

Talk – Philippians 2:1-11 – Like-Minded Humility

Bible Reading/s

OT: Is 52:13-53:12

NT: Phil 2:1-11

Central Truth

Gospel Humility in Unity

Purpose

I want to listener to recognise the value of having a clear united purpose – that which comes first because attitude is shaped to be like Jesus.

Outline

Whatever Happens (Phil 1:27)

A Heavenly Conversation (Phil 2:6-11)

Gospel Humility in Unity (Phil 2:1-5)

A life lived worthy of the Gospel...

Talk – Philippians 2:1-11 – Like-Minded Humility

CHECK TIME

Talk

Prayer

Lord and Father,

Encourage us in Christ. Comfort us in your Love. Grow us together in your Spirit.

And help us to be humbly like-minded in your gospel.

And for the next few minutes and beyond, shape us to have the same mindset as your dear Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Amen

PAUSE

Whatever Happens (Phil 1:27)

- *‘Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ’* – so the Apostle Paul instructs his Christian friends in Philippians 1:27.
- This verse has been challenging me as I prepared for this talk.
- Does the manner in which I live my life, show the *worth* of the gospel?
 - Does the manner in which I live my life, show the *value* of the gospel?
- What about you?
 - Does the manner in which you live your life, show the worth of the gospel?
- You see, believer or not, your life is a canvas which displays what you think is most worthy.

- Tonight, we look at one of the best-known parts of the New Testament - Philippians 2:1-11.
- It is well known for good reason – it paints an extraordinary picture of Jesus Christ.
- Such that any person who looks at this canvas, can see on display what was so amazing about Jesus.

- And like a masterpiece, there is something about this picture which is looking right back at the reader.
- Leonardo da Vinci’s extraordinary portrait called the ‘Mona Lisa’, is famous for many reasons, but one, is that when you view that painting, no matter what angle you view it from - She will be looking right back at you.
- Philippians 2, looks right back at you.

Talk – Philippians 2:1-11 – Like-Minded Humility

- Another reason why this congregation knows this passage so well is because our ex-music director Mark Peterson put this passage to music – we have already sung ‘Highest Place’.
- So friends, (in a manner reflecting the great 20th Century preacher J.B. Phillips¹), I thought I might approach teaching this passage a little differently today, and I hope you might be willing to go with me on this.
- You will need to have Philippians 2 open in front of you – so you can check what I refer to.

PAUSE

A Heavenly Conversation

- Imagine being a spectator at Angel Training School.
- The archangel Michael puts an arm around the shoulder of young recruit - Angel Adelaide.
- *[Michael]: Adelaide, come fly with me. Let me show you the master’s universe.*
- *[Adelaide]: Really, Archangel, that would be an honour – to cast my eyes upon the handiwork of God.*
- Look to the bright spots, they are called suns – and it is around those lights that the Master constructed his solar systems. They are vast, and majestic and they stretch out for billions of light years in every direction.
- It is beautiful, breathtaking – enormous. I can not imagine how powerful the Master is to be over all of this – and how wonderful the Master is to be so creative.
- And Adelaide, see into the vastness, there are different spheres that rotate around the suns – they are called planets. They come in all different shapes, colours and sizes – and if you look even closer you will see that each solar system has its own set of planets – each different.
- Archangel that is amazing – and I can see that each planet is warmed and lit by the sun that the Master has placed at the centre. This is vast. This is extraordinary.
- And Adelaide, see that tiny solar system over there.
- Oh yes, I almost missed it – so tiny.
- That has been called ‘the milky way’ – and can you see that tiny little planet, third out from its sun.
- I can, just. It is blue and white and brown, and it looks dirty – am I seeing right?
- Yes, I am afraid that you are. I want you to watch that planet particularly.

¹ J.B. Phillips ‘The Angel’s Point of View (or ‘The Visited Planet’).

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- Yes, sure, but next to the whirling galaxies and the blazing suns that you have already shown me – it does seem a little insignificant.
- Oh no, not in the slightest. Young Adelaide, that is ‘the visited planet’.
- ‘Visited?...you don’t mean visited by...’
- Indeed I do. That ball, which no doubt looks small and insignificant and in need of a clean – that planet has been visited by our young prince of glory’.
- I cannot imagine.
- What an honour it would have been for the beings of that planet to have the son among them.
- Indeed, the humans (they are called) were granted the greatest honour.
- I cannot imagine, what it would be like to ‘be in very nature God’ [Verse 6]
- And with all that privilege, with all [*pointing the to the universe*] this under his command.
- And with all the company of the angels just ready and willing to wait upon him.
- Oh, what an honour to be granted a visit from the Lord.

- Well yes indeed, our prince ‘did not consider equality with God something to be used for his own advantage’ .
- In fact, ‘he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant being made in human likeness’ [Verse 7]
- Did he really? Do you mean that he emptied himself and gave up being Lord?
- Oh no, little one - Our prince did not give up his divinity – what he did was take on a *humanity*.
- You mean, he lowered himself to the point that he could be one of them?
- Well Yes, he took on their very nature.
- But that is not good, they are not clean, they are not perfect, they are so insignificant.
- Oh, little one, how much you still have to learn.
- They may not be good, they may not be clean, they are not perfect – but do not think of them as insignificant – because our Lord has become one of them.
- For him to do that, to take on their nature, tells you of how incredibly significant they really are.
- For our prince to become the incarnate man – he gave up his seat in heaven for a time – because he loved them so.

PAUSE

- Well, I can just imagine what a wonderful reception the earth must have given our Lord.
- To sing his praises, to shower him with gifts, to honour his name, to listen to his voice.

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- Yes, well. That is not quite how it worked out!
- *[Verse 8]* ‘Being found in appearance as a man, our prince humbled himself, and became obedient to death...
- *[Gasp]*
- ‘To death on a cross’.

PAUSE

- Archangel, I don’t understand!
- Did not the angels go down and declare his praises?
- They did little one.
- Did not the messengers speak of his arrival?
- They did little one – the Master announced his coming through Mediators and Priests and Judges and Prophets and Shepherds and Wise Men. He even put a new star in the sky to declare to the universe that he had sent his son.
- Did not the people see and hear for themselves just how incredible our Lord is?
- Some did little one – but most saw the miracles that he did and heard the words that he spoke and dismissed them.
- In fact, they hated him, and they took him, and they beat him, and they mocked him, and they hung him on a cross – and they killed him in the most savage way that they knew.

- No, they couldn’t have!
- Our Lord is God.
- He could have stopped them. He could have turned the tables. He can do anything – he is God.
- Young Adelaide, you are right. Indeed, he could have – but he chose not to.
- He humbled himself and allowed himself to die!

PAUSE

- But why? He couldn’t have done any wrong – he wouldn’t have deserved to die!
- And Archangel, should not the Master have intervened?
- Adelaide, the Master knew what the Son was doing.
- He was dying so that he could save those who would die.
- He was taking the place of those who would be lost to our Master so that they could be found – and in turn join us in the eternal kingdom of our Lord.
- That is how the Master has chosen to take that which was unclean and make them clean like him – it was through the death of his Son.

PAUSE

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- But what of our Lord? What of him?
- Well Adelaide, God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name [Verse 9]
- And so he should – to be taken so low, it is only right and just that he be lifted so high – and above all the heavens and the earths.
- Yes, you are seeing it clearly now, young Adelaide. He has exalted the son, such that all beings – wherever they might be – in heaven, on earth and under the earth – that all beings will bow at the knee and give honour to the Lord Jesus [Verse 10].
- Archangel, that will mean that even those who did this to our Prince, will come before him and bow...
- Indeed, and every tongue will acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father [Verse 11].

LONG PAUSE

Gospel Humility in Unity

- Does the manner in which you live your life, show the worth of the gospel?
- We all know, that hearing something amazing and allowing it to shape our lives is not the same thing.
- What Paul has done is paint a picture of the extraordinary work of Jesus.
- And he holds up a mirror to those who say that they believe – and asks, ‘do you look like Jesus?’

Allow me to take you back to the beginning of Chapter 2.

- He reminds the church receiving this letter of the gospel of which they serve and have taken their stand.
- And he says – verse 1
 - if you have been *encouraged* because you are now united with Christ
 - if you are *comforted* from his love
 - if you have a common fellowship in the Spirit – that is if you are all in *partnership* together
 - and if you have any *tenderness and compassion* like that of your Lord
 - ...then you should all be united in the *same common loving purpose*.
- Paul is not questioning if they have this faith – if you, if you, if you, if you – he is declaring that because you have this faith together, then it should be obvious in the manner in which you collectively live out that faith
 - you should (verse 2) be like minded
 - you should share the same love
 - you should be of one spirit
 - and you should be of one mind.

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- This is a *collective* request. This is something he wants to see in the church. In fact, when he sees it in the church, it will make his joy complete.
- Yet even though this is a collective request, it is only possible if those he writes to *individually* respond.
- That is, when each member of a body, gives of themselves for the sake of the other.
 - We know the sporting illustrations when a talented team loses because the individuals are so self-obsessed,
 - or the music illustration when an orchestra is ignored for the sake of the soloist
 - or the business illustration when the bosses (or shareholders) are more interested in lining their own pockets and do that at the expense of the employees.
- They are all secular examples, where the individual doesn't work for the benefit of the whole.
- Paul – is challenging this church of individuals to be *nothing* of the sort.
- Look at verse 3 – '*Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit...in humility value others better than yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.*'
- He has in mind a *Gospel humility expressed in Unity*.

Illustration

- In the early 2000's a business academic named Jim Collins released a book titled 'Good to Great'. The book was a world-wide hit in the business world and remained in the best sellers list for about five years.
- What he had done was examine almost 1500 'Fortune 500' companies to discover what these businesses did to move from being a *good company* to be a *great company* – in terms of turnover.
- He concluded that these companies had three things in common
 1. *passion* – people who understood what their purpose was and had a willingness to go for it.
 2. *uniqueness* – they understood what they did that others could not.
 3. *resources* – they dedicated time and money to their cause.Passion – uniqueness – resources.
- Several years later – he wrote an amendment to that book called '*Good to Great for the Social Sectors*'.
- And one of the reasons why he wrote this extra pamphlet is because he noticed that the not-for-profit organisations had something which the profit-based fortune 500 companies did not.
- He looked at churches and charities and tried to understand why they were
 - the first to mobilise,

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- why it was that they could mobilise so many,
 - and mobilise for what often appeared to be thankless tasks,
 - and yet with a morale that left the profit-based companies in their wake.
- And what he concluded is that groups like churches which were growing quickly – had:
 1. *passion*, they knew what their purpose was and they knew they were
 2. *unique* – they had something that others didn't. Those factors were just like the successful Fortune 500 companies but when it came to the third factor
 3. *resources* – it was the churches who could do far more with seemingly far less.
 - and he suggested, that it was because the people were *united around a cause*.
 - the people were *united around a cause*.
- It was not the pay packet that inspired them,
 - It was not the discretionary time which they could use,
 - It was not the bigger budgets that they could call upon
 - it was that the people involved *moved together in line with a common cause*.
 - Jim Collins, could have saved himself some trouble by simply looking at his Bible.
 - Here is Philippians 2, Paul says to the church - *Gospel humility should be expressed in Unity*.
 - Friends, Christians have a great cause – to live lives in a manner that is worthy of what Jesus has first done for us - we need to be united around this cause.
 - How do we do that?
 - It starts with our attitude.
 - Verse 5 – ‘in your relationships with one another, have the same mindset (attitude) as Christ Jesus’ – God who became human – so that we (Humans) could be with God.
 - If Jesus was willing to go from so high to so low, then our attitude should be to start low and raise others higher.
 - The gospel should shape our humility.
 - And if Jesus was willing to give so much of himself individually for so many, then our attitude should be to serve alongside the many even if it comes at our own individual expense.
 - The gospel should be expressed in our unity.

PAUSE

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A life lived worthy of the Gospel...

- Now what will that change about the way I live my life this week?

- And what about you? What will that change about the way that you live your life this week?

- Workers
 - Many here have jobs – there are some who don't.
 - Being employed doesn't make you any better than those who are not.
 - *[at 5pm]* And let me say something to the bosses – we have several folk here in leadership positions over others.
 - Your position does not make you better or more worthy than those who work with you.

- Students
 - Consider the School yard – I notice that at my kids school, then those in the higher years give little regard to those in the younger years.
 - *[At 7pm]* Perhaps for those who are at Uni – there is a temptation to think that if you are at Adelaide Uni, then you are better than those who go to Uni SA or Flinders.
 - Or for those who do six-year degrees that you are better than those doing three-year degrees.
 - Your age, university, or uni course does not make you better or more worthy than others.

- Mental Fitness
 - Many here would see themselves as mental fit, yet for some, those struggling with their mental health it is not so easy.
 - Being mentally fit does not mean you are more superior to those who struggle with their mental health.

But perhaps, the area which we need to give most attention too comes in the way we think about our Christian faith.

- Holding to the gospel, knowing the truth about what Jesus did for us – does not in anyway put you in a more superior position to those who don't know Jesus.
- In fact, knowing this calls upon us to live out our faith in a manner that is worthy of the gospel – to humble ourselves for the sake of others so that they might give glory to God through Jesus.

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Closing Prayer

Lord and Father,

Encourage us in Christ. Comfort us in your Love. Grow us together in your Spirit.

And help us to be humbly like-minded in your gospel.

Shape us to have the same mindset as your dear Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Amen.