

PHILIPPIANS: Picture Joy

July 7: Imitate Christ, Philippians 2:1-11: 1 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, 2 then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. 3 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, 4 not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

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

6 Who, being in very nature 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 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.

Intro:

I. Value Others Above Yourselves: Rather, in humility value others above yourselves (v3)

A. Value Christ above all, because you have experienced:

1. Encouragement from being united with Christ
2. Comfort from his love
3. Common sharing in the Spirit
4. Compassion and tenderness

B. Value your mentor in the faith: *Make my joy complete*:

1. By being ***like-minded***. Paul wants unity in this church in the worst way. Apparently disunity, fighting, and discord was the order of the day in many of the churches. We read of this explicitly in the letter to Corinth, but there are many indications in the NT of the internal trouble in the churches. This grieved the heart of the Apostle Paul perhaps more than any other burden he had to bear. When he listed his sorrows and trials, he brought them to a climax with this final burden: (*2 Cor. 11:28*) ***Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches.***

2. ***Having the same love***. He has already mentioned the love of Christ in verse 1: “comfort of his love.” This word is used only twice in the NT. It’s main definition is “a persuasive address” or an address of any kind. Love is a most persuasive address, I would say, that produces great consolation and comfort. The love we are to have for one another is the same love that Christ has for all of us.

3. ***Being one in spirit and of one mind.***

a. Paul has just used the term “spirit of Jesus.” He is about to embark on a stirring description of Jesus and his condescension on our behalf. Here he uses another rare word in the NT, *sympsychos*, meaning “Of the same soul or inner life.” The KJV translates “one accord.” Paul speaks here of the spirit of humility and service that Christ exemplifies.

b. “of one mind” uses the word *phroneo*. This little word is used 7 times in Philippians, more than anywhere in NT. It speaks to the understanding including self-understanding, mixed with humility and modesty.

C. ***Value others above yourselves***: this means:

1. ***Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit.***

2. Don't look to your own interests, but *each of you to the interests of the others*.

3. Relate to others with the mind of Christ: *In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus*.

D. How is it possible in this life to have such unity among a group of people? How do you get there, having the same love, being of one mind, in one spirit and one accord? Is it even possible to reach such a unity of purpose and spirit?

1. Everybody in the group is going to have to adopt this same concern and love for one another.

We are going to have to be in this journey together.

2. Everyone in the group will have to submit to a common purpose and goal.

3. Everyone will have to exercise the discipline that comes from that common purpose and overriding goal.

Paul uses an ancient hymn to amplify and explain what he is saying. This is a beautiful expression of the servanthood of Christ, his humility and condescension on our behalf. It may not be original with Paul. It may have been sung in the churches.

This hymn gave birth to a way of thinking about Christ as Son of God and Son of Man—kenotic Christology. The word *kenos* is used in Philippians 2:7. Here it is translated “he made himself nothing.” In the KJV he “made himself of no reputation.”

II. Have the Same Mindset as Christ Jesus (Philippians 2:5)

A. Jesus was in the *morphe of God* (Phil. 2:6). Later he is in the *morphe of a servant* (Phil. 2:7). The NIV translates this “the very nature of God” and “the very nature of a servant.”

1. This translation fits other places in the NT including Hebrews 1:3 where the Son of God is said to be **“the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word.”**

2. These and many other verses give rise to the ancient confession of the faith, that Christ Jesus was “fully God and fully man” these two natures being without division and without confusion.

3. These verses also give rise to the doctrine of the Trinity, that God has revealed himself to us in three ways, as Father, as Son, and as Holy Spirit. These three agree in one. We are monotheists who believe that God’s being may be infinitely complex rather than exceedingly simple. We confess the Deity of Christ as generations of Christians have done. As the Apostle John wrote (John 1:14), ***“The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.”***

B. Jesus “emptied himself” or “made himself nothing.” Here we have part of the explanation of his **Incarnation**. He laid aside his divine prerogatives. He did not stop being God. But he emptied himself of that reputation. He set aside omniscience, omnipotence, and omnipresence for a time in order that he might become fully human, tested in every way that all of us are tempted.

You can empty yourself, too. This is the mindset that we are to adopt. We should not be concerned about our own status and position, our own importance and credentials. These we can lay aside in order that God may use us for HIS glory.

C. He took “the very nature of a servant” (v7). This is the repeated theme of the NT. ***The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many*** (Mark 10:45).

You can do this, also. You can take on the very nature of a servant. This is the mindset of Christ. The heart of service is the heart of Christ. The symbol of our faith is the TOWEL. With it Jesus washed the disciples’ feet, leaving us an EXPLICIT EXAMPLE that he intends us to follow—do as he did (John 13:15). He quizzes the disciples on this point after he has washed their feet to make sure that they got it.

Only as you become a servant will you ever follow Christ.

D. ***Therefore God exalted him to the highest place*** (Phi. 2:9). The humiliation of Christ is followed by his exaltation. This is what it means for the last to be first. This is how the servant of all becomes the Lord of all. This is the GREAT REVERSAL that Christ says will surely come.

You can participate in this as well. Jesus taught this clearly in both word and deed. If you want to be the greatest, then become the servant of all: ***Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant*** (Mark 10:44).

Conclusion: The life of service, of emptying ourselves, of caring for the interests of others, of putting the interests of others before your own, is the life of Christ. This is the nature of love, and it is the nature of God.