

Park Road Baptist Church 15<sup>th</sup> August 2021  
Order of Service & Semon

**We come to worship** (Words by John Leach)

From different lives:

**We come to worship**

From good weeks and bad weeks:

**We come to worship**

Bringing great times and painful memories:

**We come to worship**

Needing healing, needing peace:

**We come to worship**

With hope in our hearts:

**We come to worship**

To the Almighty God:

**We come to worship**

To the King of Kings:

**We come to worship**

Together:

**We come to worship**

**Song** All my days (Stuart Townend)

**Song** How Marvelous 'I stand amazed in the presence' (Chas. H. Gabriel)

**Bible reading** Philippians 2:1 – 11 (Michael Kennelly)

**Prayer**

**Song** Speak O Lord (Keith & Krysten Getty)

**Song** Lord, I lift your name on high (Rick Founds)

Sermon (Unity & Humility)

This morning we continue our study in Paul's letter to the church at Philippi and we are in Chapter 2 verses 1 – 11 which is one of those fabulous passages that will stretch our hearts and our minds in equal measure – so I hope you don't mind being stretched this morning.

The key words of this passage come in verse 5 where it says, ***'your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus'***.

So, this morning we are going to discover things about our attitude which I find very challenging. But let me begin with a fabulous story about Thomas Edison, the man who invented the lightbulb. (1)

This story goes back to December 1914 where Thomas Edison's workshop in New Jersey is burnt to the ground. (2) All his life's work was invested in his workshop was destroyed. And his son, Charles Edison finds his father standing outside his workshop as the glow of the embers turned his face red and with his grey hair blowing in the wind.

Charles said, ***'my heart ached for him. He was no longer young and everything was being destroyed.'*** Then Thomas Edison said to his son, ***'go and get your mother because she will never see the likes of this again.'***

The next morning as they were walking around the charred embers of his life's work, the 67 year old Edison said, ***'there is great value in disaster – all our mistakes are burned up and we can start again.'***

What a wonderful attitude. I had no idea Thomas Edison was such a great guy. Can you imagine losing everything you've poured your life into and saying ***'there's great value in disaster because we can start again.'***

Attitude really is so important.

In Philippians Chapter two, Paul is going to reveal some tensions within the Philippian church. In fact, every church has some tensions within it. There are no exceptions.

And so, Paul is going to deal with some these things and he's going to talk about our attitude towards each other and he's going to talk a lot about Christian unity.

I want to read verses 1 – 4 from the Message because I think it gives us a good feel for this,

***(3) 'If you've gotten anything at all out of following Christ, if his love has made any difference in your life, if being in a community of the Spirit means anything to you, if you have a heart, if you care—then do me a favour: Agree with each other, love each other, be deep-spirited friends. (4) Don't push your way to the front; don't sweet-talk your way to the top. Put yourself aside, and help others get ahead. Don't be obsessed with getting your own advantage. Forget yourselves long enough to lend a helping hand.'***

The first thing that Paul spells out for us is the requirements for Christian unity – so let's take a look at that.

Paul is such a passionate Christian that he just grabs your attention right away. And he pleads with this church to live out what it believes – isn't that so important – that we live out what we believe?

That's what Paul's getting at in the very first verse – did you notice that he uses the word 'if' 4 times? Take a look at it in your Bible.

If you're not in the habit of bringing a bible to church, can I encourage you to make that a habit.

These four little phrases that begin with 'if', are four incentives to pull together as a church family. So, he begins, ***(5) 'if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ.'***

What he's asking is, does being a Christian encourage you? Does being a Christian, help you get up out of bed in the morning and face the day ahead?

Because if it does, then this is how you are to live – and he will go on to talk about how we should live a little later on.

***(6) Secondly, 'if any comfort from his love'.***

Paul is asking, does the love of God embrace you and fill you during the darkest moments of your life? Do you find comfort from his love?

If so, then this is how you should live.

***(7) Thirdly, he says, 'if any fellowship with the Spirit.'***

Here, Paul is asking, has the Holy Spirit filled your life and brought you into the fellowship of the church?

Because if that's the case, then this is how you should live.

***(8) The fourth 'if' is, 'if any tenderness or compassion.'***

Paul is asking, has the love of God melted your heart? Are you the kind of Christian who just finds yourself caring for people in a way you didn't do before you were a Christian? You just have a heart for people in need and love reaching out to them.

So, Paul makes these 4 points;

If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ.

If any comfort from his love.

If any fellowship with the Spirit.

And if any tenderness and compassion.

Paul is fully expecting the Christians at Philippi to give a resounding YES to all of these.

So, they would say, yes, we have encouragement from being united with Christ and yes we find comfort from his love and yes we have fellowship with the Spirit and yes we are tender and compassionate.

And Paul isn't disputing any of that – his point is that if that is true, then it should lead to unity and humility.

And when it does show itself in unity and humility, Paul says it will make his joy complete.

Paul spells out what he means by Christian unity in verse 2 when he says we are to be **'like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind.'**

Christian unity would be a whole sermon in itself.

(9) So, let me just say that Christian unity does not mean uniformity. It doesn't mean we are all clones of each other.

We are not always going to agree with each other. And when that is the case, someone once said, **'we should learn to agree to disagree agreeably.'**

Christian unity involves a loving acceptance of those we disagree with.

In 4:2 Paul says, **'I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord.'**

I like how the Message puts that verse, **'I urge Euodia and Syntyche to iron out their differences and make up. God doesn't want his children holding grudges.'**

As a Christian community we are to be united in the truths of the gospel and we are to be united in our common purpose of bringing that good news of Jesus to a lost and needy world.

And, whether it's relationships within the church or outside the church we should always seek to express the unconditional love of God.

So, the 4 'if's' in verse 1 should lead to unity.

Secondly, they should also lead to humility.

When I read verse 3, I realize that I'm not qualified to speak on it. I don't think I have the right to challenge anyone to consider others better than themselves because I can't honestly say that's the life I lead.

But I can say this – it's the life that the apostle Paul led. He stands out in the whole of Scripture as one of the great examples of humility.

Let me give you 3 examples and they all build on each other.

(10) The first one is in – in 1 Corinthians 15:9 he refers to himself as the least of all the apostles.

Paul says, stand me up alongside all the great church leaders like James and John and Andrew and Peter and I'm the least of them all.

It would be a bit like me saying gather all the ministers in the EMBA and bring them here and put me at the back of the group because that's where I belong.

That's what Paul is I saying 'I'm the least of all the apostles.

Then he widens the net even further when he writes to the church at Ephesus (3:8) he describes himself as the least of all the saints.

So, it's not just the apostles but it's all of God's people. Line them all up and Paul says put me at the end of the que because that's my rightful place.

And then towards the end of his life when he writes to his good friend Timothy, his attitude is still the same (1 Timothy 1:15), 'Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners of whom I am the worst.'

So, get all the sinners in the world – there's rather a lot of them, isn't there? Gather then all together and put your minister at the very back because that's where he belongs.

That's what Paul is saying. It's incredible.

There is not a shred of pride in Paul's life – he truly believes that others are better than himself.

What a challenge that is for each one us.

And then Paul gives us the ultimate role model for humility.

He says, '***your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus***', and what follows is probably a 1<sup>st</sup> century Christian hymn which we will look at in 4 brief stages.

(11) Step 1 – What he was – truly equal with God.

***'Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage.'*** (v6)

So, Paul is saying that long before Jesus was born in Bethlehem, he existed in heaven as God. This is Paul's version of John's gospel chapter 1 and verse 1, 'In the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the word was God.'

In other words, Jesus was God, Jesus is God and Jesus will be God forever.

When Jesus came into the world, he was the perfect mirror image of God. So, when you read about the miracles that Jesus performed in the gospels, what you're reading about is the power of God at work.

When you observe the sinless life of Jesus, what you're seeing is the holiness of God.

When you see the compassion that Jesus had for others, you're witnessing the love of God being poured out on a needy world.

(12) Step 2 – What he became – a servant

***'He made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.'*** (v7)

In theological terms this is what is known as the incarnation. Jesus, the invisible God wrapped in human skin.

He made himself nothing – some translations say he emptied himself.

The Greek word means to deprive yourself of something that is rightfully yours.

I like the way J. B. Philips puts it, he says, 'he stripped himself of all privileges.'

I don't know if this is a helpful illustration or not but imagine the highest ranking military officer in the world – I don't know who that is or what they look like but just imagine this person.

Their uniform is immaculate, and their jacket is decorated with all kinds of honours and various stripes down each sleeve and everyone stands to attention when they enter the room.

Now, imagine that highest ranking officer in the world taking off his uniform and putting on an old pair of jeans and a t-shirt then getting down on his hands and knees and start polishing the boots of each rank and file soldier.

Then walking out the door and down the street – and nobody would even recognize who it was – there would be no show of respect, no standing to attention and no salute. In fact, nobody would even recognize who it was.

That's Jesus, the invisible God in human skin who strips himself of all his privileges, yet carrying within himself, the highest rank of all.

By the way, by coming as a servant, Jesus is not disguising who God is and what God is like, he is actually revealing the true nature of who God is and what he's like – Jesus, the servant king.

(13) Step 3 – What he chose – the cross

***'And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!'*** (v8)

There are many reasons why I believe the Bible and here's one of them.

If you or I were writing the Bible, we would never have a god who would willingly and knowingly die on a cross.

That would just not be part of our script.

The cross was the cruelest form of execution ever invented and was reserved for the worst of humanity.

Yet, Jesus chose the cross.

And the wonder of the cross is that those who crucified Jesus thought he was getting the punishment he deserved, but in actual fact, Jesus was taking the punishment that they and we deserved for our sin.

It was all part of God's plan of reconciliation and salvation.

(14) Step 4 – What he gains

***That's in verses 9 – 11, '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.'***

This is Jesus and his exaltation and coronation. God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name.

At the time, Nero was the greatest name because he ruled over the greatest empire. And at every rally, whether it be sporting or political or military, people would bow down before him and declare that he was god.

His name was to be praised above every other name – and Paul says, no, you need to stop that because there is a name that is above every other name, a name that is greater by far, the name of Jesus.

And with an eye to the future, Paul says that a day is coming when everyone will bow the knee and confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

And so, the question is not, will you bow the knee before Jesus and confess him as your Lord – the question is, will you do it today.

We either do it now for salvation or we do it then for condemnation.

**Song Cornerstone (Hillsong)**