

Series: Humble King	Reference: Philippians 2:1-11	Title: Living in Humility	Date: 12.30.18
<p style="text-align: center;">Website Writeup:</p> <p>In this new year, let's take off those things which are incongruent with the Life of Christ, and put on those which are reflective of Him. Let's do this not only for our own spiritual formation, and intimacy with Jesus, but also for our witness to others!</p>			

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This is our last sermon in the series, *Humble King*, focusing ourselves in Philippians 2:1-11. I think we've learned something of Humility. That through the model of Christ, we're able to become people who can, in humility, value others this year more than ourselves. A year for *humility*, a year looking to the interest of others, since living in humility, is to live in Christ.

I'm currently working through the years preaching schedule. We'll do some things on Prayer for sure leading up to the Prayer Conference on February 23rd. Rachel, Pastor Craig Snow, who does the *Restoring the Foundations Prayer Ministry*, and also Bruce Latshaw of *The Barn Vineyard*, will all share with us - should be great!

I'm also looking at focusing on Psalm 23 for a time which will be a sweet look at our relationship to Jesus as our Shepherd. Another lesson in humility really, given how it starts - *The Lord is my shepherd...* To acknowledge Christ as our Shepherd, is to make a statement of humility, since we are speaking from the viewpoint of the Sheep totally reliant on its Shepherd.

And I am also looking to focus for a time on certain passages as 1 Peter 3:15-16, John 3:16 & 10:10, as well as Romans 15:13, speaking about how the Hope of Christ should lead us deeply into peace & joy overflowing the Life of Jesus to others within our circles of influence, as well as through our Community Partner relationships with which our Community Groups partner.

I feel like the Lord would have us explore how we express the Hope we have in Jesus to others. Humility has a lot to do with that conversation. We might look at questions such as: How does the Humility of Christ bleed out of us, so that we can share His Hope while still holding to the standards of holiness, not bringing shame & condemnation on others? Does everyone we personally know realize we are born again believers in Jesus? Would they see the hope of Christ in us & feel comfortable to come to us for life's answers? Have we avoided that conversation with people we know, maybe even for years? How can we express the hope we have in him with others, even after years of not doing so? Do all the non-believers in my life see me as a Christian, just as my church friends do? Am I a practicing Christian among everyone around me? Do they see me reliant on Jesus, that he's changed my life, and view me as a prayerful person? Have I ever used that question with them, 'Can I pray for you, right now?' and done it? How do I grow in confidence in faith which enables me to minister to others without thought to

my reputation & well-being? How can I begin to do these things well? One thing you can do in preparation for that is grab one of the testimony preparation sheets we've made available by the door & begin to write out yours to prepare yourself to share it!

Today's conversation of *'living in humility, is to live in Christ'* is important as we move forward together as a church this year. Humility firstly has to do with what Christ has done in me. It's the acknowledgement of Ephesians 2:4-10.

But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, ⁵ made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions - it's by grace you've been saved. ⁶ And God raised us up with Christ & seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, ⁷ in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. ⁸ For it's by grace you've been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it's the gift of God - ⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast. ¹⁰ For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

In recognizing what he's done for me, pride's eradicated with any feeling of being better than, enabling me to express hope & freedom to others without judgment, although my words may bring conviction to them through the power of the Holy Spirit. Verse 10 says we have work to do in the Kingdom of God - you may be the only Bible someone reads! That work in us has to be done under the spiritual formation of the Spirit & Word of God, emulating the humility of Jesus, expressing his hope, joy & peace, as we do!

Humility also acknowledges the work of other people in our lives. Harvey Mackay once said, *Humility is becoming a lost art, but it's not difficult to practice. It means that you realize that others have been involved in your success.* True! When others in our lives feel respected, loved, honored & we acknowledge how they've contributed to our lives, they see the humility of Christ in us, and are more apt to listen more intently to our testimony of Jesus. We earn the right to speak in many cases, although that witness can be made with someone we just met as well, since humanity shares the same need of a savior. Sometimes it's easier to share with those we don't know given there's no past history to work through like John Samara's father at the Syrian checkpoints with the guards with which he shared.

This all leads us to looking at Philippians 2:3-4....

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

Every new year, people around the world gather in city centers to celebrate the passing of one season & the birth of another. In NYC we watch the Ball drop - a national tradition, with televised parties from all over the world.

But for us as followers of Jesus - those who've acknowledge what he's done & have come under the Lordship of his leading, could this be the year when Christ's humility is

formed in us to such a degree we don't recognize ourselves by year's end? Is it possible to be different? To see the life of Christ well up inside of us, willingly submitting ourselves to his calling as he uses our unique personalities to bring gospel hope to others? Could we possibly allow the Living Word, under the guiding hand of the Holy Spirit to develop a humility in us so attractive to others, becoming a blessing to them, they may, at the very least, come to respect our convictions, if not want Jesus for themselves?

In business there's an old adage which says, "*To say yes to one thing is to say no to something else.*" Abbey Schwamburger just said no to one job in London, England, to say yes to another in Columbus, Ohio. I wish she'd said no to both & stayed put here - we will miss them!

Every day we get dressed. We *put on* one thing, but before so, we *take off* something else first - our jammies. To say yes to a *new thing*, we have to say no to an *old thing*.

Before we can *put on* Christ, we have to *take off* a few things that get in the way of Christ's humility being our new fashion statement this year. **If we look at Galatians 3:26-28 we realize the lines of difference are erased in Jesus.**

...in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, ²⁷for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. ²⁸There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male & female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

As we clothe ourselves with Jesus, we realize, everyone's human. Maybe there are cultural, preferential, or station-of-life differences, but deep down, the longing & needs of humanity are the same. Humanities condition is the same anywhere, lost people in need of reconciliation with their God. We've found it in Jesus, the only way to be reconciled to God - as he said, *I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through me (John 14:6)*. That's not arrogance, it's a spiritual axiom, a truth. Only the Bible speaks of God's character & plan of salvation, it is found in no one else but Jesus. *Jesus said, You study the Scriptures diligently because you think that in them you have eternal life. These are the very Scriptures that testify about me, ⁴⁰yet you refuse to come to me to have life (John 5:39-40)*.

Is Jesus exclusive? Yes. But...is the invitation open to all at this point in history for anyone to belong? To be reconciled to God once more through Jesus? Yes. It's not exclusive in invitation, it's only exclusive in the sense that we must recognize his love & forgiveness, and come under his lordship to belong - Jesus is how the Created is reunited with its Creator!

Coming under His lordship means we have to take off those things which don't jive with Jesus attire in life. In the conversation of Humility one of those, according to Philippians, is to...**Take Off Selfish Ambition.**

Taking off selfish ambition is where Phil. 2:3 begins. If we've set our sights on getting our own way, subtly using others to elevate our name, or reputation, selfish ambition's at work. It's possible that all our good works are secretly driven by selfish pride & ambition. **We can also look at Galatians 5:19-26 to see a more comprehensive, although not exhaustive list, of attitudes & actions antithetical Spirit-life, as well as those copacetic with it...**

The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity & debauchery; ²⁰ idolatry & witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions ²¹ and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness & self-control. Against such things there is no law. ²⁴ Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions & desires. ²⁵ Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. ²⁶ Let us not become conceited, provoking & envying each other.

There it is again, humility, in that last verse - the opposite of conceit & envy. But today, we limit ourselves & look firstly at Selfish Ambition. The sad truth though is, we can be serving others while still inwardly serving our own needs, fixated on our own ultimate gain. The show, *The Good Place* (meaning heaven) on Netflix is based on the religion of humanity, which state those who do enough good get into heaven, and those who don't go to hell. Tahani, one of the characters, figures out in season 2 that she's actually in the Bad Place (Hell), although she's raised billions of dollars for the Poor, since all the good she did on earth was for her own selfish gain. They get that part right, no amount of good works gets anyone into heaven, they just miss the whole Grace in Jesus part!

We can't be self-absorbed & embrace weakness at the same time. Selfish Ambition will always show through in the end, since it's rooted in Pride. When it is exposed, it'll undermine any good we've sought to do. We can even be blind to this spiritual incongruence in ourselves. However, the Scriptures, Holy Spirit & Body of Christ step in to slowly reveal these incongruence's when we're ready to accept them & submit ourselves to further spiritual transformation.

Consider an area of your life where you can put someone else ahead of yourself, helping them succeed, even if at cost to your own success or comfort. It may be a difficult thing to practice at first, since self-preservation kicks in. But self-preservation's not faith. **We spell FAITH in the Vineyard, R.I.S.K. Remember the saying, 'Fake it until you make it'?** We need to change that to '**FAITH it until you make it**'. I guarantee, over time, you'll find joy & peace in practicing humility - in the beginning it may seem rote & to go against the grain of your life. Any spiritually transformational change brings with it a dying to self, which may be uncomfortable & maybe even painful at first. Our sinful nature does not let go of it's grip so easily, and there are spiritual forces in the world which do not want you to grow in humility!

Here's a great habit to get into. Start to recognize your own thinking. Start to identify what's a truth, and what's deception in your thinking. Start to identify feelings & thoughts incongruent with the life of Christ. Things you think & feel about yourself, and things you think & feel about others. Then when something's incongruent with Jesus, confess it right there in prayer - proclaim it as a lie. Confess your propensity to believe it, acknowledge your need of the Holy Spirits protection against it. Ask the Blood of Christ to wash your heart & mind clean of it, replacing it with Truth in Jesus. Denounce spiritual powers which might seek to drive you away from Jesus & more deeply into selfish ambition or vain conceit. Because we are in a spiritual battle for our hearts & minds, there is victory in living in the Spirit of God!

You may not feel great in the beginning, but your feelings will fall into line over time. They will incrementally come in line with the Spirit & Truth, you will find freedom more & more. Faith it until you make it! It's the same with working out. They say that people with Gym memberships typically only go at the most 4 times a month. Which means, you're paying them not to work out! Many of us walk in Jesus like that - we only show up in our spiritual lives 4 times a month. Jesus isn't a full lifestyle change for many, he's something, at worst we begrudgingly do, or at best, know we should, but make every excuse not to. The result is spiritual anemia & flabbiness. Everything's spiritual, treat it as such.

Practice the humility of Christ with others & see where it takes you. You'll find you may not get what your selfish desires want, but will get exactly what you need. In doing so, you're putting off selfish ambition, replacing it with the humility of Christ. People will notice. Over time you'll grow in peace & doors will open for life-giving conversations of faith with others - your intimacy & joy with Jesus will increase over time! This is your spiritual workout!

Again, if we want to put on humility, there are a few things we must take off first. The second thing is **Vain Conceit**. If selfish ambition is about doing good for personal gain, vain conceit is about looking good for personal gain.

Have you ever said of someone else, "They're so conceited. They think they're great." Conceit speaks of excessive pride in oneself & one's own accomplishments. Comedian, Brian Regan, does a bit about Buzz Aldridge, the astronaut, at a party. He says, Buzz can one-up any man talking big at any party. If there's a guy who's talking about all his accomplishments, belongings & success, Buzz just waits patiently for a break in the conversation, then says, "I walked on the Moon." Mic drop!

I didn't walk on the moon! I find there are very accomplished people all around me with whom to compare myself! And not-so-accomplished people as well. My pride either elates my vain conceit, or brings me to self-loathing, depending with whom I'm comparing myself. But, here's the thing...in Jesus...who cares!?! I'm blessed & favored of the Lord. Maybe my conversation ender isn't, "I've walked on the moon," but rather, "I got Jesus!"

In Christ, there's no room for vain conceit - the Gospel levels the playing field - Galatians 5, Ephesians 2, Romans 3:23 (*for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God...*) all reveal, everybody's equal in the eyes of God. A very freeing thing! Self-comparison with others - taken out of the equation, as we realize, God has each one of us exactly where he wants us. We need only respond!

Have you ever met someone who can't dress? They wear competing colors or styles, and we say, "That doesn't match." It's the same in this issue of Vain Conceit, the clothing we must take off is vital if humility is to mark our lives. We can't wear vanity & humility at the same time. Like two of the same poles on two magnets, humility resists a heart which finds itself to be its own secret admirer.

Proverbs 18:12 says, *Before a downfall the heart is haughty, but humility comes before honor.* It's embarrassing to fall in our pride. However, that embarrassment can be avoided by the simple practice of humility in Christ.

Consider if any conceit has begun to worm its way into your heart. If so, consider how you might take vanity off by doing something which may be humbling in your own eyes.

Humbling ourselves by asking forgiveness of someone, doing a task that seems beneath us, or confiding in someone about our fears or failures – these are all good ways of losing something old to take up the new way of humility. But remember, when apologizing, 'scratch your 'Buts'. Since everything in an apology is negated when we tack on, 'but, you...' at the end of the statement. For example, "I'm sorry I yelled at you, but you didn't put the dishes away!" What does that say to a person? It says, you're not sorry, you just wanna take another dig, and win the argument! Be humble, truly apologize, realize how your words & attitude hurt someone else who's also a creation of God. Ask the Spirit to convict your heart in the process, practice humility.

Putting on humility, after we have taken off selfish ambition & vain conceit, is now much easier when these two things are out of the way – though it will cost us the same it cost Jesus in His lifetime. Humility means we put others before ourselves, considering them better than us in how we treat them & we tend to treat ourselves pretty well.

Humility means, dying to self, choosing to become small, to make ourselves nothing like Jesus did. This is all so God can receive glory for the moments of success - a redefinition of how we operate in relation with others by way of the life & teaching of Jesus. We lose our taste for accolades; recognition from God is all we need, and peace & joy begin to reign in our hearts instead of selfish ambition, vain conceit, jealousy & the like.

Take a few moments to sit down with a journal today. Write down 10 ways you would like to see Jesus break through in your life this next year. After you've written each item down, make each one a prayer - talk to God about your hopes for the year. As He shines light on each of your requests, make notes you can return to at the end of next year. I assure you, your heart is Christ's home, and he would love to clean house for you to live

in hope, peace, joy & love this year! Because he cares for you, but also because he wants to work through you in the lives of others around you this year!