

HUMILITY IN THE TEACHING OF JESUS

INTRODUCTION:

This morning I want to go back to our series on humility. As mentioned before, there is no one chapter dedicated to humility like I Corinthians 13 is dedicated to “love.” Instead, humility is a thread that is woven throughout the Word of God.

What is humility? It’s the opposite of pride, right? But that doesn’t really tell us much! E.M. Bounds, the great prayer-warrior and writer on prayer wrote: “**Humility is just feeling little because we are little. Humility is realizing our unworthiness because we are unworthy, the feeling and declaring ourselves sinners because we are sinners.**”

Although that is certainly a **good** definition of humility, it is not a **complete** definition of humility. Why? Because **Jesus** called Himself humble—“I am meek and lowly in heart”—and it wasn’t because He was declaring Himself to be a sinner! In Jesus, humility was a virtue that wasn’t connected to sin because He didn’t have any!

Four weeks ago, we looked at humility in the **life** of Jesus, particularly in His service to others, His dependence on the Father, and His submission to the Father. The Sunday before Easter, we looked at humility in the **death** of Jesus in Phil 2:5-8. In a quote from Steven Cole regarding those verses, Cole captures well the humility of Jesus: “...Jesus Christ **voluntarily left the highest position in the universe** and went to the very **lowest position on earth** in order to rescue from God’s judgment people **who did not in any way deserve it**. There can be no greater example of lowering oneself than what Jesus did on our behalf.”

This morning we are going to look at humility in the **teaching** of Jesus. We touched on this somewhat when we looked at humility in the life of Jesus because it is impossible to separate the **teaching** of Jesus from the way He **lived**. Jesus **always** lived out what He taught! He never said, “Do as I **say**—not as I do!” Imagine that...a Preacher who never—not even once—failed to practice what He preached!

So what did Jesus teach about being humble? I’m sure there are more, but this morning I’m going to share with you three truths Jesus taught regarding humility.

First, let’s look at the one we are probably most familiar with...

1. It is better to serve than be served

We won’t spend a whole lot of time on this one because we looked at it a few weeks ago in the account of Jesus washing the disciple’s feet. Not the only place Jesus taught that, though. Please take your Bibles and turn to Luke 22:24. The disciples go from wondering who would **betray** Jesus in v 23 to who would be the **greatest!** Jesus takes this opportunity to teach them about greatness **according to God**—not men.

--v 25. Greatness in the **world** is measured by having authority and power over other people

--v 26. ‘It is not going to be that way with you. In fact, it will be the opposite. The one who is the greatest—the chief—will be the one that **serves**.’

--v 27. In the world, the great ones—the important ones, don’t serve—they **sit and are served** by others. But what does Jesus say about Himself? Last part of the verse: “but I am among you as He that serveth.” We read similar statements from Jesus in Matthew 20:25-28.

Jesus’ teaching here was kind of radical—and is really **opposite** of what the world says. What about us? Are we looking to **serve others**—or to **be served**? If we are going to be like Jesus—and that is who God **wants us to imitate**—we need to be a servant.

Truth #1? It is better to serve than be served.

Truth #2? **2. The way up is down!** Did Jesus say that? Not with those exact words, but the principle certainly is... A. Seen in the teaching of Jesus

We're in Luke 22; turn back to Luke 14:7. "And he put forth a parable to those which were bidden, when he marked how they chose out the chief rooms..."

--Did you catch that? **Why** did Jesus put forth this parable? Because "He **marked how they chose** out the chief rooms..." In other words, Jesus was a "**people-watcher**"—just like some of **you!**

Not the only time in the Bible we are told Jesus was **watching** people. Another familiar account is Lk 21:1-4 when Jesus was watching people "cast money into the treasury" at the temple. What caught His attention was not how much the **rich** people put in, but how much the **poor widow woman** gave!

Back to our parable. Choosing out **chief rooms** is not so much a physical room as it was a **seat or place**. He watched people pick out the **best seats**. **Why** did they pick out the best seats? Because they thought they were **important**—and wanted everyone else to think they were important too!

Now vs 8-10. Is Jesus suggesting that you purposely pick out the **low** seat so that you get moved up to a **higher** seat so people there at the wedding feast will "worship you"—meaning **honor** you? Not hardly because that would still be a form of pride—the very thing Jesus is **teaching against** by telling this parable! I like what a man named **Alfred Plummer wrote**: "Every one before God ought to feel that the lowest place is the **proper place** for him" (Alfred Plummer, *The Gospel According to St. Luke* [Charles Scribner's Sons], p. 356, quoted by Steve Cole; Bible.org).

Now v 11 "For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." In other words, 'If you **lift yourself up**—you will be brought down. But if you **humble yourself**, God will lift you up.' A similar statement is made at the end of the parable about the Pharisee & publican in Lk 18.

This truth is not only seen in the **teaching** of Jesus, it is also... B. Seen in the tribute to Jesus

What is the **tribute**—the sign of respect and honor that God bestowed upon Jesus for His humble obedience unto death, even the death of the cross? He was "given a name which is above every name..." Although those verses are familiar to many of us, I still want us to turn to Phil 2:9-11. We looked at verses 5 through 8 a couple of weeks ago, so it is fitting—after looking at Christ's **humiliation**—that we look at His **exaltation**.

Notice vs 9 "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him..." Jesus taught that if we humble ourselves, we shall be exalted and we see that very thing happening here. So **what** is the name given that is above every name? The **simple** answer is "Jesus" because of v 10 "That at the name of **Jesus** every knee should bow..."

I think the **better** answer, though, is found in v 11 "that Jesus Christ is **Lord**." Here's why I'm suggesting that. Philippians 2:10 certainly seems to point back to Isaiah 45:23. Before we look at v 23, though, I want to point out a couple of things from the context.

Isaiah 45:21 "Tell ye, and bring them near; yea, let them take counsel together: who hath declared this from ancient time? who hath told it from that time? have not I the **LORD**? and there is **no God else beside me**; a just God and **a Saviour**; there is none beside me."

--The LORD (all caps; meaning Jehovah; aka Yahweh) declares things before they happen because He is the one that brings them to pass!

--There is no God beside Him—He is the Supreme Being of the universe! We see that repeated in v 22. **Isaiah 45:22** "Look unto me, and **be ye saved**, all the ends of the earth: **for I am God, and there is none else**."

We also see in these two verses (21 and 22) that Jehovah is the Saviour!

Now **Isaiah 45:23** "I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, That **unto me** every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear."

Who is talking? The LORD...Jehovah...Yahweh...God!

Who are people going to bow down to? Here in Isaiah it is **God**; in Philippians it is **Jesus**! So, the name given to Jesus is LORD...God...The Sovereign, Supreme being over everything and everybody!

And that Lordship over every one and every thing is seen in v 10: things in heaven...and earth...and under the earth! In other words, all the inhabitants of heaven, earth, and I believe hell—including Satan and fallen angels—will bow down to Jesus as **God**! And all God's people should be saying, "Amen!"

Truth 1 that Jesus taught about humility? It is better to serve than to be served!

Truth #2? The way up is down!

Truth #3? **3. The way to save your life is to lose it**

Did Jesus say that? He did, didn't He? **Six times**, to be exact—Mt 10:39 and 16:25; Mk 8:35; Lk 9:24 and 17:33; and John 12:25! We only have time to look at one of them.

Please turn to Mt 16; notice vs 25 "For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it." At first glance, this can be a rather troublesome statement. What is Jesus talking about? Is He saying that if your boat tips over and you "save" your life by swimming to shore or being pulled out by someone, that your life will be **lost**? No; that's not what Jesus means. But what **does** He mean?

The context, of course, helps tremendously. What I mean by context is that the surrounding verses will give us insight as to what this particular verse means.

First, A. It's about self-denial—not loss of physical life

We see that in v 24 "Then said Jesus unto His disciples, If any man will come after me, **let him deny himself**, and take up his cross, and follow me."

When Jesus is talking about **losing** our life, He is not talking about physically dying. What He is talking about is making a decision to follow Christ—and to deny ourselves. You can't come after Christ...and deny yourself...and take up your cross...and follow Jesus...if you aren't physically **alive**!

What does it mean to **take up our cross**? I believe a fair amount of people misunderstand this phrase. They think of their "cross" as a physical ailment—or trial in their life—that they must patiently bear. I believe that misses the point for a couple of reasons.

1) It is something we **voluntarily do**—"take up his cross." I don't know of anyone that purposely tries to "take up" cancer or create a hardship in their life so they can suffer! In other words, Jesus is not saying it is something that **happens to us** whether we want it to or not. Instead, it is the **act of the will**—something we must **decide** to do. To "take up our cross" involves a **choice**.

2) The cross at that time was a **symbol of death**—not a symbol of Christianity. I forget what the name of her program is on Facebook, but a young gal by the name of Kaitlin Bennet (I think) likes to record her interviews with people. She was asking college-aged people what Easter was all about. She went up to a young man who had a cross-necklace and asked him why we celebrate Easter. He didn't have a clue!

Let me say it again—at the time Jesus spoke these words, the cross was a symbol of **death**. If you were carrying a literal, **physical** cross—like Jesus would do shortly after this—it meant you were on your way to your **death**! When Jesus said to "take up your cross," He meant that we are to make a conscious decision to **die to self**—our ambitions...plans...and will—so that we can whole-heartedly follow Him.

Second.... B. It's about seeking to please Christ—not ourselves

We see that in vs 25: "For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for **my sake** shall find it." It's not just about dying to self and **doing nothing**—it is about dying to self for **His sake**; it is above living for Christ and seeking to please Him! Jesus Himself told us that we cannot serve two masters. If **we** are the **master** in our life...if **we** are the **captain** of our ship...if **we** are the **priority** in our plans and pleasures and purpose...we cannot have Jesus be our master at the same time! It doesn't work!

A funny thing happened during our son's wedding last weekend. The Pastor that was officiating said to our son Ben, "Today you're wearing **black**, a color that symbolizes **death!**" Needless to say his statement caused more than one startled look, but the point, of course, was this—Ben was volunteering to die to self that day so he could put the needs of his wife ahead of his own!

What does it mean to lose our life? It is about denying ourselves...and seeking to please Christ...and

C. It's about finding satisfaction in the things of God—not in the things of this life

We see that in v 26 "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" This world has a lot to offer—and there are a lot of things we can pursue in this life and try to gain. Fame...money...possessions...and power, just to name a few. Regardless how much we gain in any or all of these things, they do not bring true happiness in **this** life—and we certainly can't bring them **into the next!**

That's not the only take-away from this verse though, is it? In fact, it may not even be the main point. Jesus gives us here a very solemn warning in the form of two questions.

1) First, "What is a man profited"—what **good does it do**—"if a man gains the whole world, but loses his own soul?" A lot to unpack from that one question, isn't there?

--We each have a soul—an invisible part of us that will live forever somewhere.

--That soul can be lost. Lost, of course, does not mean we don't know where it is. Lost means separated from God in a place called hell.

Question 2) "What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

Not an easy question to understand, but I believe the idea behind it is this: 'If a man **does** lose his soul, what can he give in exchange to **redeem** it—to purchase it back?' The answer? **Nothing!**

Let that sink in. If you die without Christ, it will be too late! There is no purgatory...there are no do-overs...there are no second chances. You **will** get out of hell—but only to stand before God and be judged at the Great White Throne Judgment! Imagine the horror of hearing Jesus saying to you, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels" (Mt 25:41)!

We don't have to hear that though, do we? Instead, we can hear "Well done, thou good and faithful servant—enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." How and why can we hear that?

First the "how." We can enter into God's presence some day because Jesus lived out His own teaching that it is better **to serve** than to be served. He humbled Himself by coming to earth as a servant—and by sacrificing His life on the cross to pay for our sins! Humility was what led Him to do that for us—and we need to humble ourselves and receive Him as a needy sinner. "Nothing in my hand I bring, simply to thy cross I cling."

But is every child of God a faithful, obedient child? Will everyone who enters heaven hear, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant?" I don't believe so.

So why will some of God's children hear that—but not all? We know the answer, don't we?

--Because some of us are pursuing the world and the things of the world.

--Others of us want to lift up ourselves instead of lowering ourselves.

--And still others want to be served instead of serve.

--And still more want to live for themselves instead of dying to themselves. They trust Jesus to save them—but don't want to turn over their lives to Him.

I wonder what our world would be like if every child of God **died to self**—and lived whole-heartedly for God. Is that your desire? Is that mine? It is certainly what Jesus taught about humility. Take up your cross—and follow Him!

PRAY

So what does God want us to do in light of what we have heard from His Word today?

1. First and foremost, are you saved? Do you have Jesus? Are you born again? Are you a child of God? The greatest act of humility the world has ever seen is God coming to earth in the form of man to pay the price He required for people that don't deserve it—us! He is the only way—and God showed His approval of what Jesus did by giving Him a name above every name.

You will bow down to Him some day. The question is, will you bow down to Him as **Savior** now and escape hell—or will you bow down to Him as **judge** then?

2. Second, if you are a child of God, who do you live for? Have you taken up your cross—are you dying to self—and following Him? Will you hear, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant?”