

Series: Humble King	Reference: Philippians 2:1-11	Title: Love	Date: 12.23.18
Website Writeup:			
Learning to love others isn't about agreement on every little detail of life, it is rather about being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit & of one mind as Philippians 2:1-2 dictates. How can we learn to love well?			

Color changes in text indicate slide changes

We're basing this series off of Philippians 2:1-11, of which we will not read in full today due to time. But we will center our thoughts today on the first two verses. In which we see that, moved by *the same love* as Jesus, we can truly become one in spirit & mind, despite differences.

Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness & compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit & of one mind (Phil. 2:1-2).

We also look today to a very familiar verse, John 3:16 - a verse often seen gracing football end zones on some handmade sign, and a message of hope for the whole world!

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life (John 3:16).

I'd like to show you a short video I took while waiting for my ride when I came off the *Colorado Trail*. I was sitting at a small bed & breakfast in the Rockies & on the porch were a bunch of hummingbird feeders lined up. There must've been 50 hummingbirds feeding off these things just above my head. Realize this video is in slow motion. They were just zipping around, and since I'm filming into the light close to dusk you can't see the beautiful reds & greens of their plumage. It was a wonderful experience to sit & eat diner with these little guys buzzing & fluttering around my head.

The hummingbird's a fascinating creature; small, agile & fueled by the sweet nectar it finds in flowers (or hummingbird feeders obviously). With the wing speeds of the smallest hummingbirds hovering around 80 beats per second, and some species diving as fast as 49 miles per hour, the hummingbird looks like grace in motion as it hovers in front of a flower waiting to draw out what is sweet. But behind all that grace is a hard-working machine – hustling to stay in the air.

I'd imagine many of us feel like that - beating our wings 80 beats per second just to stay in the air. Sometimes in relationship with others, be it the close intimacy of a spouse, or significant other, family, friends or just work relationships, we seem to work so hard, often wearing ourselves out in process.

The question today is, **‘Can we learn to love well?’** Jesus asks many things of us in the Scriptures – one of them is to love others. But have you noticed that learning to love others is difficult? It stretches us. Sometimes it feels very unnatural since maybe it goes against our sin nature to do so. Especially with those different than or who attack us.

I spoke with some guys this Thursday about how we live in a society right now where feelings are king - ‘do what you feel, follow your heart’, are the axioms of our time. A time where how we feel, and when things like political ideology or sexuality, have become identities rather than just ideas or behaviors. It’s hard to address certain topics these days without emotion rising up in throats on both sides of the table. You’ve all been in the conversation where your face gets warm, you can feel your blood pressure rise, and you seem not to be able to control the words pouring from your mouth. Culture says not to, ‘just let it rip’, but Jesus says, that’s not how we have healthy relationships.

What we’ve spoken about over past weeks is important. The humility, hope, joy, peace & love of Jesus enable us to put our emotion in check. Since when the conversation becomes about how I feel, or my strong emotion, it’s about me & not about Jesus. But humility helps to settle the silt of our soul in to hope & peace, and instead of anger or vitriol we can respond in peaceful love. I can tell myself, “It’s not up to me to change a mind or someone’s heart, it’s the Holy Spirit who convicts. I just need to be faithful to represent Jesus in Truth.” Disagreement isn’t hatred, contrary to popular belief, even on major political & social issues. It’s just disagreement, and when talked out well, transformation can occur - and the message of Jesus isn’t hindered by the messenger.

If you’ve watched the office, Michael & Dwight go on a venture to win back lost clients with giant gift baskets. And in one meeting with an owner of a company, Michael’s doing his best to win back the client, but Dwight’s standing next to him saying, “Forget it Michael, he doesn’t care, forget him!” Michael’s obviously perturbed at Dwights words, and tells him to be quiet. That’s what many of us do in conversation with others, we’re there to represent Jesus, but we let our emotion dictate the conversation - feelings aren’t facts, and we need to put them in the right place speaking in active love marked by peace. We leave conviction to the Holy Spirit, understanding our emotion can be wrong.

The hummingbird’s a metaphor for what someone who’s learned to love can look like - *grace in motion*. Love’s hard work; it takes difficult choices in the unseen moments when no one’s around to applaud. We’re called to value others highly, even when they differ from us, as Philippians 2:3-4 say, ³*Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, 4 not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.*

We have to restrain our tongues from unleashing fury in anger. Learning to control the tongue so that it can become an instrument, not of destruction & hurt as tongues often are in this world, but of healing & wholeness, as they’re meant to be in reflecting the love of Christ to others. We only need to review James 3 & what it says about our tongues to see how dangerous & destructive they can be when not controlled.

The hummingbird works very hard to do what it does, but appears to be doing it with ease on the surface. Grace expressed in love takes individual, single beats of small wings that, by practice, enable us to hover in front of difficult situations & draw sweetness from them. We can learn, by humility & practice, to draw sweetness from any situation.

Can we learn to love deeply? The gift of God in Christ is that our need for love has been met in Jesus! Your lifetime & mine will be spent learning to receive the great & grace-infused love that meets us every moment in Jesus. To understanding the Humility, Hope, Peace, Joy & Love provided in our restored relationship with God the Father, through God the Son, led by God the Holy Spirit in conjunction with his Word.

The love of Christ shown to us in the Gospel account frees us not only from sin, but the debilitating need to get worth, love, affection & approval from others! Not that we cannot & shouldn't get love & affection from others, but it's icing on the cake when we do, given all that is met in Jesus! Only his divine love can fulfill any soul, everything else is bonus - and only in His love can we truly love others the way they were created to be loved. *1 Peter 1:22 says, Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for each other, love one another deeply, from the heart.* Learning to love others, deeply & from the heart, requires we humble ourselves enough to be *like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit & one in mind.*

One of the clearest models we have are the 12 Disciples, who came from very different backgrounds & very different socio-political views. Zealots, Tax Collectors & Fisherman make for a motley crew. Jesus gave the name Sons of Thunder to James & John probably due to their tempestuous disposition & the rough way they spoke. Peter was rash & impetuous, a bull in a china closet, making awkward statements & putting his foot in his mouth more than once. Simon was a Zealot, probably member of a political party opposed to the Roman Occupation, very nationalistic & opinionated. But all of them seem to soften & had their focus redirected & centered on Christ after the ascension & receiving the Holy Spirit. All these different guys united under Jesus. No longer were their agendas their main concern, rather Christ's was & whether others had experienced, or were experiencing Jesus in Truth.

The task of becoming like-minded & like-hearted is arduous. What Paul's **not** saying here, as he most likely writes from his jail cell, is that we're all to think the *same thoughts*. That's neither healthy, nor natural for a group - it's cultic. There are shared beliefs & values, one goal, but our thought life in every issue isn't dictated in relationship with other Christians.

Being like-minded means we have the *same goal* – the goal of receiving love & giving love in Jesus' name. Some of the most unyielding postures of hate between people & people groups have been softened & turned into embraces by coming to be *one in spirit* as we choose to be loved by Jesus & to love in Jesus' name – together. This is why as Christians we believe to change the world is to bring Jesus to the world.

Think on what your goal is for others around you - don't answer too quickly. If you could peel yourself away, looking down on yourself as you speak with others, what would be the thing(s) you seem to care most about, or put forward with others? What do you communicate, or show others about yourself, or about what is most important to you? Is it to make yourself shine? To win them to your political stance? Is it your art? Your career, you want them to know most? Your pet issues you want them most to understand? How intelligent, capable, or skilled you are? Or, is it the love you've found in Jesus which you want most desperately for others also to know? Do you identify yourself with Jesus, or something else?

Can we learn to love completely? I think so, by the filling of the Holy Spirit, in process of Spiritual Formation as we seek to emulate the heart of Jesus in Philippians 2:1-2... *Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind.*

It's not that we have to agree on every little point in life, it's that our goal & our spirits are centered around following Jesus together. It's aligning ourselves under the Humble Kings directives, taking on his values & expressing his love to the world. We can learn to love deeply, to draw out the sweetness in any situation, relationship, or even cultural challenge. But it will take practice in small acts & practicing love always requires we humble ourselves in some way. For the one who wants to change a nation, we must start by accepting someone who's not like us ethnically, socially, spiritually, or even politically. Soon the hurried beating of our wings will look like grace as we hover across lines of preference & prejudice to love others in Jesus' name.

Charles Spurgeon once said, *"Through humility, some have even possessed the gates of their enemies. For which of the virtues is so mighty to subdue the pride of demons & the tyranny of men?"*

When I first met Jesus, I was strangely drawn to his deep & powerful love for me. At the same time I was deeply convicted of the things in my heart which didn't align with the life to which he was calling me. Jesus has that uncanny ability to be convicting without bringing shame, his forgiveness calls people higher. In the beginning of my walk, the things in my life which were so prominently ungodly had to be cut down quickly. And over time as I've grown more deeply in him there have been other things he's revealed to me which have needed changing. Spiritual formation may begin drastically, but it works out overtime into a fine tuning.

Like a piano tuner tuning an old piano. He may make large turns on the strings in the beginning, but as he continues to work with a skilled ear, the fine tunings he makes are something the musical laity may not even be able to hear as he gets it ready for a master musician.

When Bill Massey & I got those two cabinets three weeks ago they were covered with 5 layers of old paint. It had to go, it was the most prominently ugly thing about them. The doors wouldn't close, the hinges were gummed up & rusty. They were unusable as they were. Using heat guns we had to scrape all that paint off. We finally we got them down to two rough wooden cabinets. The beauty of that wood was beginning to show through. But they were still covered with lingering spots of paint & tool marks from our scraping. So we begin with heavy 40 grit sandpaper & ground away all that stubborn paint & roughly smoothed out tool marks. When we got that done, we switched to 150 grit sandpaper to smooth them out further. Until when you ran your hand over them it was like a baby's bottom - they were finally ready for polyurethane.

Some of you are sitting here this morning with 5 layers of the worlds paint on you. Your sin may be covering you, but Jesus is going to scrape it away. Some of you are ready for 40, 60 or 80 grit sandpaper, and some of you for the finer 150 or 200 grit as Christ smoothes out your rough spots in order to cover you with his character & make the wood of your life bright, beautiful & usable.

I like those cabinets, because they're not perfect. They're old, have seen life, there's still hint of residual paint on them, which reflects our lives as Christ the carpenter continues to work on us. And as he works, he often sits back & admires what he's creating you to be, something usable in his kingdom.

This week, do two things. Firstly, pray Jesus would continue to work at sanding down your life, that you'd submit yourself to his skilled hand. Pray, in that process, you'd become more like him in the ability to love others while still upholding the call of holiness - calling them higher up into the life of Jesus with you.

Secondly, find someone who's different from you, ask them to coffee. Ask them their story, begin to build a friendship. If they're a Christian, begin to build that relationship around your shared love for Jesus. If they're not, pray the Holy Spirit would speak to you about how you can share the love of Christ with them. Keep emotion in check, in the power of the Spirit, tame your tongue & stand alongside Jesus communicating well.

*Be grace in motion, put the work of spiritual formation in this Christmas season to make your calling look effortless like a hummingbirds flight. Be like-minded, have the same love, be one in spirit & of one mind, since...*God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life (John 3:16).**