

Not to **boast**... or anything... but I think I am a lot like the **Apostles**. James and John... especially... stand out in my mind. But maybe... **you** are quite a bit like them too.

Do you remember that toward the end of Jesus' ministry... an ugly... *competitive* spirit developed among the apostles...? It started when James and John... and their **mother**... attempted to get Jesus to promise them privileged thrones in the kingdom... One throne to Jesus' right and the other on Jesus' left. ... This would have made them the two most important rulers... after Jesus. ... But when the other 10 disciples caught wind of this maneuver... they were **indignant** at the two brothers. Matthew chapter 20 tells us the story. ... Harsh words and angry gestures were exchanged... Tempers flared! ... So Jesus called them together and said:

Matthew 20:25-28 (ESV)

...“You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. It shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be your slave, even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

Now... this **might** have been the end of it. ... But remember... we are seeing just how *SIMILAR* they were to you and I...

Several days later... when the apostles arrived in Jerusalem to celebrate the final Passover with Christ... the disciples were **still** going at it. ... Peter and John went to secure a room for Passover. Jesus had asked them to do this. ... But they had neglected to make arrangements for foot-washing. So...as the apostles wandered in... no one would *condescend* to perform this task... **that** was for the lowest of lowly servants. ... No one would volunteer for this *humiliating* job. How very human they were. How like us.

... .. So Jesus... Himself... got dressed like the lowest of household slaves and washed every one of the disciple's feet. ... Then He said... what you just saw Me do... is what I want you to start doing for each other.

Listen to these words of a poet named Robert Raines:

*I am like James and John
Lord, I size up other people
in terms of what they can do for me;
how they can further my program,
feed my ego,
satisfy my needs,
give me strategic advantage.
I exploit people,
ostensibly for your sake,
but really for my own sake.
Lord, I turn to you
to get the inside track
and obtain special favors,
your direction for my schemes,
your power for my projects,
your sanction for my ambitions,
your blank checks for whatever I want.
I am like James and John.*

Given our natural bent to be self-centered... it has always been difficult to live out the **directive** we saw last week in our study of Paul's letter to the Philippians... which **fortifies** the instruction Christ gave... Here is what we looked at last week...

Philippians 2:3-4 (ESV)

Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.

Both Christ... and Paul... present this... as though it is to be our *normal way of life*. ... But humility and others-directedness are **hard** for us. ... We

find it difficult in our most important relationships... both in the home... and among our Christian brothers and sisters... in the church.

We hardly even flinch when we see selfish behavior out in the world. It is so common. ... We see people often excuse selfishness... pride... or evil by claiming their **rights**. ... They think, "*I can cheat on this test; after all, I deserve to pass this class,*" ...or "*I can spend all this money on myself—I worked hard for it*" ...or "*I can get an abortion; I have a right to control my own body.*" ... But as **believers**... we should have a **different** attitude... one that enables us to **lay aside** our rights... in order to serve others.

One of the great myths of popular psychology... that has drifted into the church today... deals with impulsive behavior based on emotions. ... Many people feel that they **can't control** their moods or attitudes. ... But Paul doesn't accept the idea that Spirit-filled Christians are **slaves** to their attitudes. ... Christ Jesus had a particular attitude... and we are called to have the same.

If we say we follow Christ... we must also say we want to **live** as he lived. ...We should develop His attitude of humility... as we serve... even when we are **not** likely to get **recognition** for our efforts. ... Are you selfishly clinging to your rights... or are you willing to serve? ... Remember... you can **choose** your attitude. ... You can approach life expecting to be served... or you can look for opportunities to serve others.

What makes the difference... is a careful following of Christ. ... But... how is this possible for such sinful and selfish people like you and I... to

follow Christ in such self-less behavior...? ... C.S. Lewis once attempted to answer this very question. He provided a helpful description of how a fallible believer can be more like Christ amid the give-and-take of our every day lives... *“It helps”*... says Lewis...

“to pretend to be Jesus, just as a child might pretend to be a soldier or a shopkeeper. Just as the child's imaginary games help the child to develop skills that will later be useful as a real soldier or shopkeeper, so the ‘game’ of pretending to be Christ inevitably reveals to the believer places for improvement and guides the believer toward spiritual maturity.”

Lewis agrees that the minute we realize we are dressing up like Christ... we will discover ways in which our pretense could become reality. ... We will be embarrassed to discover thoughts... that Christ would not have had... and unfulfilled duties... that Christ would not have neglected. ... Those realizations... he says... should in turn prompt us to more complete obedience.

It would seem as though the “What-would-Jesus-do-?” movement started with C.S. Lewis... back in the 1940’s or 50’s...

Christians... we need to KNOW Christ... We need to be able to recognize the life that He is living inside every believer. We must identify the attitude of Christ that is **inside** of us... and submit to it. ... What we know and recognize of Christ inside of us... is the most important thing about us... because it determines the way in which we live... as we let Him fully live **in** and **through** us. ... So we need to recognize... and imitate... or submit to the attitude of Christ... which is there... through His indwelling Holy

Spirit. You see... Paul explains the Gospel as a glorious mystery... and then he writes:

Colossians 1:27 (ESV)

"...which is Christ in you, the hope of glory."

Now... one of the most succinct passages that NOT ONLY identifies the attitude Christ has in us ... but also calls for us to let it shine... is our passage of study this morning - Philippians 2:5-11.

Phil 2:5-11

Verse 5... The "mind" of Christ means the "attitude" Christ exhibited. ... "*Your **attitude** should be the same as that of Christ Jesus.*" So... the command literally reads: "*Let this (attitude) be minded in you over and over.*" ... The wording and grammar of the original writing (φρονειτη) ... shows that a humble... altruistic concern... must be a **daily practice** ... and that it must originate within a submissive will... which is **determined** to obey God. ... It is **not** something which God develops within the life of a Christian without his active conscious effort. ... It does not automatically occur in a believer's life... after so many years of being a Christian. ... It is also **not** achieved through a crisis that forces us to grow up suddenly and act responsible. The concept behind the verb (φρονειτη) ... is that of a mind... **fixated** ... (absolutely determined) ... on a specific purpose... not that of a casual thought... or accidental circumstances.

So... simply listening to a message like this... or reading this passage on your own... is not enough. ... It isn't enough that we acknowledge what Christ's attitude is... We have to energetically decide to make a sustained conscious effort to recognize the attitude of Christ... which is in every believer through the Holy Spirit... and submit our own attitude to it.

Because it is... as J. Vernon McGee wrote...

"You and I can't be humble. We can't be meek. We are not made that way. We want to stand on our own two feet and have our little say. All of us are like that. Don't say you are not, because you really are. None of us wants to be offended. None of us wants to be ignored. We develop hang-ups if we are brought up in such a way that we have been trampled on."

So let's look at the existing attitude of Christ that we need to consciously display ...

Philippians 2:5-6

"*Form of God*" has nothing to do with shape or size. The word "*form*" means "*the outward expression of the inward nature.*"

There are actually **two** words... that are translated into English as "*form*" in the New Testament. ... One word is (μορφη) which means "*the form which never changes.*" It describes the **inner essence** of a thing. ... The other word is (σκεμα) ... which is the **outward** form... which **does** change from time to time... and from circumstance to circumstance.

Let's illustrate these two words for a better understanding of a wonderful **truth** in this chapter. ... My own morphe is that I am human. But I also have a schema which is changing as I grow older. It even changes from day to day... when I change clothes. But my morphe... the fact that I am a human being... never does change. ... The **schema**... or *outward* form... is always changing. ... A person can go from a baby... child... a teenager... adult... to an elderly person. ... But they still have the morphe of humanity... ... However... their schema... or *outward* form - changes. ... Roses and tulips both have the morphe of flowers... but their schema... or outward appearance is different. (The schema of a tulip differs from the schema of a rose...)

Now... here is something that Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons... who deny the deity of Christ **miss**. ... The word that Paul uses for Jesus being in the **form** of God... is the word **morphe**. ... He was saying that Jesus' unchangeable... inner essence is divine. ... This is a strong declaration that Jesus is God. ... His outward schema **did** change... (He took on flesh as a human infant... and then grew into manhood) but He remained in His unchangeable nature - **God**. He was God when He was born in Bethlehem. He was God when He was 8, 18, and 28. He was God when He died and when He arose from the grave.

All that God is... Jesus Christ is... and ever shall be! He has complete **equality** with God... ... Christ was not simply God-conscious... nor was He simply **like** God... rather... He was "*equal with God*." ... Christ's equality to God extended to all of the essential attributes. ... The Son is just as holy... omnipotent... omniscient... and sovereign... as the Father.

Certainly as God... Jesus Christ did not need anything! ... He had all the glory and praise of heaven. ... With the Father and the Spirit... He reigned over the universe. ... But this verse states an amazing fact. ... He did not consider His equality with God as... (now get this...) as "something selfishly to be held on to."

Jesus did not think of Himself... He thought of others. ... His outlook (or attitude) was that of unselfish concern for others. ... This is "*the mind of Christ*"... an attitude that says... "*I cannot keep my privileges for myself, I must use them for others; and to do this, I will gladly lay them aside and pay whatever price is necessary.*"

A reporter was interviewing a successful job counselor who had placed hundreds of workers in their vocations... and they all seemed to be happy. When asked the secret of his success... the man replied:

"If you want to find out what a worker is really like, don't give him responsibilities—give him privileges. Most people can handle responsibilities if you pay them enough, but it takes a real leader to handle privileges. A leader will use his privileges to help others and build the organization; a lesser man will use privileges to promote himself." [PAUSE]

Jesus did not leave heaven reluctantly... At no time did He say... "*Oh, I just hate to leave heaven. I don't want to go down on that trip.*" ... He came joyfully. Hebrews 12:2 puts it "*...for the joy that was set before him... He endured the cross...*" He came to this earth with joy. ... He was not

releasing something that He wanted to hold on to when He came to this earth.

Jesus used His heavenly privileges for the sake of others — for *our* sake. We expect unsaved people to be selfish and grasping... but this does not need to be true of any believer... who has Christ inside of them.

Philippians 2:7

This verse has been at the center of a lot of controversy. ... How can God make Himself **nothing**...? Wouldn't that render Him **less** than God...? If anything is removed... He becomes **deficient**... and He would therefore no longer be God.

The word for “made Himself nothing” literally means... He emptied Himself. ... That sounds like Paul is saying that Jesus became less than God... that He gave up some of His divine attributes. ... But actually that is not what is being said.

Well... then... of **what** did Jesus empty Himself... when He came to this earth? ... I believe that He emptied Himself of the **prerogatives** of deity. ... He lived on this earth with certain limitations... but they were self-limitations. ... There was never a moment when He wasn't God. ... And He was not less God... because He was man... yet He emptied Himself of His **prerogatives** of deity.

Paul is stressing that Christ... Who had all the privileges that were rightly His as king of the universe... gave them up to become an ordinary Jewish baby... bound for the cross. ... Christ “*made himself nothing*” by **taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.**

While He had every right to stay comfortably where He was... in a position of power... His love drove Him to a position of surrendering the **independent exercise** of His attributes. By becoming man... He yielded His will to the will of the heavenly Father.

Then... it says that He took the form of a servant. ... There is that word again... “form.” ... And it is the same word that was used for Christ’s deity... “morphe.” So what is that telling us...?

The lesson is Jesus always **was** a servant. This never changed for it was the essence of His character. There was no play-acting. He was a genuine servant. Jesus did not pretend to be a servant... He was not an actor playing a role. ... *He actually was a servant!* ... This was the true expression of His innermost nature. ... He was the God-Man... Deity and humanity united in one... and He came... expressing His true nature... as a servant.

He came into this world as a working man... a humble man... instead of a man of high esteem. Not only did He humiliate Himself to become a human being... but He came among the majority... at the level where most humans are today. ... He was one of the little people.

The few shepherds and wise men... and even the multitude of angels... were a disgraceful turnout for the Son of God... when He came to this earth. ... Not only should **that** crowd have been there... but the whole universe should have been there. ... All of God's created intelligences should have been there. ... The hierarchy of Rome should have been there. ... There should not have been just a few wise men from the East. They should have come from the West... and the North... and the South. And the temple in Jerusalem should have been empty that day -- they should all have gone down to Bethelhem. But they didn't.

Why didn't He force them to come? ... Because He had laid aside His **prerogatives** of deity. ... He was willing to be born in a dirty... filthy place - - not the pretty... clean stable of Christmas pageants and Christmas cards. He was willing to grow to manhood in a miserable town named Nazareth. He was willing to be an unknown carpenter.

He could have had the shekinah glory with Him all the time... but He didn't. He didn't have a halo around His head as we see in so many paintings of Him. ... Judas had to kiss Him the night He was betrayed so that the crowd would know which was the man they were to capture. ... He didn't stand out from other men by some kind of inner light or glory around Him. ... He was a human being... but He was God manifest in the flesh. ... Is there any doubt... that He laid aside the **prerogatives** of His deity...?

After He had finished His ministry... He gathered His own followers around Him on His last night on earth... and He prayed a very wonderful prayer to His heavenly Father. ...One thing He said in that prayer was this:

John 17:5 (ESV)

And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed.

Notice this carefully: He prayed to have His **glory** restored. ... He did not pray to have His **deity** restored... because He had **never** given up His **deity**. ... But now that He is returning to heaven... He is asking that His **glory**... a **prerogative** of deity... be restored. ... Because... obviously He had laid **that** aside.

This is very heady stuff...! ... We will need eternity to wrap our minds around all this. ...The Sovereign Lord of the universe... ... He who existed...

- in eternity and perfection
- in glory and majesty
- in dominion and power

...stepped down and became a man. ... But more than this. ... He who was the Lord and Master of the universe... who deserved all the honor and service of all living creatures... took upon Himself the form of a servant. ...He became the Servant of men...not only of God... but the *servant of men*. ... Imagine!

- ⇒ The Lord whom we are to serve, came and served us.
- ⇒ The Lord whom we are to love, came and loved us.
- ⇒ The Lord whom we are to adore, came and adored us.
- ⇒ The Lord whom we are to wait upon, came and waited upon us.
- ⇒ The Lord whom we are to minister to, came and ministered to us.
- ⇒ The Lord whom we are to seek, came and sought us.

The great distance... between the majesty of Christ in heaven... and all of this humiliation of Christ upon earth... can **never** be measured. ... The amount that our minds are able to fathom would probably compare to a thimble full of water... beside the vast Pacific Ocean... of this magnanimous truth. ... But we are commanded to let the *same mind of humility* flow through us... and therefore... we have to contemplate the deep humility of Jesus Christ... and do our best to grasp... and practice it.

Philippians 2:8

The world often looks at “humiliation” as **forced *embarassment***. ... One dictionary cited this usage: "*Mother was humiliated by finding that she did not have enough food for her guests.*" ... Humiliation is seen as undesirable... and accidental... or unavoidable.

But a sovereign God cannot be humbled... because there is no one or nothing outside of Himself... that could force Him into that situation. However... Sovereign God can... and did humble Himself... as a free choice of His will.

Christ... has actually **elevated** the concept of humiliation...to a positive... holy virtue... which should be cultivated in the lives of all believers. He completely manifested it through His incarnation, earthly ministry, and subsequent death on the cross.

Many people are willing to serve others *if* it does not cost them anything. But if there is a price to pay, they suddenly lose interest. ... Dr. J.H. Jowett has said, "**Ministry that costs nothing accomplishes nothing.**"

If we are to submit to the mind of Christ that exists within us... we will not avoid sacrifice. ... We will live for the glory of God and the good of others... and if paying a price will honor Christ and help others... we will be willing to do it. ... But why...? Why are we far less likely to sacrifice for the cause of Christ... than many communists have been for their ideal...?

In his book *Dedication and Leadership*, Douglas Hyde explains how the Communists succeed in their program. A member of the Communist Party himself for twenty years, Hyde understands their philosophy. He points out that the Communists never ask a man to do a "mean, little job." They always ask him boldly to undertake something that will cost him. They make big demands, and they get a ready response. Mr. Hyde calls "the willingness to sacrifice" one of the most important factors in the success of the Communist program. Even the youths in the movement are expected to study, serve, give, and obey, and this is what attracts and holds them.

We are not like that... are we...? ... At a religious festival in Brazil... a missionary was going from booth to booth... examining the wares. He saw a sign above one booth: "Cheap Crosses." ... He thought to himself... "That is exactly what many Christians in the American church are looking for these days — cheap crosses! ... My Lord's cross was not cheap. Why should mine be?"

Jesus humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

Crucifixion was the ultimate indignity... a public statement by Rome that the crucified one was **beyond** contempt. ...The excruciating physical pain was magnified... by the degradation and humiliation. ... No other form of death... no matter how prolonged or physically agonizing... could match crucifixion... as an absolute destruction of the person. ... It was the **ultimate counterpoint** to the divine majesty... of what He had before coming to earth.

There is NOTHING that can compare to such an extreme contrast from the heavenly glories that Christ experienced... to the degraded human experience that He suffered. ... There is nothing that can compare... to what we might have to give up – NOTHING! No one can say... *“It’s unfair... God... what You’re asking me to do...!”* It just doesn’t wash! (I almost said, “God plays by the same rules...” But that would **not** have been true. He gave up so much more... that we will **never** be able to compare.)

God may have you and I be sacrificially humble... in some way. It might be in our future. ... But if it is... we need to know what our concluding verses demonstrate. ... These last verses demonstrate what Christ said in Matthew 23:12...

Matthew 23:12 (ESV)

Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.

GOD FAVORS THE HUMBLE ! ... And it is fitting that the One Who humbled Himself most deeply... the One Whose obedience cost the greatest imaginable self-denial... should be most highly exalted.

Philippians 2:9-11

I would like for you to focus on what just may be the most important word in these last verses. It is the initial word of verse 9 – “THEREFORE.”

Therefore... God has highly exalted Him. ... And in that little word... there is a mandate for you and I... to deny ourselves... and take up our cross... and follow Jesus... and give away our lives... for the sake of others who don't yet know God.

Why could the famed missionary... Hudson Taylor... say... after a lifetime of toil and suffering in China... "*I never made a sacrifice*"? It was because he understood the "*therefore*" of Philippians 2:9.

Missionaries like Hudson Taylor illustrate that there is power in leaving a lucrative career. ... But we don't have to go nearly as far as the 1800's to see it. Our own Mike and Stacey Riffle... who have gone out from among us to start an orphanage in Colombia... demonstrate the same power of the "therefore" in Philippians 2:9. There's the power to say farewell to family and friends. There's the power to agonize with a new language and new culture. There is power in loving those who keep coming onto your property

and stealing the pump that brings water into your home. There's the power to keep on and keep on and keep on in sickness and obscurity while most of your contemporaries back home have bought their nice houses and started their families and are starting to forget your name. The power to be a missionary and stay a missionary is in the "therefore" of Philippians 2:9.

And you may be called to experience the power of the “therefore” in Philippians 2:9... as you joyfully serve someone who is struggling with an addiction problem... here at the church during a Celebrate Recovery meeting. ... Maybe it's the deserts you prepare for them... a warm welcome you give them as they come through the door... or that you watch their kids in a loving and safe environment so they can be here. ... The power of the therefore in Philippians 2:9 might have you coming out on a snowy evening to listen to a child cite their AWANA verses...

Know this for sure: **GOD FAVORS THE HUMBLE** So...

Philippians 2:3 (ESV)

Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.

We must... of course... always remember that God does not expect us to obey Him... in our own strength. **He** works His obedience **within** us. Indeed... Paul will say **exactly this**... in a verse we will study next week – Philippians 2:13.