

The Humiliation of Christmas

Philippians 2:1-11

(preached Pine Grove 12/24/17; Sunday AM)

Introduction

I assume all of your gifts are bought by now as many will be having Christmas Eve parties tonight...

If not, another good reason to come to Pine Grove is that you can swing by the Fairview Mall (Dollar General) on your way home from church and finish up your gift shopping...

Purchasing gifts can often be a stressful activity for many as we try to be “unique” in what we purchase for others...

No one wants to get the first thing you see on the first display you come to in Wal-Mart because that shows lack of thought in our purchases..

Instead, we want to be different in what we buy others...

We want our gifts to be special and unlike the gifts that other buy...

So we go to great lengths to make our gifts distinct and “one of a kind” purchases...

This need to be unique also spills over into our personalities as people..

We want an identity....

Something that sets us apart from the people around us...

You see, young people struggle to find out where they fit in the world...

Are they part of the smart crowd or the athletic crowd or the popular crowd?

You see young couples try to find out where they fit in as adults..

Are they a working family?

A farm family?

The upper class?

When I was a kid, breakdancing was very popular..

I remember watching a movie about break dancing, and I really wanted to be a break dancer..

But since I had no rhythm and couldn't dance like them, I decided to dress like them...

And they often wore high top basketball shoes, and often times they would wear mismatching sneakers...

So I went and bought two pair and wore two different shoes to school the next day....

Needless to say, I was desperate to be different...

And it certainly made me stand out...

All the older kids simply laughed at me and called me "color blind"....

Now, I say all that about the pressure to be different to say this...

In 2017, if you want to be different from the people around you in our culture, it is pretty easy to do and it doesn't matter if you are in school, a young adult, middle aged or a senior adult...

All you have to do is to be a truly humble person...

When I say truly humble, I don't mean a false humility where you fake humility in the right circumstances...

I mean a true humility that sees everyone as better than you..

That kind of humility is almost impossible to find in 2017 because our culture is obsessed with self...

Obsessed with pride...

Obsessed with seeing our things, our homes, our lives as better than those around us...

Obsessed with serving our needs over the needs of others..

Obsessed with getting our way..

So if you want to be different than the culture around you, learn and practice true humility...

And where do we learn the key to being truly humble?

Well, you learn the key to true humility from the Bible..

And there may be no better place to consider what true humility look like than the birth of Jesus Christ that we celebrate at Christmas...

So please take your Bibles and turn to the book of Philippians, chapter 2...

Now the book of Philippians is simply a letter that God inspired Paul to write to the church at Philippi...

The church at Philippi was a giving church...

The church at Philippi was a faithful church...

And for the majority of the letter that Paul wrote to them, he was pleased with their example, but Paul is also an expert at human sinfulness...

And he knew that as the church prospers, it is easy for pride to set in...

Pride in the church but also pride among individual Christians...

And when pride takes root, division takes root inside the church..

And though much of the letter to the church at Philippi was joyful and encouraging, Paul also took time in the second chapter of the letter to call them to humility as well...

When we arrive at chapter 2, Paul sets out to offer some instruction in humility...

So, let's read what he says to them in verses 1-4...

1 Therefore if there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any [a]ffection and

compassion, 2 make my joy complete [b]by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose. 3 Do nothing [c]from [d]selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; 4 do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.

In this verses, you see the foundation of true humility...

Verse 3...humility is the absence of selfishness..

Humility is the opposite of empty conceit or arrogance...

Humility is regarding others as more important than you...

Verse 4...humility is also not looking out for your interests but the interests of others...

This is the foundation and basis of biblical humility..

And this stands in so much contrast to the way most of the world thinks...

As kids enter school, what are they thought....

Self-esteem...

That seems to be the highest character trait of the world...

Self-esteem says “you are important.”

Self-esteem says “your dreams, needs, desires are what should drive you.”

Self-esteem says to not see anyone as more important than you..

Dream it and do it because you matter..

Humility says serve others..

Lower yourself...

Stop being selfish..

Stop being..

Regard the interests of others above your own interests..

And that is exactly what God is calling Christians to be through Paul here in the book of Philippians..

But God in her mercy doesn't just tell us how to be humble, he provides an example of humility...

And this is where the Christmas story is truly a story of humiliation....

Look at verse 5...

5 Have this attitude [e]in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, 6 who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be [f]grasped, 7 but [g]emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men.

Paul is saying to us that the foundation of humility is seeing others as more important than ourselves...

And the example of humility is seeing the attitude and actions of Jesus Christ...

What happened at Christmas is incredible..

God's own Son sent into the world to save sinners...

But when we consider how that occurred, we also see some incredible truths as well...

And so, let us for the next few minutes consider the humiliation of Christmas by discovering 4 principles of biblical humility...

I. Humility is an Attitude of the Heart (4-7)

The example of Christ's humiliation begins at Christmas...

Though Jesus is God and though he was God in heaven before his birth, Jesus gave up that place of honor and humiliated himself in his birth at Bethlehem 2000 years ago...

Think of how humbling this must have been...

Our world applauds when presidents go to visit troops in the field at Christmas time...

You see president in military uniforms heading to Afghanistan, Iraq, Korea, and the nation applauds such a show of humility...

The president of the United States lowering himself to a military uniform to see troops overseas...

And there is nothing wrong with that idea, but there is no greater example of a powerful person being humbled than Jesus Christ coming to earth in a manger at Bethlehem...

The King of kings born in the lowest of lows...

The Lord of lords born in the boondocks of boondocks...

No silver spoon in his mouth...

No golden crown on his head...

But instead, dirt poor parents and a dirt floor stable...

This is humility...

And notice, that this humility is a matter of the heart...

We are called to have an attitude of humility like Jesus..

An attitude is nothing but a heart condition...

And though Jesus is God and was God at his birth, his attitude of humility caused him to humble Himself to come to earth because he was looking out for the interests of others more than his own interests...

Furthermore, this was true humility because of the nature of his birth...

Where was he born?

Bethlehem...

What is the significance of Bethlehem?

Well, it wasn't the happening place in Israel...

This wasn't the New York City of Israel..

Bethlehem was an obscure town...

Listen to Micah 5:2...

2

***“[c]But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah,
Too little to be among the clans of Judah,
From you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel.
[d]His goings forth are from long ago,
From the days of eternity.”***

Mican writes that Bethlehem was too little to be among the clans of Judah...

And that was true because the book of Joshua, Bethlehem was not even listed among the towns of Israel though over a 100 are listed...

Bethlehem was an obscure place..

It was a just a bump in the road..

Now, David was born there which gave it some notoriety, but nothing else happened there until Jospheh and Mary had to travel there to register for a census.

But this is the depth of humility that Jesus possessed...

Not a pomp and circumstance birth on the temple mount in Jerusalem but a feeding trough in Bethlehem...

Some of you may have used the phrase, "its a one horse town" which is actually an agricultural term meaning that an area is so small that one horse can do all the plowing and planting and harvesting.....

Well, Bethlehem was so small that it was a no horse town...

Yet, God has a way of taking the lowly and lifting it out of obscurity...

Such is the truth about Bethlehem...

It was unimpressive until the most impressive was born there...

But this is the humility of Christ..

Humble attitude..

Humble exit from heaven.

Humble entrance into the world in a humble town in a humble feeding trough.

No spotlight...

No parade..

No headlines...

Just a star, a few shepherds and an angelic
announcement.

This is the humility of Christ which came from the
humble attitude of Christ...

Which is an attitude we all need...

The second principle of true humility is this..

II. Humility is a Way of Life (8)

Look at verse 8....

8 Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death [h]on a cross.

So many people can have short-lived humility...

After making it through a difficult time, people often sense the need for humility...

Humble phrases like, "Yes, the Lord got me through it."

"There is no way I could have made it with God."

"I am just glad to be here."

Often come out of the mouths of those who have survived a trying time..

Yet, in matter of weeks or even days, their humility vanishes and they are back in their life of pride and arrogance...

True humility is not just acting humble, it marks your entire life...

And is there any greater example of that than Jesus Christ...

Born in humble Bethlehem in a humble manger to humble parents, yet doesn't get arrogant as he matures...

Though he was a man and tempted to be prideful, he lived a life of humility from beginning to end...

Think of this fact..

Though Jesus owned everything he saw in the world, he never possessed any of it for himself...

Think about this....

Jesus had nowhere to lay His head. He had only the clothes on His back. Jesus was always borrowing. He had to borrow a place to be born. He had to borrow a place, He said, to lay His head. He had to borrow a boat to ride in and preach from. He had to borrow an animal to ride into the city of Jerusalem. He had to borrow a room for the Passover. He had to borrow a tomb to be buried in. He is of all people who ever lived the one who had the greatest rights but waived them.

Humility for Christ was a way of life...

Even his death on a cross was a humiliating act..

Jews rejected crucifixions because they seemed to be an inhumane way to die..

Most died on crosses due to strangulation as victims could not support their own weight long enough to breathe...

Their fatigue essentially led those on crosses to strangle themselves but not being able to hold themselves up long enough to breathe...

It was no doubt a horrible death...

Therefore, Jews rejected it...

Even the Romans would rarely use crucifixion on their own citizens because of its severe nature...

On top of that was the public spectacle of having people watch you die...

Here you are most likely stripped naked and lifted up before the people of the town to be ridiculed for your crimes and offenses...

It was embarrassing and shameful and certainly a source of great humiliation...

Yet, Jesus knew that his humiliation meant salvation for all who believe in Him...

Jesus put his interest aside to serve the interests of others...

This is the definition of humility...

Jesus regarded others as better than Himself...

He put our needs above his own...

And he did it not in short spurts when other people were looking and listening...

He did it his entire life from the cradle to the cross...

The life of Christ was a life of a humble attitude that led to humble actions...

A final principle of humility is found in verses 9-10...

III. Humility is the Road to Exaltation (9)

Verse 9...

9 For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name,..

According to this verse, it is an unmistakable truth that humiliation is the way to exaltation...

Jesus's humility led to his nobility..

Because Jesus was humble, God exalted him..

The humiliated one became the resurrected one...

Humility put Jesus on the cross and in the tomb, but God does not leave the humble unrewarded...

So, God raised Jesus from the dead and exalted his life on earth...

In fact, the name of Jesus as Lord is above all the names of the earth...

If you consider the history of man, what has the sinful desire of so many evil people?

To make a name for themselves...

IF you think back to Genesis 11, what were the people at the tower of Babel trying to do?

They wanted to build a tower to heaven so that they could make a name for themselves...

And this sinful desire has been passed down to all the generations of people that followed...

Nebuchadnezzar built a statue of himself in Babylon...

Judas wanted to make a name for himself in his betrayal of Jesus...

And that he did...

Because even today, the name Judas is the name of a traitor...

But then you have all the recent mad men of history that sought to make names for themselves...

The Hitlers, Stalins, Mussolinis, the Saddam Hussiens of the world and eventually there will be an Antichrist looking to have his name held in high regard in the world...

But the name above all names is the Lord Jesus Christ...

And the reason he got that highest name is because he lived the lowest life...

The world says climb the ladder, make the money, win the fame, control the world and make your name great...

The Bible says sink low, serve others, regard others as better than yourselves and your name will rise above all the others....

The key to being raised higher in a biblical worldview is to go lower...

Listen to what one Christian writer says....

"In the Christian story, God descends to re-ascend. He comes down, down from the heights of absolute being into time and space, down into humanity, down to the very roots and seed bed of the humanity which He Himself created. But He goes down to come up again and bring ruined sinners up with Him."

In God's way of doing things, you don't climb the ladder to succeed...

You go down the ladder to eventually go up..

Now, this is a primary reason why the world rejects the gospel..

In fact, it is the primary reason that the Jews rejected Christ...

In their wrong view of God, he would never stoop low to the point of being killed for His people's sins...

In their mind, God asks us to rise to his level....

That is why Jews put such an emphasis on works...

They are the building blocks to God because God would never come to us..

The thought of their Messiah being born in anything town and laying in a feeding trough was repulsive to the Jews...

The Bible says that it remains a stumbling block to them..

They can't imagine God being brought low..

But that is the gospel truth...

Jesus humbled himself...

Lowered himself...

Denied himself....

To save people dead in their sin...

For Christ, the road to having his name raised to the highest point in all the world was the road of humility...

And that name is so great according to verse 11 that every knee will bow to that name..

So let's end in verses 10-11 with the final principle of humility...

IV. Humility is Necessary for Salvation (10-11)

Verse 10...

10 so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

The picture of a knee bowed is a picture of humility..

Because bowing is a literal lowering of yourself to one of greater rank or authority or power...

And in case you are wondering, there is no room for pride in the life of one who comes to Christ...

In order to be saved, you have to admit your defeat at the hands of sin...

You have to confess your need of forgiveness and your desire to be saved, which are both acts of great humility...

You see, the victory of salvation isn't possible unless you admit defeat..

I know you have never met a person who never seems to be wrong...

But just imagine you know a person who never seems to be wrong about anything...

That person may be many things but he is clearly prideful...

And prideful people dont bow knees to anyone...

If you want to be saved in here today, you must admit your sin and bow your knee to Christ...

The way up to heaven first begins with you going down on a knee...

Salvation is not possible without the humiliation of the sinner..

IF you want to taste the sweetness of the Lord in salvation, you have to swallow your pride first..

But I also need to mention another truth of this verse...

If you dont bow the knee willingly in this life, you will bow it forcibly in eternity as Jesus sends you to a lake of fire as you finally submit to his name and authority...

Conclusion

In case you are wondering, I understand it is Christmas...

And I also understand that people want an uplifting message...

A message to make them feel better as they head out to eat and drink and open presents...

But remember, the way to be uplifted in God's word is to lower yourself under the weight of it...

Do you need more humility in your life as a believer?

Do you find yourself being filled with pride over your accomplishments and possessions and way of life?

Do you put your needs above the needs of others?

IF you do any of those things, bow your knee to the word of God today...

Acknowledge your lack of humility and ask God to make you lower so that you one day can be exalted...

But the question must also be asked...

Have you ever bowed your knee to Christ?

So many people in part of the world think they have...

They would say that they bowed a knee when they prayed a prayer years ago as a kid..

They would say they bowed a knee when they got wet years ago as a teenager in the waters of baptism..

Other would say they bowed a knee when they walked an aisle and hugged the preacher's neck..

Yet, none of those things were the bowing of a knee to the name of Christ because once those moments passed, they went right back to their life of sin...

They randomly attend church..

They randomly read their Bible..

They rarely work on their lives to live more like Christ...

What those people did was respond to the gospel out of emotion and not commitment to Christ...

They bought fire insurance just in case that preacher was right...

They responded to make their parents or spouse or mom feel better, but no knee was bowed to the name of Christ..

All they offered to him was a beautifully wrapped present with nothing inside of it..

It looked good to the people around them but their heart was not in it..

You can't bow your knee to Christ without offering him you entire heart and life...

You can't be saved unless you are willing to lose everything...

You can't ascend to the heights of heaven until you lower yourself before God..

The Christmas song is right..

It is the most wonderful time of the year because Christmas is a picture of the great humility of Christ who left the glory of heaven for the shame of earth..

Yet in that act of great humiliation at his birth, Jesus Christ began the process of securing our salvation which ended at a cross of humiliation as well..

However as I preach today, Christ is no longer in a place of humiliation but a place of exaltation...

You see the road to glory is paved with humility..

I pray this Christmas finds you on the road to glory...

I pray this Christmas finds you emptied of your pride...

I pray this Christmas finds you on your knees before God bowing to his Lordship over your life..

Let us pray.