

DATE OF MESSAGE: October 16, 2016

MESSAGE TITLE: It Takes Humility to Maintain Unity

SCRIPTURE: Philippians 2:1-11

KEY TRUTH

Followers of Jesus are called to live in unity in order to work together in the Gospel mission. In this passage of Scripture, we learn that unity will be destroyed without humility.

GETTING STARTED

Unity is a gift from God, which we as believers must work to maintain. The Holy Spirit produces unity in believers who serve together for the common purpose of knowing Christ and making Him known. Unity is absolutely necessary in a culture where divisions in the church can occur quickly over matters of opinion. We protect unity best when we humbly honor others as more significant than ourselves and when we cling to what the Bible teaches about the person and work of Jesus.

OBSERVATION

Read Philippians 1:17-18. Do you think Paul had in mind those who preached Christ out of selfish ambition when he wrote this section of his letter to the Philippian church?

What according to verse 2 would complete Paul's joy?

In verse 3, Paul urges the Philippian believers to reject vainglory. Look up the definition for vainglory to more clearly understand the kind of lifestyle Paul denounced here. Write out some of the synonyms for this word and consider what each word means.

Paul uses the example of Jesus in verses 5-8 to show the stark contrast between vainglory and humility. What words and phrases best describe the humility of Jesus in this passage?

How did our Heavenly Father respond to the humility of Jesus? What did He bestow on Jesus?

How will every person ever created one day respond to the honor the Heavenly Father bestowed on Jesus?

APPLICATION

Paul uses the word 'mind' three times in this passage. What does 'having the same mind' imply about unity in our church? Does this passage leave room for believers to disagree with one another?

How do we arrive at the place where we have the mind of Christ that Paul describes in verses 5-8? Is Paul giving us an ideal to shoot for or a realistic lifestyle to adopt?

Why is humility necessary for unity? Isn't unity a matter of insisting that everyone think and behave the same way I do? What's the difference between unity and uniformity in the church?

Purpose this week to consider someone more significant than yourself in a specific way. Ask God to help you do this.

PRAYER

Dear God, help us empty ourselves of self-preservation and self-interest so we take on the mind of Christ in pursuit of unity. Don't let us play it safe! We will follow you as you lead us to risk our safety and comfort for the sake of others.

SHARE POINT

Read and review the application questions. Share with someone in your life how God's Word is changing you into a growing disciple. Encourage that person to do the same. That person could be a family member, a friend, a co-worker or a neighbor.

COMMENTARY NOTES

2:1-2 Four if statements in this verse form the basis of Paul's appeal. These phrases express conditions that are assumed for the sake of argument. Both Paul and his readers will be inclined to believe the truth of these conditions. Paul reminded them that their steadfastness completed God's call on his life. Four actions on the Philippians' part explain what Paul meant. Two verbs translate the Greek word *phrono* -thinking and focusing. Beyond mere 'thinking', this addresses values. The Philippians were to value the same way the same thing and the one goal. Between these two, Paul included shared love and feelings.

2:3-4 These four habitual actions reveal themselves collectively through another four attributes. Rivalry or conceit recalls the problem Paul condemned. Humility, the antidote for wrong attitudes, results in considering others as more important than oneself. Additionally, humility considers the interests of others.

2:5-11 This is one of the most difficult passages in the Bible, prompting various theories attempting to describe what Jesus gave up in coming to earth. The text illustrates Christian humility. Because of its rhythmic character, it is often considered an early hymn, including two stanzas – verses 6-8 and verses 9-11.

2:5 The phrase, "have this mind among yourselves" commands the church to value Christ's character as a model.

2:6 The key thought of this verse is that Jesus did not consider His own interests, thus allowing them to dominate his actions. The word 'form' suggests His complete deity. Equality with God indicates His coequality with God and separate personality.

2:7-8 The phrase 'He emptied himself' is much debated. Theologians ponder what Jesus emptied Himself of. It is certain that He did not divest Himself of deity or its attributes. Two statements accompany the verb.

2:9 It was precisely Jesus' humiliation that became the grounds for his exaltation. By humbling himself on the cross out of love, he demonstrated that he truly shared the divine nature of God who is love. God raised him to life and highly exalted him, entrusting him with the rule of the cosmos and giving him the name that is above every name. This name is not specified here, but many think it refers to the name Yahweh, God's personal name which in the Septuagint is regularly translated as the Greek Kyrios or Lord. In any case, Paul meant that the eternal Son of God received a status and authority that had not been his before he became incarnate as both God and man. Jesus' being given this name is a sign that he exercises his messianic authority in the name of Yahweh.

2:10-11 While Jesus now bears the divine name Yahweh, he is still worshiped with his human name, Jesus, since it was in the flesh that he most clearly displayed his divine glory to the world. This astounding union of Jesus' diviner and human natures is reinforced by the allusion to Isaiah 45:23 in the words 'every knee should bow...and every tongue confess', which in Isaiah refer exclusively to Yahweh. The fact that these words can now be applied to God's messianic agent, Jesus Christ is Lord, shows that Jesus is fully divine. But the worship of Jesus as Lord is not the final word of the hymn. Jesus' exaltation also results in the glory of God the Father. God gives Jesus messianic dominion over all creation, and everyone will one day rightly give praise to him as their Lord.

SOURCES CONSULTED

ESV Study Bible

Serendipity Bible for Personal and Small Group Study

