

First Baptist Church Merritt Island
Senior Pastor Titus Green
March 5, 2023
The Humility of Christ
Philippians 2:1-11

In a couple of weeks, we are going to begin our study of the Gospel of Mark. We will kick off that study with Pray21. Pray21 is something we do every year in the 21 days leading up to Easter. We set those days aside to spend time in God's word and prayer as a preparation for celebrating Easter. And, this year, Pray21 will focus on the Gospel of Mark. And, as we see the earthly ministry of Jesus and His journey to the cross, we trust that God will lay a foundation for our celebration of Holy Week as well as our next year or so in the Gospel of Mark.

And, as I prayed about these two weeks between our study of Daniel (that we just concluded) and our study of Mark, I felt the Lord leading me to preach Philippians 2 as a sort of precursor to Mark. You see, there are two features of the Gospel of Mark that uniquely relate to Philippians 2.

First, the Gospel of Mark has a unique beginning. Unlike Matthew, Luke, and John, Mark doesn't talk about the coming of Jesus into the world. He just jumps right into the earthly ministry of Christ.

Second, the Gospel of Mark has a unique focus. Matthew is written primarily for Jews and focuses on Jesus as Messiah and King. Luke is written to Gentiles and focuses on Jesus as the Savior who seeks and saves the lost from all the nations. John focuses on Jesus as God. And Mark focuses on Jesus as our Suffering Servant. One of the key verses in Mark is Mark 10:45 - *For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.*" Mark is drawing our attention to the servant ministry of Jesus. He came to this earth to serve us by sacrificing His life to save us.

That makes Philippians 2 a great study to prepare us for Mark because it describes Jesus coming into this world as our Suffering Servant and the practical impact that should have on our lives. So, my hope is that the Lord will use Philippians 2 to spark a passion in our hearts for Jesus and stir a desire to follow Him into the life He will empower us to live.

Philippians 2:1–11

1 So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, 2 complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. 3 Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. 4 Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. 5 Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, 6 who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. 9 Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, 10 so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

That's clearly a powerful passage of Scripture. But, since we haven't been studying Philippians, let me give you a bit of context so we can understand Paul's message to the Philippians. In chapter 1, Paul told these Christians in the city of Philippi that he rejoices when he thinks about them because he has seen God begin the work of saving them. He was there when this church started. He was the one who led the first Christians in Philippi to Christ.

And, in verse one of our text, Paul describes several things that should be present if you are trusting in Jesus.

- If there is ANY encouragement in Christ...if you believe that Jesus died to save you from hell and make you a child of God, you should be encouraged.
- If there is ANY comfort from love...if you believe that God Almighty loves you enough to give His Son to die for you, you should be comforted by that fact.
- If there is ANY participation in the Holy Spirit...if you have been born again, then the Holy Spirit has come to live in you and you have partaken of the Spirit-given life of Jesus.
- If there is ANY affection and sympathy...if you have experienced God's grace in the midst of your brokenness and sin, then you should have some amount of gracious affection and sympathy for people who are broken by sin.

So, verse one is simply Paul's way of saying if you have begun the Christian life and have any spiritual fruit at all. Notice what he says next in verse 2: **complete my joy**. Paul is saying that his joy isn't complete simply because they began following Jesus. His joy will be complete as he sees them growing and maturing in their journey with Christ.

When Emily and I welcomed each one of our children into this world, we rejoiced over their births. But our joy wasn't complete to simply see them born. Our joy increased to see them grow. When they graduated from diapers, we had joy. When they were able to start talking and tell us what they were thinking, we had joy. Now that they have started driving, we have stress! Joy increased as our children matured. Watching our children serve at the widows' banquet last night, we are loving to see our kids growing and maturing into three awesome people.

And that's the dynamic Paul is referring to here. He is encouraging these believers to grow into Christian maturity, to complete His joy. And what is the indicator that they are growing in maturity? Is it how much they give to the church or how many books they've read or how many Bible studies they attend? Keep reading verse 2: **complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind**.

Spiritual maturity is expressed in unity.

- He says we should have unity of mind ("being of the same mind"). That means we should be united by knowing and believing the same truths – the truths of the gospel of Jesus.
- He says we should have unity of heart ("having the same love"). That means we should be united in our love for Jesus and one another. If you love Jesus and I love Jesus, then we should love one another.

And there's an entire message in just those two phrases, but the bottom line is that there is no true and lasting unity between people unless they are united around the gospel of Jesus.

Churches won't experience God-honoring unity simply because they all like the same kind of music or have the same interest in political parties. Marriages won't experience God-honoring unity just because the husband and wife share the same kids or have the same preferences. Friends won't experience God-honoring unity merely because they enjoy the same hobbies. True unity only comes through knowing the gospel and growing in love for Jesus and each other. But Paul doesn't leave it there.

Philippians 2:3-4

3 Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit,

Verse 3 describes two attitudes that destroy unity: selfish ambition and conceit.

The phrase selfish ambition translates a Greek word that was used by Aristotle to describe the self-seeking pursuit of a political office. It's the description of someone who uses every opportunity to make themselves look good so they can advance their own agenda. This is the spirit of "I want my own way." It's what goes on in our hearts when the thing we most want is to get what we want.

The word conceit can also be translated "vainglory" or "worthless, empty glory." It's what happens when we exalt anything that isn't ultimately glorious, namely Jesus. Only Jesus is worthy of ultimate glory. And the primary thing we exalt is ourselves. That's what it means to be conceited. This is the spirit of "I want my own glory." It's what goes on in our hearts when we want other people to put us in a place above themselves.

And those two things destroy unity.

- Marriages are destroyed by selfish ambition and conceit. Husbands or wives who see their spouse as a means to get what they want. They put themselves above their spouse and it rips their marriage apart.
- Families are destroyed by selfish ambition and conceit. Parents and children who try to manipulate each other to get what they want. They put their desires and interests ahead of one another and it rips their families apart.
- Churches are destroyed by selfish ambition and conceit. Pastors and people who see the church as a means to get what they want. They allow their consumeristic greed and self-centeredness to put their own interests ahead of others and it rips the church apart.

Back in the mid 80's two ships collided in the Black Sea off the coast of Russia. Hundreds of passengers died as they were hurled into the icy waters below. Certainly, that was a tragedy. But that event became even more grievous when the public learned how the shipwreck happened. It wasn't a technology problem like radar malfunction or even thick fog. The cause was human stubbornness. Each captain was aware of the other ship. Both could have steered clear, but according to news reports, neither captain wanted to give way to the other. They each felt they deserved to have the right of way and were too proud to be the first to yield. By the time they came to their senses, it was too late.

Some of us are on a collision course toward disaster in our relationships. Some of us have already experienced the shipwreck and can testify to this truth, selfish ambition and conceit wreck our relationships because they destroy God-honoring unity.

So, how do we avoid the crash? How do we avoid losing our marriages and our families and our relationships before it's too late? Verse 3 tells us.

Philippians 2:3-4

but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. 4 Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.

Humility is the key to unity. Humility is what happens when we count other people and their needs as more important than ourselves.

When my family goes on road trips, we never break any land speed records. Emily thinks it's because I drive like my grandma. I think my grandma was a terrific driver. I think the reason our trips take longer than they should is because several members of my family have a bladder the size of a communion cup. When we go on road trips, we have to stop every ten minutes to use the bathroom. And plenty of times we have pulled off the highway to find a gas station and the only gas station around is one that only has one-person-at-a-time bathrooms. That means we have to triage our use of the bathroom. So, the person who is closest to an accident gets to go first. Then, the kids go and then I go.

And, in a really weird way, that's how Paul is characterizing humility. Humble people live like other people and their needs are in line ahead of them. And that's not saying we should spoil our kids or give into the abuse or manipulation of sinful people. Helping someone destroy themselves and others is the opposite of meeting their needs. Putting others ahead of self is thinking in terms of what the Bible says is best for them and being willing to do that ahead of getting your own way.

Just think about that for a moment.

- What would change about your marriage if you started to think about your spouse and their needs and put them in line ahead of you?
- What would change about your relationship with your parents or your children if you put them and their needs in line ahead of you?
- What would change at work or at school if you put your coworkers or classmates and their needs in line ahead of you?
- What would change about your approach to our church family if you put your preferences or interests at the back of the line?

So, here's what we have seen so far. Spiritual maturity is expressed in unity that is preserved by humility. So, how do we cultivate humility? How do we lay aside our selfish ambition and our self-centered pride?

5 Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus,

How do we become humble people? Well, we certainly don't do it by focusing on ourselves and working in our own power. Do you realize how proud you have to be to think you can make yourself humble? And, by the same token, you don't become humble by focusing on people. When you focus on others, one of the things you'll be able to see clearly is just how broken and sinful they are...and you'll begin to justify the ways you don't think you should put them ahead of yourself.

You become humble by looking to Jesus to do for you what you cannot do for yourself. Paul says the attitude of humility is yours when you are in Christ Jesus.

That's the heart of what it means to grow into spiritual maturity. It simply means that you begin to be more and more like Jesus, as Jesus lives in you.

Galatians 2:20

I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

The promise of the gospel is that Jesus not only gave His life for us at the cross but will live His life through us in the power of His resurrection. The series on Mark is all about following Jesus. And something we need to know about following Jesus is that He is not primarily asking us to do something for Him, He is inviting us into something He will do in us. And that makes all the difference in your Christian life. That's such a central truth to this text and the gospel of Mark, that we will look deeper into it next week in Philippians 2:12-13.

But, for this morning, let's put everything we've seen together for our big idea:

Big Idea: Spiritual maturity is expressed in unity that is preserved by humility in Christ.

If you want to know what it looks like to be a spiritually mature follower of Jesus, this is it. If you want to safeguard or restore unity in your relationships, this is it. Pursue spiritual maturity by looking to Jesus in faith and living in the humility He promises to provide. And, in the remainder of our time together, I want us to see what the humility of Christ looks like. What does it look like when Jesus lives in human flesh on this earth?

Philippians 2:6-11

6 who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. 9 Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, 10 so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Church, behold our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ! He is glorious. And He is the perfect example of humility. Notice how vividly Paul is displaying the humility of Jesus. If there has ever been anyone who could have rightfully put themselves above others it was Jesus. Verse 6 says that He was in the form of God.

The word “form” in verse 6 comes from the Greek word “morphe.” It’s also found in verse 7 to describe Jesus as a servant. It means “to have the shape or appearance of something, not as a counterfeit but as a duplicate.” Jesus is just as much God as God the Father and the Spirit.

- Jesus Christ is not merely a prophet...like Muslims believe.
- Jesus Christ is not merely a great teacher...like Buddhists believe.
- Jesus Christ is not merely an example of ideal humanity...like Jehovah’s Witnesses believe.
- Jesus Christ is not merely a transformational leader...like many secular humanists believe.
- Jesus Christ is God.

Not only is Jesus God, but Jesus is Lord. The word “Lord” in verse 11 is a word that means “someone who is in charge by virtue of possession.” I love that. Jesus owns everything. He can literally look at everything in existence and say, “That’s mine.” He has the right and authority to do anything He wants with everything He owns.

So, if there is anyone who has ever lived who could have rightfully put Himself above others, it’s Jesus. But, when Jesus lived on earth in human flesh, His life was a life of selfless humility. The One who owns the place didn’t walk around like He owned the place.

And there are three ways the humility of Jesus takes shape in real life, not just the life He lived 2000 years ago, but the life of humility He desires to live in you today.

1. The Humility of Jesus is displayed in SACRIFICE.

6 who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped,

Since Jesus is God, He deserves to be treated like God. It’s His right. He deserves to have angels and people bowing down in worship to Him. He deserves to display His unveiled glory. But, when Jesus was born as a man, He did not hang on for dear life to certain things that are rightfully His as God. He willingly laid them aside. There’s a lot of mystery here that I can’t understand or explain, but before Jesus sacrificed His life at the cross, He sacrificed a host of things that are rightfully His as God.

And that’s the kind of humility Jesus wants to enable in you if you will trust Him. He wants to enable you to lay aside things that are rightfully yours so that you can sacrifice them for the good of others.

What things in your life might Jesus be calling you to lay down in order to bless the people around you...your time, your hobbies, your way of doing things, your control of the situation? If you want to live in Christ-like humility then you have to die to the mindset that holds on to what you think are your rights!

The humility of Jesus is displayed in sacrifice.

2. The humility of Jesus is displayed in SERVICE.

7 but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.

When Jesus came to this earth, He came to be a servant. He knelt down at the feet of His disciples and met their needs. That's the humility Jesus wants to empower in you. And there isn't really a lot of explanation needed at this point.

I want to ask you to bring the people in your life before the Lord and ask this question: Jesus, how are you calling me to serve them today? What does your spouse need today? What do your children need today? What do your friends and neighbors, your coworkers and classmates need today? And how might Jesus be calling you to serve that need?

The humility of Jesus is displayed in sacrifice and service.

3. The humility of Jesus is displayed in SUBMISSION.

8 And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

Although Jesus is God, in His humility He lived in humble submission to God the Father. His heart's desire was for the Father to have His way in His life, so He yielded His will to God the Father.

John 6:38 - *For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me.*

The kind of humility that Jesus will empower in our life is a humility that yields to the will of God. In other words, we begin to live like God is calling the shots and we lay our life down before Him in humble obedience.

That is spiritual maturity. That's what the life of humility looks like. That's the life of Christ in you.

So, what would it look like for you to lay your life down before God this morning in a commitment to do whatever He would call you to do? To kneel before Jesus as Lord and say, "Jesus, my life belongs to you?"