

In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:

*⁶ Who, being in very nature^[a] God,
did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;*

*⁷ rather, he made himself nothing
by taking the very nature^[b] of a servant,
being made in human likeness.*

*⁸ And being found in appearance as a man,
he humbled himself
by becoming obedient to death—
even death on a cross!*

*⁹ Therefore God exalted him to the highest place
and gave him the name that is above every name,*

*¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,*

*¹¹ and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2:5-11 NIV2011)*

Sermon Theme: Have the Mindset of Jesus

Anyone who has worked in the service industry knows how important perception is. A manager is sure to train the new employees to remember that even if you don't like what you are doing, at least make it look like you are. I wonder how often we have that same mentality when serving each other. "Remember, service with a smile."

But what is that smile covering up? What thoughts are running through your mind? Someone says, "I'm eager and willing to serve." When they might really mean is, "I have to do this and am under obligation to say this." You might hear, "I'll help in any way possible." Which might be secret code for, "I'll help except for in the following ways...you can find someone else to do that." What about, "Just let me know how I can help."? Do you mean it? Or are you hoping and praying that they don't actually take you up on that offer.

What is your attitude, your mindset when you are asked to serve and when you serve? Do you see it as an opportunity and privilege or almost an embarrassment while thinking someone else could be doing this? Is it willingly or forced? Is it eager or indifferent? Do you actually want to do it? Or, are you just doing this so you can get something out of it and people will quit bugging you? On this Palm Sunday we see the attitude of a king on how to serve. Paul teaches us to have the mindset of Jesus.

Understand who that was riding into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday and his mindset. This is Jesus, the Son of God from eternity. There was not a moment when he stopped existing as True God. But, as Paul explains, Jesus did not consider equality with God

something to be used to his own advantage. In other words it wasn't something for him to forcefully take or hold onto. He did not regard equality with God as an excuse from the suffering and the death he was looking ahead to in a few short days. Rather, Jesus made himself nothing or emptied himself.

How did he empty himself? Paul says, Jesus took the very nature of a servant. He became a slave to God's will; obedient to him and his plan. He came to serve not his own desires, but to serve in the place of others. In order to serve for you, Jesus who is true God was made in human likeness. Like a human being Jesus got hungry. He had emotions. We see him weeping at the grave of his friend Lazarus. He grew tired and needed rest. He felt pain. He matured and grew. He was tempted just as we are. He has our likeness. To make sure his humanity is abundantly clear Jesus had the appearance of man as well. But don't think of this that he just looked like a human being or that his humanity was a mask to cover his being true God. When someone looked at Jesus they automatically assumed that he was a human being. He had flesh and blood. In fact, he was quite ordinary looking. Isaiah 53 shares with us that nothing about Jesus' appearance would have led people to him. He was rather insignificant in his outward appearance.

But that wasn't enough. No, he humbled or lowered himself even further becoming *obedient to death, even death on the cross (v.8)*. For the Roman citizens who Paul was writing to in Philippi this would have been a great offense. The scum of society are executed in that way. It would have been shameful even to be associated with someone who was executed like this. For the Jews who read this it would be just as bad. They knew the Old Testament where God curses anyone who is hung on a tree. Yet, in spite of all this, Jesus lowered himself to not only die like a human being, but to endure the shameful, cursed death of the cross. The taking on of flesh, the nature of a servant, the dying, the death on the cross all of it was done for someone else.

And that's the mindset we are to have. Now, it's not like we have a problem with serving or the thought of being humble. We know we should do it. If asked if you would be willing to help someone, I think the majority of people would at least say, "Probably." Of course this all depends on what the helping all entails. There are obviously certain areas where you are unable to help whether it's because it is beyond your expertise or your capabilities. It's better to be honest about your own limitations than unnecessarily lead someone on and possibly make the situation worse. But how often, instead of being honest and upfront about our service and willingness to help, we say we are willing, but really have little intention to carry through with our actions? Or, we say we want to help, but never follow through because life gets busy and stuff happens?

But even more important is the mindset. Are you humble in your service? Or are you trying to lift yourself up hoping that someone will notice all the work that you have done and see what a great servant you are? Are we really all that willing? Instead of looking for opportunities to serve are you insistent that you've put your time in already, you've sacrificed so much? "Now it is someone else's turn. Besides, I'm just so busy," one might think. Being humble means making yourself lower than someone else. In our relationships it means putting them before you; bowing to their wants and needs. But when an argument comes up, I'm more focused on wanting to win than the needs of the other individual. I want to put them in their place which is below me.

The reason why we struggle with serving in more than mere outward actions and words, why we struggle with being humble and lowering ourselves is quite simple: I'm selfish. Really, we think too highly of ourselves and put too much importance on making sure that our own easily inflated egos are not injured. On top of all that you feel that you don't always receive the respect that you rightfully earned. Your work goes unnoticed—so what's the point? But then another reason is that we can be quite awful at being realistic with ourselves and what we are. We can get so focused on me, what's best for me in my situation. Then if someone or something doesn't quite fit into our own plans, we are quick to say the things that people want to hear to protect the perception. But if it doesn't fit into what I want, if it's not going to benefit me, then why should I want to do it? Including, and especially following God's will. The reality: I'm selfish. And because I'm selfish and do not follow God's will, why would Jesus want anything to do with me?

The mindset of Jesus? Notice **he** didn't consider to use his advantage, **he** made **himself** nothing, **he** emptied **himself**, **he** chose to become a slave and become true man, **he** humbled **himself**, **he** was **obedient** to death. No one twisted Jesus' arm to go to Jerusalem riding on that donkey. He told his disciples to find it because he knew his work was about to come to a mighty crescendo on the cross until he was finished with the task. No one forced Jesus to go to Jerusalem. He knew the horrifying humiliation that he would endure in a short time. And still he went. He heard the songs being sung about him, but he didn't let them distract him from going where he would be berated and abused with insults, mocking, and ridicule. He knew he was riding to his death. And he chose to do it. For us who puff ourselves up, inflate our egos, who serve our own desires, Jesus willingly rode into Jerusalem for you and me. He humbled himself to lift you up from the pit of selfish sin. He lowered himself so that you would be raised from the grave of death to life with him. He took on your likeness claiming your sin for himself so that you would be given his likeness of perfection and holiness. Jesus who is true God and true man did this all for you. Jesus had to come to be true man to suffer and to die in your place. He had to lower himself so God's saving plan would be carried

out. But this doesn't take away that he also had to be true God so that his life and death means something for you.

Therefore, because Jesus did fulfill God's saving plan, God *exalted* or lifted him *to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father* (v.9-11).

But it doesn't always seem that way. We don't bow to him in following his will but often follow our own. Instead of having the mindset of Jesus we fall into that selfish mindset of me. Instead of proclaiming what he has done, we leave that for at church where it is supposed to be done. Not in our "normal, everyday" lives. Instead of shouting our praises to him even in church, it's mumbling along with responses and singing of hymns because someone might hear you, you might say something incorrectly, or you might hit the wrong note. Why do we act like this? Be honest with yourself. Isn't it linked back to that selfish attitude? Isn't it because I'm selfish and self-focused that instead of making sure the visitor or individual who hasn't been here in some time is comfortable, I want to be comfortable. Instead of going out your way to show love and care, you don't want to stick out too much. Instead of proclaiming, I'm afraid of being looked at as one of those "bible-thumping Jesus freaks." I want to be able to fit in with everyone else. It starts already at a young age in grade school and you can watch it get worse as a child grows and often doesn't get better as we get older.

When there is the temptation to focus on "me" to be selfish, look away from yourself and see what Jesus willingly did for you. Paul gives us this early Christian hymn in Philippians for a model of what to follow. And it's this model that teaches how to love one another. It shows us the very love Jesus had for you that brought him to want to lower himself. It's that love of Jesus that compels us, moves us because he died for all that we might live for him. He was exalted by God and now Jesus lifts you up as well. With his name he has given you a new name—child of God, bought and paid for with his death on that cross. He is your king who died for you and lives so that you will live with him. We sing, "Hosanna, Lord, save us," knowing that there will come a time when that king comes again. This time not in humility riding on a donkey. He will come riding on the clouds. His procession won't be palm branches and cloaks but with the trumpet call of God ushered by the angels. And all will know that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. Until that time, humbly serve one another and have the mindset of Jesus. Amen.