm division and disunity is to find the kind of humility that doesn't insist on what I'm entitled to, doesn't insist on my rights, but is willing to give that up for the sake of others.

Jesus, though he was God, didn't grasp or demand or exploit his godness, but gave it up, poured himself out, taking on the form of a servant, coming in the likeness of humanity.

And coming as a human being, what would he do? Was this a form of brilliant espionage? Coming as a human to then destroy his enemies, to overthrow those that oppose him?

Coming hidden as the form of a human so that he could destroy anyone that disagreed with him? No, verse 8 tells us, This section of scripture is an incredible portion of scripture.

It's called the Christ hymn. And it's a passage of scripture that many scholars have written hundreds of books about, exploring the depth of richness and meaning in this passage.

[19 : 23] It's obviously an incredible piece of writing. But it's also a passage that is laden with Old Testament imagery and analogy. And one of the references in the Old Testament is to the story of Adam and Eve in Genesis 3.

You'll remember the story of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. They are made as God's image. They are given a unique status, his image bearers.

They are given a unique calling and commissioning to steward God's creation on behalf of God. They are to work with God, closely with him, looking after creation for the glory of God.

And they are in the garden, but they are tempted. And remember the essence of the temptation. Satan comes to them and says, God's really holding out on you.

He doesn't really want you to be happy. If he wanted you to be happy, he would let you have whatever you want in the garden. But the reason God isn't letting you have everything you want is because he knows that if you eat this fruit, you will become like God.

[20 : 30] Satan comes to Adam and Eve and says, if you have this, you will become like God. He offers them God-like status. And when you see the temptation, it's not just fruit.

It's the desire to be like God. And they say, we want it. And as they pursue it, the world enters into a fallen state. Sin enters the world.

Conflict enters the world. Sin, death, destruction, heartache enter the world. And the consequences for the sin entering the world is that that heart becomes our natural disposition.

And if you think about it, almost every difficulty, almost major problem that we have in our lives is because someone in the world, either ourselves or someone else, has acted like Adam and Eve, grasping for God-like status, grasping for their own selfish ambition, grasping for their own desires.

But contrast that with Jesus, who though he really was God, didn't grasp or exploit his God-like status, didn't grasp at his God-ness, but rather he offered it up.

[21 : 49] He laid it down. He took the nature of a servant, not serving himself, but serving others. And unlike Adam, who in disobedience grasped for the status which was not rightly his, Jesus laid aside his majesty and was resolutely obedient to the Father's wishes and desires.

Obedient to the point of death. And where Paul writes and says, obedient to the point of death, even death on the cross. Dan alluded to it a little bit earlier, but the Philippians would have known exactly what Paul was talking about.

You see, the great horror of the cross wasn't just how painful it was, though of course it was excruciatingly painful. The great horror of Roman execution was that it was the ultimate sign of shame and disgrace and rejection.

For the Jewish people, someone like Jesus, who was crucified in Jerusalem, the cross was the ultimate sign of God's curse and rejection on you. God was utterly displeased with you and so led you to be crucified on a cross.

For the Romans, crucifixion was too barbaric to do to their own citizens. They only crucified foreigners, servants, slaves, or outcasts. You were considered not human if you were crucified on the cross.

[23 : 08] But here is Jesus, such as the humility and the God-centeredness of Him, that though He was God, in all His glory, unrivaled majesty, divine perfection, He lays it aside, took on humanity, embraced His Father's will, surrendering Himself to Roman crucifixion.

Friends, why did Jesus do this? Why did Jesus do that? He didn't do it just to be an example of humility and selflessness.

He did it to heal the greatest discord and division and conflict in the history of the world.

He did it to bring restoration and healing between the division that occurred between God and man, to bring reconciliation between a holy God and sinful humanity.

In Colossians chapter 1, Paul writes, and he says this, You who were once alienated and hostile in mind, doing sinful deeds, He has now reconciled in His body of flesh by His death on the cross in order to present you holy, blameless, above reproach before Him.

[24 : 29] Jesus died on the cross to make those who were alienated and hostile, to heal the division between this holy God and sinful man, to reconcile us because Jesus went to the cross.

Friends, that's the gospel. That's the message of the Bible. That's what the Bible is all about. Jesus didn't come just to give us a good example of humility, but in humility, He did what He was rightfully didn't need to do.

He laid aside what He's entitled to. He laid aside His divinity and took up the cross that we might be reconciled to God. That's not all the Scripture says.

Because look at verse 9. The second half of this Christ hymn says this. Christ, being found in human form, humbled Himself further, becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on the cross.

We just read that. Verse 9. Look at how it ends. Christ's resurrection of His shameful death is reversed.

[25 : 36] It says, In this passage, Paul is quoting Isaiah 45, a very famous passage in the Old Testament, which the Philippians would have probably been familiar with.

It's a passage that describes how all creation comes to realize that the God of Israel is in fact the one true God, the Lord of all.

And all creation is drawn towards Him, bows down on their knees before Him, and everyone from every nation and tribe and language and tongue confesses that the God of Israel really is the one true God, the Lord of all.

Now look at what Paul is doing here. What he's saying is almost blasphemous. He's applying that passage in Isaiah 45 to the person of Jesus.

And what he's saying is that in Jesus we discover the death and the resurrection of Jesus shows us, tells us, that the one true God of all creation consists of God the Father but also the Lord Jesus Christ.

[27 : 01] This Jesus who though He was by worldly standards lowly and discreditable and despised and rejection He's actually the Lord of all creation.

And one day every single person is going to bow down before Him and every single person is going to have to acknowledge who He really is the fact that Jesus is Lord.

Friends, you see how Paul can now say do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit but in humility consider others more significant than yourselves.

Look not only to your own interests but also to the interests of others knowing that in Jesus we have the ability to do so because Jesus Christ the one who was God laid aside His majesty and divinity to con the nature of a servant died the death we should have died and rose again to glory.

Now, let's conclude with this. In this passage Paul asks the Philippians to do three things three practical things really quickly.

[28 : 13] Firstly, he calls them to remember the gospel. What does he do when there's conflict and division in the church in Philippi? Well, he doesn't just tell them to pull themselves together.

He doesn't pull on their emotional heart strings and say, after all I've done for you, really? This is how you treat me? This is how you repay my kindness to me?

He doesn't manipulate them. He reminds them of the grace of God towards them. Of the humility of Jesus which purchased their healing, which purchased their restoration, which removed the enmity between them and God and reconciled them to God the Father.

In effect, he's saying, friends, the offense between you and God has been removed by the humility of Jesus. Don't you think you can lay aside the offense which you feel rightly entitled to?

Friends, isn't this true for us? Some of us have been offended. Some of us have been hurt. Some of us are holding on to unforgiveness and that unforgiveness is legitimate.

[29 : 20] We've been rightly hurt. But in Jesus, in the gospel, we're able to lay those things aside because of who we have in Christ. Friends, to the degree to which you and I see and understand who Jesus is and what his death on the cross was all about, to that degree we'll be able to let go of offense and unforgiveness and hurt in our lives.

To that degree we'll be able to let go of the things that caused conflict and division in our lives. Many Christians once knew the gospel, once believed the gospel and now just assume the gospel.

It's there in the back of our minds but it's no longer vivid, it's no longer real, it's no longer beautiful and informing our lives. Paul says remember the gospel. Let it shape your life.

Second thing is this. Paul says be resourced by the gospel. He's not just saying, he's not just holding up Jesus as an exalted example and then saying go and be like him.

pull yourselves together, look within yourself, be the best version of yourself you can and be like Jesus. What he's saying is that as you dive into the gospel, as you meditate on the gospel, as you remember the grace of God towards you, let that be the power, the resources, the motivation to help you live this kind of life.

[30 : 47] Look at what he says in verse 1. He says, if there's any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from God's love, any participation in the Spirit, then complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in one accord and of one mind.

He's saying that this kind of agreement and humility is possible because you've experienced Christ, because you've experienced the love of God, because you've participated in the communion of the Spirit.

He's saying that in the gospel, God gives us the resources, the motivation, the strength to do this. When we see what Jesus did for us and who He is, it melts our hearts to become the kind of people that want to extend that same kind of grace to others.

Look what he says in verse 5. Have this mind amongst you, which is yours in Christ Jesus. In fact, throughout the rest of Philippians, everything Paul is going to say is going to come back to this passage as the motivation and the resources and the power to live the kind of life that He calls us to.

Finally, and lastly, this. Paul calls Christians in Philippi and God calls us today to imitate the life of Jesus.

[32 : 05] Friends, one of the biggest mistakes that we can make as Christians is that because the gospel is by grace alone, because Christians are saved, not by our own moral performance, our own good works, but because of Jesus' work on the cross, because in the gospel we discover that God loves us and accepts us for who we are, not because we've pulled our lives together, one of the mistakes we can make is we can think that God is disinterested in our moral lives or our conduct.

But notice what Paul's argument is here. Paul says that the Christian life, and in this case Christian community, is shaped is shaped by the radical humility and selflessness of Jesus.

Paul's argument here is let your life reflect the life of Jesus. Paul's urging them and God's calling us to imitate the person of Jesus.

In other words, the Christian, having been forgiven by grace alone because of Jesus' death, is someone who's learning to model our life on the life of Jesus. that the humility of Jesus becomes the humility of his followers.

That the mercy of Jesus becomes the mercy exhibited by his followers. That the compassion and the kindness and ultimately the grace and the forgiveness of Jesus becomes the compassion and the kindness and the mercy and the grace that his followers extend to others.

- [33 : 32] One of the things that Paul's going to show us is that like Jesus, that's going to mean dying to ourselves. It means laying aside our own selfish ambition, putting aside our own self-interest, maybe even dying or laying aside to our dreams, maybe even our rights or the things that we are entitled to.

And at times that may feel like death. But Jesus Christ promises us and what Christians throughout the ages have discovered, that when we follow Jesus, when we lay down our lives, ultimately that always leads to overflowing joy and fullness of life.

Have this mind amongst you which is yours in Christ, who though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God something to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant.

And being born in the likeness of man, he humbled himself, becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

- [34 : 58] Amen. Amen. We're going to end our sermon a little bit differently. Before we sing songs of worship and devotion to Christ, we're going to end at the time of prayer.

And normally I would pray for us, but I want to urge you and encourage you to take a few minutes and pray in your home or where you are. If you're with some other people, turn to the person next to you and spend a couple of minutes in prayer.

Maybe if you're watching by yourself, why don't you phone a friend, phone somebody, a family member and spend two minutes on the phone just praying with the person next to you or someone on the phone, another brother or sister in Christ.

And here's what I want us to pray about. What has God been saying to you in this passage? What would it look like to respond in prayer? Maybe you want to respond in worship or adoration, just praising God for who He is.

Maybe this passage is calling you to a prayer of confession or repentance, acknowledging that you've lived for yourself, you've maybe held on to something that you felt entitled to, but it's causing division in relationships.

- [36 : 16] Maybe you want to just pray a prayer of thanksgiving, just thanking God for His goodness and His grace in the gospel. let's take three or four minutes and spend some time in prayer.

And then after that, will you stand with us and we're going to sing songs of worship and devotion to Christ. Let's do that together. for the whole time. Come with us.

Before I go to Caleb snow got about it now. In my fold, to incredible how do you know you'll go to and have will you fill in you and for that Rafael and I in a time Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

- [39 : 24] Amen.