

KAILUA CHRISTIAN CHURCH

Sunday, March 26, 2023

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Scripture Verses: Philippians 2:5-8

The Humbled and Exalted Christ

⁵Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, ⁶who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, ⁷but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. ⁸And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.

Sermon Title: Having the Mindset of Christ

Before my parents divorced, and before we moved to the United States, I grew up in a wealthy family in the Philippines. Part of the lifestyle that we had was that my dad hired drivers to drive us around everywhere. As a child, I didn't think much of them. All I was told was that they were here to serve us, and that they had to follow everything that we said. I had a much different perspective when I visited the Philippines again - this time in 2010 for a missions trip, and my father (who still lives there) assigned me drivers. Their job stripped away all of their pride. They couldn't fight for their rights - they had to wear uniforms when they were driving me around, they weren't allowed to eat until I had finished eating, they had to wait in the car for however long I was at whatever place I was at, they weren't allowed to rest or nap until I was home safely to name a few. One of the drivers showed me a picture of his wife and newborn child. I asked him when he would be allowed to see them. He told me, "Whenever you tell me I can." They were treated with less dignity than I was - I was told that they were of a "lower class" which is why they had to call me "sir" even though some of them were 20 years older than me. Yet, this time (unlike when I was growing up) I took the time to talk to them, and saw that they were normal people...and realized that I could very well end up in a position like theirs.

I asked myself, "Would I willingly take up an occupation like this, if this is what it would take to go on missions?" If I wanted to go on full-time missions, and this was the only job I could get, would I be willing to do this after the education that I've received? Would I ever lower myself to this degree of servanthood if that's what it meant to save a person who had mistreated me and backstabbed me? Would I be willing to humble myself to this level for the sake of the welfare of others?

It's such a painful question to answer, because our culture doesn't prize humility. We live in a culture that prizes pride - self-worth, rights, prestige. Humility is a forgotten virtue. The world doesn't think highly of people who give up their dreams to minister to difficult people. The world doesn't treasure people who abase themselves for others. If I were to do what I mentioned above, every single member of my extended family would tell me not to do it. Why? Because humility is a forgotten virtue.

But this is exactly what Christ did, and as His disciples who were saved by His gospel, we are called to emulate Him in His mindset of humility which manifested in how He lived and ministered. Christ's humility is something we have to both comprehend and emulate in order to live a life worthy of His gospel.

That very humility of Christ is seen in His incarnation, described in Philippians 2:5-8. And when you look at this passage, you will see three qualities about Christ's humility to emulate: His consideration of Himself, His emptying of Himself, and His abasement of Himself.

First, emulate Christ in His consideration of Himself (v 6). Let's not forget that Christ possessed an unrivaled worthiness, as one who "was in the form of God." Jesus Christ was and is God, and has never stopped being God. He possesses all of the attributes that separated God from man. He is the Holy, Holy, Holy. He has absolute equality with God. He possessed all of the authority of God. He had the right to do whatever He wished, could command and demand anything, and was never obligated to save the world. All of the glory of God dwelt in Jesus Christ. He possessed an immeasurable, incomprehensible, indescribable glory that we don't have. And what did He choose to do with it? He chose to defer it. He deferred His unrivaled worthiness, as He "did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped." He did not boastfully prize His equality with God, though He never lost it. He did not cling on greedily to all of the rights and the boasting that He had access to. He did not value it so much that He had to put it all on display. And this is what led to the incarnation. Christ became man, because He did not consider His equality with God something that needed to be boastfully displayed. He chose not to prove the worth that He had, while we seek to prove a worth we don't have! We must remember that earth is not the place to prove our worth or fight for our rights.

Second, emulate Christ in His emptying of Himself (v 7a). What did it look like for Christ to empty Himself? the answer is simple, and said in v 7: "taking the form of a bond-servant, being born in the likeness of men." Look at the progression of steps. He emptied Himself of His rights, and became a bond-servant, the lowest member of society who had no rights of their own. He considered the value of His own life of least importance, and died so that we might live. He forfeited the rights that He had as the authoritative God, when He made Himself the sacrifice for our sins. The socio-economic background that Jesus chose to be born in was anything but spectacular. His circumstances at His birth were anything but spectacular. How different this is from our generation today, where everyone is willing to hurt everyone to get what they want because they feel entitled to their own desires. The reality is that we're not entitled to anything, as we have no rights of our own. In fact, with respect to leadership development, famous missionary Jim Elliot once said, "What's this whole movement about building leaders in the church? The Bible never talks about raising leaders; it talks about raising servants." But not only did He empty Himself of His rights, but also His likeness, as He was one who was "being born in the likeness of men." If Jesus had exposed the fullness of His glory, there would have been no doubt in anyone's mind that He was the Son of God (see Philippians 2:11 and what will happen to men what Christ does in fact reveal the fullness of who He is). Yet, He was born as a human baby - the epitome of helpless creation. He didn't just become man; He became man in every way, including experiencing natural human weaknesses apart from sin. He grew tired and hungry. He had to grow and learn. He had to submit to his parents. He had to earn His food. He had to walk from place to place. He never demanded special treatment like we sometimes do.

Third, emulate Christ in His abasement of Himself (v 7b-8). As if His consideration and emptying of Himself wasn't enough. Verse 8 says, "Being found in appearance as a man, He Humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross." To become man, as God, is humbling enough. But He became obedient to the point of death, even death on the cross. He not only was willing to give up His life for us, but to do so in the most agonizing and humiliating way - the way of crucifixion. The giver of life - the life and light of men - had to die. He did it actively and voluntarily. He relinquished His claim to life itself in order to save ours. While humans are naturally prone to preserving themselves, Christ's followers are those who sacrifice themselves as their Lord did. Christ's death on the cross was the most dehumanizing and humiliating of deaths. He was cursed, mocked, spit on, stripped, publicly displayed, hung on a tree for hours. And this was for you and me.

Because of the humility of Christ, you and I are here today as saved sinners for whom the kingdom of heaven is promised, to whom eternal life is granted. How far was Christ willing to humble Himself and lower Himself for our sake? As far as infinity. As His disciples, as His ambassadors, as His children, let you and I have this same mindset and way of living. Only then will we glorify Christ in our lives. Only then will we gain unity in the church.