

Good Friday

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[0:00] It was the Scottish atheist philosopher David Hume who called humility monkish values.

! That was not a compliment just in case you were wondering. He was suspicious of humility! And he said that modesty is good if it does not go beyond the outside.

That means for him, your modesty should not impinge on your inner pride, which according to him is the ground for self-assuredness and ambition, which is also the mark of a worthy member of society. So to David Hume, humility is a vice because it does not produce valuable members of society. Now, Hume's point of view was the widespread and accepted view before Jesus established his church. And Christians started preaching and living out the implications of the gospel in the world. Even within the larger Roman Empire, humility, the Latin word for that is humilioris, it was considered a slur and a vice since it describes those who are lowly, those who are the underclass of society, bad people who cannot contribute anything to society.

But the Romans were not unique in this viewpoint. It was also the accepted wisdom of the whole known world. In fact, Aristotle, a Greek, his idea of a perfect man of virtue is the magnanimous man, the man who is better than everyone else and knows it. This is what Aristotle writes, the sort of person who does good but is ashamed when he receives it. For doing good is proper to the superior person, but receiving it is proper to the inferior. So this is Aristotle's idea of a good, perfect, magnanimous man. This is what you should describe to be. So this is the viewpoint. And I think oftentimes we have been so, maybe jaded is the word, but I'm not sure. We've lived under the Christian concept of humility and we've understand it to be a virtue, largely in our world. But I think in a lot of ways it isn't, even in the present world that we live in. We live in a world that has been influenced by Christian virtues. So we pay lip service to humility as a worthy trait, but we've lost sight of its true source. In our day, humility is a virtue, so we say. But in almost every practical way, what we really celebrate, even in our day, is self-promotion. We celebrate self-exaltation. We agree with Hume or Aristotle than we do with Augustine, who said, if you were to ask me, what are the instructions of the Christian religion? I would be disposed to answer always and only, humility. But this was not St. Augustine's invention. Better, it was the teaching of our Lord himself, who said, whoever humbles himself as a little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. It is this human trait that he exhibited before the Father that should mark us as well.

[3:48] As Paul says in Philippians 2, Jesus Christ did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but he emptied himself by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.

He humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. So the message of our age is that of self-love, self-gratification, and self-exaltation, with the myriad of things on offer to help you achieve it. Whereas the message which our Lord Jesus Christ exemplified and calls us to is that of love of God and neighbor, self-sacrifice, and humility. But alas, the message of our age has permeated the church. Jesus is no longer the example of the one who serves, but the one through whom you can meet all your need for your pursuit of happiness.

Although this self-focus has permeated some parts of the church, you will not find such theology anywhere in the Bible. God in the person of Jesus exemplifies love by lowering himself for our sake. And we see it in this passage in Luke 22 and in John 13, which gives us a deeper picture of this night in our Lord's life. Jesus instituted. Let's first look at the institution of the Lord's Supper in Luke 22. Jesus instituted this meal and he commanded us to remember it. Now the immediate context of the Lord's Supper is the Passover meal. And we can see some of the comparisons there.

[5:51] We can also see in the Lord's Supper the fulfillment of the Passover meal itself. Here are some things I want us to note. The first thing is that the meal is a family meal. Both the Passover and the Lord's Supper are meant to be eaten in a family context.

But Jesus has redefined family in his kingdom to be those who do the will of his father. Remember earlier in the Gospels when his mother and brothers came to him while he was preaching and ministering to people. And they said to him, your mother and your brothers are here. And he says, these are my brothers. These are my mothers. The people who do the will of my father.

So in his kingdom, consequently, the family of God is made up of those who come to the father through the son. Having been buried with him through baptism into death. In order that just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the father, we too may live a new life. Those are not my words. That's from Romans 6 verse 4.

[7:08] So we see there that it is a family meal. So the supper as instituted is a command to be kept by those who are in the family of God with Jesus as head of our soul.

And secondly, we ought to see that the Passover remembers. It's a remembrance and it commemorates the defining saving action of God's people in the Old Testament.

It's the deliverance from Egypt.

In the same manner, the Lord's Supper, this supper calls us to remember Christ's once for all atoning sacrifice.

We look back in remembrance and thanksgiving that Jesus humbled himself even to the cross. He carried our shame and guilt so that we might have life with God.

[8:31] So that we who were prodigals, slaves to sin and death might be set free and be made sons and daughters of God. So when we gather to eat the body and blood of our Lord, it is not a re-sacrifice.

Christ, one sacrifice of himself, once offered, was full, perfect and sufficient sacrifice.

It was a full, perfect, sufficient sacrifice offering and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world. That is why we receive it by faith and with thanksgiving, knowing that our deliverance is accomplished and secure.

Furthermore, the remembrance calls us to look forward to that time when our Lord will again drink with his redeemed. At the marriage supper of the Lamb of Revelation 19.

So every time we come to the Lord's table to eat, we are to remember his death and resurrection, which inaugurated his kingdom. And we are also called to anticipate with full confidence in his promise that that day is coming, that day when all things will be perfected.

[9:51] The church will be presented spotless, without blemish, bright and pure before her groom. Secondly, I want us to look at the foot washing that took place on this night.

Now, it's quite a wonder that as Jesus is instituting this meal, even as he's doing so, his disciples started to bicker among themselves about who is the greatest.

But Jesus sets down this example of greatness in his kingdom for them. Humility, not as the world defines it, not modesty for the sake of civility, but true humility, which thinks of others more highly than oneself, is the model Christ sets for us in the washing of the apostles' feet.

Jesus washing his disciples' feet reveals two significant things to us. Number one, I think it sets up a pattern for Christian conduct. And although the act of washing the feet would have embarrassed the apostles, did embarrass them, even scandalized them.

Remember what Peter said? Peter, being bolder than the rest of them, always says what everybody else is thinking. And in the John account, he says, no, Jesus, you can't wash my feet.

[11:19] Because it was a scandal that Jesus would stoop that low to such a menial task. But Jesus showed, even in doing so, he showed his disciples and he shows us, is upside down, that his kingdom is upside down from the world's.

Jesus says to them, the kings of Gentiles exercise lordship over them. And those in authority over them are called benefactors. But not so with you.

Rather, let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as one who serves. For who is the greater? One who reclines the table, or one who serves?

Is it not the one who reclines the table? But I am among you as the one who serves. This is the pattern of Christian conduct that Jesus sets for us.

Secondly, I think the washing of the feet of his disciples was also a display of his abiding love. A display of his abiding love for us.

[12:35] John 13 says this, that Jesus, having loved his home who were in the world, he loved them even to the end. This act of God prefigures the far greater sacrifice he will render the next day.

The disciples were scandalized by him lowering himself at their feet to do the task meant only for a slave. But they didn't know that the very next day he will willingly undergo a far more gruesome humiliation.

He will give his body to be stripped naked before the world, beaten and nailed to the cross. Jesus commands his disciples to follow his pattern of behavior and serve abasement for one another's good.

We are his servants and messengers. He is our master and he sends us into the world to live out true humility that springs from a true love of God.

So, when you feel your pride and dignity trampled upon in the church, when you are tempted to remind everyone of your value, can I encourage you to look to Jesus?

[14:01] Who, though being God, emptied himself of his glory, took on the form of a slave and washed the feet of sinful, prideful, obstinate disciples.

When Jesus tells them to do as he has done to them, he's not referring to the act of foot washing, per se, but I think he's referring to the example of his life among them, the life of self-sacrificing love.

God himself condescends to lavish his love on us in humble service and obedience to his Father.

And he calls us, his followers, to do so for one another and for the world around us.

We are to have this same mind of our Lord Jesus Christ. This means humble service, loving service for the good of others, even when, especially when, it is not seen or appreciated or reciprocated.

It means self-sacrificial outpouring of love for the benefit of his body, for the advancement of his kingdom and the glory of his name.

[15:19] That's the mark of greatness before God. He is the God who honors the humble, exalting those of lowly estate, and the proud he opposes and casts out.

That is great. Thank you.