

The Servant King

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Preacher: Luke R

[0 : 0 0] This is a sermon from King's Church West North. And we are currently in the New Testament book of Philippians, so Paul's letter to the Philippian church and if you've been here the last couple of weeks you'll know we've been looking at chapter one! and now we're on to chapter two together so if you've got a bible with you do open it with you or your bible app and hopefully the the verses will be behind us great thanks Dave so i'm going to get straight into it i know we've not got lots of time so let's go for it and we'll read Philippians chapter two verses one to eleven here we go therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ if any comfort from his love if any common sharing in the spirit if any tenderness and compassion then make my joy complete by being like-minded having the same love being one in spirit and of one mind do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit rather in humility value others above yourselves not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others in your relationships with one another have the same mindset as Christ Jesus who being in very nature God did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage rather he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant being made in human likeness and being found in appearance as a man he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death even death on a cross 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 let's just pray quickly Lord Jesus we proclaim that you are God and you are an amazing incredible wonderful Lord Lord you are just so worthy of worship and praise and Lord we've been doing that this afternoon and Lord as we read your word we just pray it would create more worship more wonder more praise to you thank you Lord amen so today we're going to explore these verses together and I have drawn the opposite of the short straw drawn the long straw I suppose in that this is just an amazing piece of scripture isn't it if you have read much of the Bible before if you're a Christian you'll know these verses well they're some of my favorite verses of scripture so all we're going to do today is just really simply go through verse by verse so if you've got your notes and it says what are the main headings sorry there are no headings

I'll just go through it verse by verse I've got a croaky throat from being at school teaching for the last few weeks so bear with me me so verse one let's look at that again therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ if any comfort from his love if any common sharing in the spirit if any tenderness and compassion so the apostle Paul who've already said is the writer of the letter to the church in Philippi I think he uses an interesting word here maybe strange word if I was writing this letter I don't know if I would use this word it's just two letters long but every time I read this verse I think that's an interesting choice and it's the word if the word if so use it four times and it's a little bit confusing I think by using the word if it sounds a bit like Paul could be doubting that the Philippian Christians are encouraged by knowing Jesus it sounds like he might be a bit hesitant by is the Holy Spirit really at work is he sceptical about you know are they showing compassion and tenderness to one another it's an interesting choice of word isn't it but it got me thinking that actually the word if we use it all the time in our conversations and stuff and it can be really a powerful word so you will have heard it used like this before if you're really my friend you'll help me if you truly love me you'll understand if there's any hope at all we have to keep trying if can be used in lots of different ways and the apostle Paul used it in a really powerful way so what does the word if do he says if you have any comfort from his love that's one example so here the word if Paul isn't doubting the comfort of the love of Christ do you know it's the opposite he is appealing to the reality of it and he's appealing to the Philippians experience of the depth and the riches of God's love really what he's doing when he uses the word if is he's getting them to reflect he's getting them

to think about it the spiritual reality of what Christ has done in their lives and what that really means for them and it's helpful for us too it's helpful for us when we read these verses to reflect actually we know Christ in us we know the encouragement and the comfort of being united with Christ it's the foundation of our faith what does it what's it really mean for your life what does it look like for you and the verses we're looking at today how does the encouragement and the comfort of knowing Christ affect the way that you interact with people around you day in day out Paul then suggests an answer in verse 2 he says make my joy complete by being like-minded having the same love being one in spirit and of one mind Paul is determined that these Christians in Philippi would continue to grow in God you might remember in chapter 1 it opens with a sense that Paul is really cheering on this church he's really encouraging them he's he's so determined and resolute that they would continue to grow in him in God you know that they wouldn't wither that they wouldn't fall back that they'd keep growing in God you know in verse chapter 1 verse 25 he says that he wants them to progress and have joy in the faith to know that progress and joy in the faith and it got me thinking do you know for us we're not in Paul's time what does progress look for us look like for us what does progress in the Christian faith really look like and as we'll see in chapter 2 progress in the Christian faith really looks like love it looks like love for one another it also looks like unity and it looks like humility love unity and humility

growing in God progressing in him knowing him means verse 3 to do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit the word conceit basically means when you think far too much of yourself you know when you're far too proud of your achievements or things that you think you're good at and the verse gets us thinking about what's going on inside these the deep motives that we have the heart behind our words and our actions to grow in God and to progress in him means in humility valuing others above yourself verse 4 not looking to your own interests but to the interests of others that is what progress and growth in God looks like it looks like love and unity and humility and for many of us whether you'd say you're a Christian or not we can easily begin to believe the story that's around us in our culture that progress and growth is actually to do with personal improvement whether that's your work or your finances you know climbing that ladder to get to the place you think you deserve or maybe we think progress is about the image that we project so it might be about what we wear or our social media and how we project ourselves but is that the kind of growth that God really wants for us is that the kind of progress that is actually good for us

I think God has something better for each of us and that is love and unity and humility and Paul sums up with his prayer in chapter 1 verse 9 he prays that the church there would abound in love it's a great prayer to pray for one another isn't it that we would abound in love so for Paul this love for one another which is expressed in the ways that you see in verses 1 to 4 it was grounded in a greater love the love of Jesus Christ so you know the radical love that we've heard about and it is radical because I think it's incredibly unusual that you meet people that put the interests of other people first that value other people more highly than they do themselves do you know that is challenging isn't it to value someone else more highly than you would value yourself that is radical love and it's do you know in Paul's day and in our day that kind of love is incredibly rare however there is one place that we can see it and it is the life of Jesus Christ and he is the he's the supreme example of love and the supreme example of serving one another we're just going to spend a couple of minutes looking at another sort of theme that Paul brings out here that comes through the New Testament and it's this funny theme of imitation imitation so it's not about doing impressions of people but it's this word imitation all of us will know that kids love to imitate don't they so often at our table at home or in the classroom at school you'll have kids like repeating what the other person says and they'll just keep doing it and keep doing it and keep doing it until someone says stop copying me and then it all ends in tears sometimes it might be you know sadly they might be impersonating people mocking people and that can be really upsetting but imitation actually has a really good and healthy side to it whether you're a kid or an adult whether we realize it or not all of us are imitating all of us are copying people around us it's part of being human isn't it that we mimic we copy the behavior of people like our parents when we're growing up or our peer groups that is really how we learn to act and behave and you know imitation can be a really positive thing when we imitate the right people the apostle Paul often encouraged his followers the people who speak into the churches to imitate him it sounds a bit proud doesn't it a bit conceited like we talked about before but I don't think it is at all you know in two Philippians two Thessalonians verses chapter 3 verse 9 he says we offer ourselves as a model for you to imitate in 1 Corinthians chapter 4 verses 15 to 17 he says in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel therefore I urge you to imitate me he

says that timothy will remind you of the way of my way of life in christ jesus we'll see later in philippians chapter 3 he says join together in following my example my example and just as you have us as a model keep your eyes on those who live as we do my favorite example of paul saying this kind of thing is the simplest one so this is the one just to remember 1 corinthians 11 verse 1 follow my example as i follow the example of christ he talks about imitation a lot a lot paul saw that following an example imitating someone living for jesus is actually crucial for growing in god he called christians to do this not because paul wanted to gather followers but actually that he believed it would point people towards jesus

and help them to follow jesus and it got me thinking for my life has that happened do you know have i found myself imitating people around me and i'm sure probably i have in ways are not good you know when you're at school and you've got your bunch of mates some of them are good influences some of them bad if you've got kids you'll be seeing that for your own kids probably and it's a total mixed bag in the church and in life growing as a christian since i put my faith in jesus i've i found probably that whether consciously or not i have begun to imitate people around me and i could tell you about people you know when i was a teenager and i first came to faith or maybe in my 20s when i'm sort of growing in god but actually i questioned myself and i thought who am i imitating right now do you know if paul is saying to me you know imitate paul as he imitates christ who am i imitating and you know no pressure but i actually think it's you guys i think i'm imitating you and i'm not going to name any names i don't want to embarrass anybody but i do think for myself that being part of a church community has been foundational you know it's so it's so important when i see when i actually experience people welcoming me into their home you know you know and they say come around you know have a meal whatever it is that hospitality points me towards christ it's such a precious thing when i hear about you guys sharing the gospel with a friend or a colleague or something like that that points me towards jesus that refreshes me and it sharpens me and encourages me when i meet people in the church who are faithful in prayer that always just encourages me to pray you know and it points me towards jesus so when we talk about imitating i think it starts here doesn't it you know and i think if you are someone perhaps you've just started coming along to church i would just i would just so encourage you to be to be part of a christian community i think we only imitate the people that we know well i don't want to imitate someone if i don't really know them because i don't know where that's going to lead me but if i know someone well if i see god at work in their life i want to imitate that person it it leads me towards jesus so let's be that kind of church where we are building one another up and and imitating one another as we follow him and when we talk about imitating or following someone's example that is the sense that we get in philippians chapter 2. Paul is showing the believers the example of jesus so that they would in turn imitate jesus in worship and in gladness from verses five oh sorry verse five of philippians 2 this imitation essentially it doesn't start with what the people do it's not necessary about their behavior their action actually starts in the mind so verse five it says in your relationships with one another have the same mindset as christ jesus the same mindset as christ jesus how do we have that mindset you know that's amazing isn't it how do we get that you know you will have you probably have a friend or maybe a sibling or something and do you know when you say a sentence and they end it that's because they're on your wavelength isn't it they know your mind and we're to have the mindset of jesus how do we get that well to be honest i think it's just like a close friend or a sibling i think we really only get the mindset of jesus if we if we really know him don't we to know him closely and i think you know that comes from reading his word the bible it comes from listening to his voice spending time with him in prayer as we get to know jesus we begin to know his mind we begin to know his heart and we begin to

[16 : 47] understand how it can revolutionize the way that we interact with other people how we even think about other people it changes our motives knowing jesus changes our heart and our mind and in our scripture there's a sudden change here so it goes from this focus on us as the christian community the philippian community to a focus on jesus and it looks at his supreme example of love and humility and service um some commentators call these next verses the the hymn of christ like a song do you know paul is is really writing something that's very poetic it's a stirring poem about jesus in his pre-existence and his incarnation and his death his resurrection his ascension and it really is the centerpiece of the whole letter of philippians and it's to be honest one of the most magnificent bits of all of the bible isn't it now you could look at this next part in lots of different ways but when i was preparing i read a helpful bit of advice and it it was just this that this this hymn of christ was written by paul not to create theological debate that was not his reason to do

it many theologians have debated it over and over and talked about the ins and outs of the truths expressed but he wrote it to encourage humility and love he wrote this part to encourage humility and love so i think as we're reading it let's have that in mind so from verse five and six it says to have the same mindset as christ jesus who being in very nature god did not consider a quality of god something to be used to his own advantage here it uses the word nature so that sometimes in your bible it might be translated form and it means to possess the characteristics and qualities the true and exact nature of something and it's roughly equivalent with the next line where it says having equality with god the son of god is and always has been god but that's not paul's emphasis i don't think the remarkable thing that paul is emphasizing is that jesus even though he had all of this privilege this position this power he didn't hold on to it you know he didn't hold on to it greedily as something to be kept and exploited for his own advantage instead he had the mindset of service of being a servant verse seven says rather he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant being made in human likeness now in this verse paul is not saying that jesus gave up his divine nature and somehow became less than god but he what paul is doing is stressing that you know all the privileges that were rightly jesus's as the king of the universe he gave them up to be born an ordinary jewish baby boy born in bethlehem whose life was headed towards the cross you know he had every right to stay in a position of power but his love drove him to a position of weakness and it was for my sake and for your sake miracle miracle miracle miracle miracle miracle miracle miracle miracle miracle he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death even death on a cross so you know it's remarkable that the son of God would take on human form and enter into a broken world but he actually went further than that he went all the way to the cross and in the Roman world in which he was living crucifixion it wasn't just a way of getting rid of people it was the ultimate indignity it was a

public statement by the powers Rome that the person being crucified was beyond contempt meaning they were so vile or so low in value that they weren't even they were beneath consideration really crucifixion was of course physically excruciating but it was mentally degrading it was humiliating no other form of death could match crucifixion as an absolute destruction of a person and yet Christ chose to go to the cross Christ was crucified for you for me he died in our place verse 9 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 it's amazing isn't it by humbling himself to the cross Jesus demonstrated that actually he was God because God is love and he humbled himself because he loves you he loves the Philippians he loves every Christian that's walked this earth and it took him to the cross so therefore the Father raised him to life and exalted him and gave him this status and authority that at his name every knee should bow we were singing that this afternoon weren't we every knee should bow before him but do you know just to finish even with this exalted state seated at the right hand of the Father it's interesting that Jesus doesn't keep that glory for himself all of what we've read about is to the glory of God the Father even in his exaltation Jesus remains this model of loving service he is our supreme example isn't he now I've rushed through it because it's 20 past four but I'd love to to just pray for us with along these themes so let's just go be before God and pray thank you Lord Lord we thank you for this wonderful part of the Bible that helps us to see you for who you are God that you are the servant king Lord I thank you that you came to serve not to be served that you gave your life as a ransom for many thank you that includes me thank you that includes everybody here you gave yourself for us Lord we just proclaim that you are highly exalted you are so worthy to be praised you are alive Lord Jesus and you are ruling and you are reigning we put our trust in you and Lord I pray for our church I pray that we would imitate you that we would look to you that we would follow you help us to do that with one another that we would see it in each other's lives Lord give us the power by your Holy Spirit to do things that we couldn't do on our own in Jesus name Amen