

ONE ANOTHER

Cultivating Christ-Centered Community

LESSON SIX



THE FRUIT OF HAVING THE MINDSET OF CHRIST IN YOUR RELATIONSHIPS WITH ONE ANOTHER

- Being able to see others through Jesus' eyes of love
- Loving your neighbor as yourself; caring for the needs of others without expecting anything in return.
- Being others-centered rather than self-centered; taking as much interest in others as in yourself, your desires, and your opinions
- Responding as Jesus would to conflict and hardship – to those who disappoint, hurt, and betray us
- Showing mercy rather than passing judgment
- Choosing downward mobility so others have more; living sacrificially in order to benefit and bring freedom to others
- Learning what it means to have a love that keeps no record of wrongs, does not delight in evil, always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres

IN YOUR RELATIONSHIPS WITH ONE ANOTHER HAVE THE MINDSET OF CHRIST JESUS

To preface our “one another” text for this week (Phil 2:5), let’s first consider the words and actions of Jesus in John 13:12-17.

*When Jesus had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. “Do you understand what I have done for you?” he asked them. “You call me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord,’ and rightly so, for that is what I am. **Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.** Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.*

It’s a very personal thing to have someone wash your feet. More than that, in that setting it was a task that you normally did for yourself, or one that a slave did for you. It certainly wasn’t something you would expect from the one you believed to be the Messiah. For a free person to wash someone else's feet meant that he or she was assuming the position of a slave. The only reason someone would do this voluntarily was to show complete devotion to another person.

And yet there Jesus was, washing their feet, doing for them all what none of them would ever have done for each other. Jesus insists on washing the feet of Peter, knowing full well that Peter will deny him to save his own skin. What’s more, Jesus stoops to wash the feet of Judas, knowing full well that Judas has already conspired to betray him. And the rest of them would abandon him and run for their lives when the crucial moment came.

Jesus then tells his disciples that they are to serve one another in the same way that he has served them. His example suggests that loving as he has loved means taking the role of a servant, caring for the needs of others without expecting anything in return. His example suggests that we are to do this not only for those who treat us well, but even for those who disappoint and hurt and betray us (E. Johnson, “John 13:1-17”).

This is the kind of attitude that Jesus said would be the defining mark of those who claimed to follow him. It is the willingness to humble ourselves to do for one another what we would not normally do. It is the decision to give ourselves away for the sake of one another. It is the commitment that our lives are to be lived not just for ourselves, but for the benefit of one another (A. Brehm, “Tough Love”).

HAVING THE MIND OF CHRIST

“In your relationships with one another have the mindset of Christ Jesus” Philippians 2:5

Paul writes, “May the mind that is in Christ Jesus also be in you” (Philippians 2:5). This is the truest depth of our Christian tradition, what it truly means to be a disciple of Jesus. We are called to recognize, surrender to, and ultimately be identified with the mystery of God utterly beyond all concepts, all words, and all designations. This is our destiny.

— James Finley

Richard Rohr reminds us that for Jesus, “discipleship” is about being in an intimate, loving, and challenging relationship, much like that between parent and child: “There is a unique nature to the healthy parent-child relationship, and each person has a role to play. Ideally, the parent employs the gifts of experience and knowledge to care for, nurture, and protect the child. In turn, the child can depend on and trust the parent for sustenance, well-being, and guidance in a world of unknowing. Discipleship follows that sequence. First, we must learn how to be God’s children, allowing ourselves to receive love, to be loved, to be cared for, and believed in, so that we can be entrusted to go about our “Father’s business” as Jesus did (see Luke 2:49).”

We are entrusted to go about our “Father’s business” just as Jesus did, and this business is concerned not only with *right belief* but also, and perhaps more so, with *right practice*. So how do we go about this business? How do we put on the mind of Christ? How do we see through his eyes? How do we feel through his heart? How do we learn to respond to the world with that same wholeness and healing love?

This week we focus on having the mindset of Christ in our relationships with one another — a way of life characterized not by selfishness but by humility, not by hoarding but by giving, not by serving our own interests but by serving others, just as we have been served by Jesus.

Read Philippians 2:1-5

In Philippians 2, Paul seeks to describe and encourage the appropriate kind of “mind,” thinking, or attitude for the Christian community, for those “in Christ” (2:5). This “mind” is really a life-style of love and humility, as the preceding verses indicate (2:1-4).

Complete my joy by being like-minded and having the same love, being united, and agreeing with each other. Don't do anything for selfish purposes, but with humility think of others as better than yourselves. Instead of each person watching out for their own good, watch out for what is better for others. Adopt the attitude that was in Jesus Christ.

What if we all lived like this? Imagine a world where each human being strived for Philippians 2:2-5 ... how would things look different? It begins with you, and me, and us together as a community. We are all on this journey together. How we use our words and spend our actions affect those around us.

We have come from many different places and differing locations, but we are all attempting to walk in the same direction - toward the one Savior who has come toward us. Paul encourages the church to focus upon our originating cause, our great mission - to allow Jesus Christ to gather us, to overcome our boundaries and divisions and to be one in Jesus Christ. In other words, to show the world what Jesus can do.

HAVING THE MIND OF CHRIST

“In your relationships with one another have the mindset of Christ Jesus” Philippians 2:5

Read Philippians 2:6-11

So, what exactly is “the mindset of Christ”? As Paul goes on to describe, “...he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant...” (2:7) and “...he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death...” (2:8). I like the way Anthony Smith succinctly describes the significance of these verses, particularly in the context of Roman society:

We tend to think of humility as something good. But in Roman society, people didn’t behave like that. If you were someone important, with a high status, then you shouldn’t be doing the dirty work! In Roman society, everyone knew where they were on the ladder. And everyone knew how they should behave. If you were at the bottom, you shouldn’t behave as if you were at the top. And if you were at the top, you shouldn’t behave as if you were at the bottom. But what Paul says in 2:5 is completely counter-cultural. He says everyone should behave as if they were down there, and as if everyone else was above them. As citizens of the heavenly empire, Paul says we should have values that are completely different to the world around us.

We might disguise it in different ways, but we still have that ladder, and we still know where we sit on that ladder. Depending on your background, your nationality, your age, your education, your job, your health, your shape, your size, your abilities... But Paul says no, those things don’t matter. You should all treat one another as if you are at the bottom, and as if the other person is higher up the ladder. And this, says Paul, is because we are united with Christ, and because of Christ’s example.

So in the rest of the passage Paul tells us about Christ Jesus. **How did Jesus display humility? In this way: out of obedience to God, Jesus was willing to give up his status and his reputation.** There are three verses that describe Jesus going down, and then three verses describing God lifting Jesus up.

So, first, Jesus went down. He started off with the highest status imaginable. He had the status of God. You can’t get any higher than that. But he didn’t cling to that status. Instead, he emptied himself of all status, and did the equivalent of going from being the greatest to being the least, by taking on flesh and becoming an ordinary human being. **But that wasn’t all. Jesus went even lower, and took the most shameful status you could possibly imagine.** His obedience to God took him to the point of death. And not just any death, the most humiliating death imaginable, death on a cross. Crucified criminals were the threats to national security, the enemies of the people.

Jesus voluntarily went from the top of the ladder to the bottom, out of obedience to God. He went from a position where everyone would have looked up to him, to a position where everyone would have looked down on him. Such self-humiliation would have been shocking to people in that culture. **But what does God think of that kind of self-humiliation? The last three verses of our passage tell us:** ‘Therefore God exalted 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’ (2:9-11).

— A. Edward, “The Mindset of the Heavenly Empire (Sermon on Philippians 2:1-11)”

HAVING THE MIND OF CHRIST

What is Jesus' attitude and mindset? As we've seen, it's humility and servanthood. Jesus invites us to come and be his disciples by faithfully following his lead. To be disciples of Christ means conforming our lives to his. So, what does this mean for us today?

1. Strive to be like-minded and have the same love, be united, and agree with each other (2:2)

Just before his crucifixion, Jesus prays that the church would “*experience such perfect unity that the world will know that you sent me and that you love them as much as you love me*” (John 17:21). Paul insists on humility, mutual concern, and service. Each member of the body of Christ contributes to every other. Each part serves the other. Each one has a lead part that no other part can play.

2. Don't do anything for selfish purposes, but with humility think of others as better than yourself (2:3)

In contrast to the surrounding culture, Paul urges the Philippians to do nothing out of selfish ambition, but rather to think of others as better than ourselves. He calls this attitude “humility”—which is not the same thing as low self-esteem or thinking ill of oneself. Humility refers to putting others first and consciously seeking what is best for others rather than what is best for oneself. This is closely connected to what Paul means by “love” (Rom 12:10; 1 Cor 13:4-7).

Selfishness and its relatives — envy, jealousy, conceit, pride, and arrogance — have no place in Christ's attitude toward us. By extension, as followers of Christ who seek to have Christ's attitude toward one another, these things have no place in our relationships. Paul says that Jesus Christ “*though he was in the form of God...[he] emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men*” (2:6-7), so when we try to assert our “rights,” whatever those might be, think of Christ. He had every right and authority to bring down legions of angels to stop the crucifixion; but instead “*He did not retaliate when he was insulted, nor threaten revenge when he suffered. He left his case in the hands of God, who always judges fairly*” (1 Peter 2:23).

Our participation in the life-giving love of God begins with Jesus before us, humbling himself and us. It is in pouring ourselves out in love as Jesus has done for us that we become able to function as his servants, his sent ones, his friends, reflections of his light in the dark world God loves.

3. Instead of watching out for your own good, look out for what is better for others (2:4)

Humble people honor others by making the others' needs as real and important as their own. They're the kind of people that others look forward to being with because they enjoy what each person brings to the table. Their humility is an invitation for others to join in common tasks for the common good.

Think about how Jesus did these things and consider what it would look like (1) to have one's own life and the life of the church modeled after the life of Jesus; (2) to display an attitude of humble service, such as Jesus demonstrated by washing the disciples' feet; (3) to treat one another in such a way that loving them is more important than life itself; (4) to treat one another with love even if it is difficult, or if we can't see the outcome, or even if doing so does not make sense.

This week, seek to become more aware of your own pride and self-focus and be intentional about emptying yourself of those things so that you are available to meet the needs of others. Use the pattern of Jesus that we see in Philippians 2:6-11: Although you could do _____ [self-centered action], you choose instead to do _____ [self-giving action], taking on the form of servant, even to the point of sacrifice, for the benefit of another. At the end of the day, let God do the exalting (James 4:10).

DISCUSSION

1. As you look back on your life, who are some people who modeled humility for you? How did you recognize true humility in them? What do you admire about humble people?
2. (See John 13:1-17) Why would Jesus wash the feet of his disciples? What sorts of reasons could Jesus have used to not wash the disciples feet? What kinds of neighbors are we probably more reluctant to serve? Are we only obligated to serve people who “deserve it”? If not, what does that change for us?
3. When Jesus says to his disciples, *“Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you”* – what, exactly, is Jesus calling his followers to do? Why is it necessary for Jesus to emphasize that the servant is not greater than the master, that the one who is sent is not greater than the one who sends (v. 16)?
4. How might Jesus’ openness to deep friendship (and the hurt that comes with that) – and his commitment to unconditionally love and honor others – serve as a model for us in our own relationships? Who has modeled this for you...and what did you learn?
5. Given your understanding of *why* we follow Jesus example, *what* does that look like today? What are some practical ways that you can love and prefer others in your home, work, or church above yourself? (Think about those whom it is hard for you to love). If the character of God is defined by self-sacrificial love, how can you embody that love for the people around you?