

Clothe Yourself in Humility

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Preacher: Dave H

[0 : 00] This is a sermon from King's Church West Northean. Corinthians.

So open your Bible near the back. If you find a book ending in eons, you're pretty close to Philippians. We're going to be in Philippians chapter 2 a little bit later. And we've been in Philippians for a few weeks, as you know, if you're a regular here.

And there's two themes that run through the book. One is unity and one is humility, which is why we've called this series Unity and Humility. And we're going to touch on both of those themes again today in the passage.

Unity was a massive issue in the early church. Because you had such vastly different groups of people thrown together. So you had all the Jewish people with their rituals and their laws and just their way of doing life.

And then the Gentiles who were vastly different. And then you had the Romans and the zealots and the fishermen and the teachers of the law. All of these groups thrown together into a community called the church and told to get along.

[1 : 28] And not just told to get along, told your brothers and sisters now. Your family. It would have been a massive culture shock to those groups. There's a picture of us at a wedding.

This was a few months ago. We got invited to some friends of ours to their daughter's wedding. And they're a strict Muslim couple. And it was so different to anything we've ever experienced.

You know, in terms of sort of standing out like a sore thumb. We were the only white family. The only non-Muslim family. Everything was different to any wedding we'd been to. The food was different.

The way the food was eaten was different. The dress was different. The toilets were different. I kid you not. What else? Even the men and the women were totally separate.

So for the entire day, there was one venue for the men. And the men celebrated and socialized with the men. And the women were in a different building celebrating with the women. They only mixed right at the end in the car park.

[2 : 30] So everything was different. Because it's a totally different culture. And it just gave me that, I don't know, just a reminder of what it must have been like for some of these people groups to mix. The Jews were so different to the Gentiles.

The zealots were so different to the Romans. And suddenly these are all thrown together and told, right, now guys, you need to get along and work out your differences. So unity comes up again and again throughout the New Testament.

And I guess for us, we're not Jews and Gentiles and Romans and zealots and fishermen. But, you know, we're pretty different. You look around the room. You don't have to tell me, but some of us will have different political opinions to others.

Different backgrounds, different tastes, different educations, different jobs, different opinions on how to do life. And as a church, we're thrown together and told, be united, be a family.

So unity is really important. And one thing that kills unity is pride. Pride. So often in the New Testament, Paul will speak about unity and then he'll speak about humility. Because he knows that pride is the thing that's going to kill unity.

[3 : 37] Because when we start to think that we are right and that we're more important than others, that our way is the right way, that's not going to work if you're trying to build unity. So we're going to talk a bit about unity.

We'll also talk a bit about pride, which gets in the way. We're going to play a video. This is funny. It's about pride. It's sort of, we're going to touch on some of it as we go through. I think it will make you laugh. But don't take it too seriously.

Great. I mean, I don't think any of us are probably that blatant in our pride. But, you know, pride's a condition of the human heart that we all wrestle with. This idea that we're better than others, that we're more important, that the way that we think is the right way.

Paul's going to challenge that in the passage we're about to read. So, yeah, Philippians chapter 2, if you have a Bible. And we're going to read the last section of the chapter.

But I just want to read a couple of verses right at the start just to kind of set the scene. So we go to verse 3. Paul says, make my joy complete.

[4 : 40] So verse 2, make my joy complete by being like-minded. So be like-minded. Be on the same page with each other. Be like-minded. Have the same love.

Be one in spirit, one in mind. So he's talking about unity. Be united. And in verse 3 he says, Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but rather in humility value others above yourself.

Not looking to your own interests, but each to the interests of others. I think that's, I mean, that's basically a definition of humility. You know, don't do anything out of selfish ambition.

Value others above yourself. Look to other people's interests, not your own. He's basically saying put other people first. So he kind of introduces that at the start of the chapter.

And then you'll be very familiar with the next section, which is basically a description of Jesus, who I guess is the best example of humility we have. Paul's basically saying, be humble, live like this, put others first.

[5 : 42] And by the way, remember Jesus, this amazing example that gave up everything, went to the cross, valued others above himself, looked to the interests of others. So he's kind of holding up Jesus as an example.

And then the bit we're going to read, which is at the end about Timothy and Epaphroditus. When you sort of first read it, when I first read it, it read a bit like travel plans. Paul's basically saying, I'm going to send Timothy here and Epaphroditus there.

But I think in the context, he's using them as another example of humility. He's saying, I want you to put other people first. Remember the example of Jesus. And also look at these two guys, Timothy and Epaphroditus.

They are also great examples of humility. So have a look for that as we read. So we're going to read verse 19 through to the end. Okay. Paul says, I hope in the Lord to send Timothy to you soon, that I also may be cheered when I receive news about you.

I have no one else like him who shows genuine concern for your welfare. For everyone looks out for their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ.

[6 : 50] But you know that Timothy has proved himself because as a son with his father, he served with me in the work of the gospel. I hope therefore to send him as soon as I see how things go with me.

And I'm confident in the Lord that I myself will come soon. But I think it's necessary to send back to you Epaphroditus, my brother, co-worker and fellow soldier, who's also your messenger, whom you sent to take care of my needs.

For he longs for all of you and is distressed because you heard he was ill. Indeed, he was ill and almost died, but God had mercy on him and not on him only, but also on me to spare me sorrow upon sorrow.

Therefore, I'm all that more eager to send him to you so that when you see him again, you may be glad and I may have less anxiety. So then welcome him in the Lord with great joy and honor and honor people like him.

Because he almost died for the work of Christ. He risked his life to make up for the help you yourselves could not give me. I think I put a few of those verses in red.

[7 : 51] So thanks, Regan. I think it highlights this thing that Paul's talking at the start of the chapter about putting others first, being concerned about others, valuing others. So he says things, look, Timothy, he shows genuine concern for you, for other people.

He talks about Timothy has served with me. I'm hoping to send him to you. I mean, Paul is in prison. Timothy is Paul's closest friend and co-worker. Surely Paul would love to keep Timothy with him.

But he's saying, no, I want to send him to you. You know, I'm valuing you above myself. And then Regan, the next one. You sent him, ironically, to care for me. And now I'm going to send him back to you to care for you.

And Epaphroditus longs for you. He's distressed because, that's interesting. I mean, Epaphroditus almost died, but he's more concerned about how the Philippians are going to feel knowing that he's ill.

He almost died for the work of Christ. He risked his life. So Timothy and Epaphroditus, they're both examples of servants who, it says, they served people. They gave up their own ambitions.

[8 : 55] They were valuing others. They were concerned for others. It's, again, I think just great examples of what we're being challenged to live like. Okay. I want to challenge us.

Regan. I want to put up, I don't know what to call this, maybe a barometer. Okay. So, imagine that you're on one side of this scale. And then we're going to put other people on the other side of the scale.

And Paul says, or he challenges us about our ambitions, how we value people, and looking to others' interests, not just to our own.

And I wonder where you would put yourself on that scale. When you're sort of making decisions in life, are we thinking more about us, and how it affects us, and whether it's good for us?

Or are we thinking more about others, how it affects others, the impact on other people? I think that's really hard. Well, I don't know. Maybe it's just me. Because when I signed up to be a Christian, I sort of signed up to God being first.

[9 : 57] Yeah? I think we all probably agree with that. So, when you become a Christian, you're basically saying, God, we're going to put you first. So, if the verse read, value God above yourself, or look to God's interests above your own interests, I would be okay with that.

Because that would sit with me okay. The fact that it says other people, that I'm to value others above myself, and put other people's interests ahead of mine, that's much more difficult.

Paul's basically saying there's kind of an order. You know, God's there. When we became Christians, maybe we thought it was God and then us. But actually, it's God, others, and then us.

He wants us to value others and put others ahead of ourselves. Isn't that hard? I mean, others is quite a broad term. So, I guess it encompasses our work colleagues, our neighbours, our church family, our biological family.

Putting others, it's like in the small print of being a Christian, putting other people ahead of ourselves. There's a quote, this is quite a nice quote, we'll leave it up for the rest of the talk, by, I think it was Rick Warren, but I think he was quoting C.S. Lewis.

[11 : 05] So, you can kind of find it under both people's names. He said that humility is not thinking less of yourself, it's thinking of yourself less. I'll read that again.

And humility is not thinking less of yourself, it's thinking of yourself less. Humility is thinking more of others. And I think that's really important, isn't it, when we talk about, you know, putting others above us.

It's not that we're putting ourselves down, and it's not that we don't have any value, because actually that's not true, God says we have huge value, and that we're loved, and we have purposes in our life. It's just that we've now got to put others into the equation, and think about how it affects them, and how we can put others first.

I don't know, maybe, does this feel challenging? I certainly felt challenged as I read these verses, to live more humbly, to kind of think how I'm impacting others with what I'm choosing to do, or choosing to gain.

I want to finish. We're going to respond, we'll have a bit more worship in a moment. There's another verse in the New Testament that talks about humility. We'll start with Paul again.

[12 : 14] So, Paul in Colossians chapter 3, he says this, he says, as God's chosen people, holy, dearly loved, clothe yourself with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience.

He says, clothe yourself with humility. So, I guess the imagery is, you know, we're putting on, we're clothing ourselves in humility. The reason I think it's interesting is Peter says exactly the same phrase.

So, 1 Peter chapter 5, Peter says, clothe yourself, all of you, with humility towards one another. Because God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.

I found it really interesting that Peter and Paul, the two most prominent church leaders in the early church, both used the same phrase. Clothe yourself with humility.

Don't know, maybe it was a Paul phrase, and Peter heard it, and started using it, or maybe Peter used it first, and Paul picked it up, or maybe it was a Jesus phrase that was just in circulation. But they both say this thing, clothe yourself with humility.

[13 : 21] So, I made a little prop, just to help you remember. So, care to see a Vox fan last night? Paul and Peter, they both say, clothe yourself with humility.

Put on humility. It's almost like it's a conscious decision. You know, just like when we're dressing ourselves in the morning, we're choosing what we wear. He says, put on humility. You know, choose each day that you're going to put others first, that you're going to value others above yourself.

You're going to look to other people's ambitions. You're not going to have selfish ambitions. Clothe yourself with humility. So, I guess my challenge, your homework, if you like, you know, maybe this week, over your breakfast, or on your commute to work, or whatever it looks like for you, or if you have a quiet time in the morning, why don't we think, God, you know, I'm going to choose to put on humility this week.

I'm going to choose to make that decision to put other people first for the rest of this day. I want us to respond.

We're going to stand, and in fact, why don't we stand? Let's all stand, and I'd love to pray for us, and then we're going to sing a song. We're going to sing a song, which you may know, it's quite an old song called The Servant King, and the reason I love it is it basically talks about Philippians 2.

[14 : 42] It kind of lifts up Jesus as this amazing example of humility, but then the final verse talks about let us learn how to serve, each other's needs to prefer.

So it kind of really ties in with this. So let us pray, and then we'll respond. Father, I thank you that you set us a great example of humility on the cross, and I just pray for all of us, because we all wrestle with pride.

It's just a condition of the heart that we have, and I just pray you'd help us, help us to put on humility, to clothe ourselves with humility, to prefer others like yourself, like Timothy, like Epaphroditus.

Help us to choose to put others' needs and concerns ahead of our own. I pray you'd help us with that in Jesus' name. Amen. So let's sing, and as we're singing, why don't you pray?

Keep praying in your heart. God, help me to be more humble. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[15 : 44]