

Humility: Aren't You Proud of How Humble You Are?

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[0:00] So let us pray. Speak to us and through us thy mighty word, O Lord, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. Please be seated.

Well, interesting. Friday, day before yesterday, I was out jogging in Baldwinsville. We live up there. And I came upon a Stewart's ice cream store.

Now, if you're from the Saratoga area, you know Stewart's is kind of like a burned dairy. And Stewart's is slowly invading central New York. So they were having their grand opening. They'd been open for about a week, but Friday was their grand opening.

They were selling gasoline for \$2.07 a gallon, and they were pouring it for you in your car. You could get an ice cream cone for 50 cents. Hot dog, 50 cents. Everything marked down. Scads of people. They even had a grand prize.

Well, this is kind of a grand opening here. We have no gasoline, no ice cream. I do have a grand prize.

[1:17] The winner, if your last name starts in QA, raise your hand. Oh, sorry. In the church, a grand opening is a dedication. It's a consecration of a space to God.

It's standing with the cross and coming against the forces of evil and saying, this is God's house. And that's what we're doing today. You have been worshiping here for a couple of weeks now. Today is the grand opening. Much work has been done to prepare this space. Many hands, many ideas all come together to make a space where we say to God, we love you.

This is your place. Many things will happen in this space. Baptisms, confirmations, weddings, funerals.

People will come to a saving relationship with Christ in this space. People will sit here with tears of joy and sorrow. This is our church.

[2:36] This is where we, as a family, meet God. But mostly what will happen in this space is weekly preaching the word of God and receiving of communion.

So let's preach the word. Now, Caleb has started a series of sermons on Paul's letter to the Philippians.

And if you have a Bible handy or if you have your Bible on your phone, please turn to Philippians. And I have been assigned chapter 1, verse 27, through chapter 2, verse 11.

So that's where we're going today. The title of the sermon is, Humility. Aren't you proud of how humble you are? Now, we each have kind of a shtick.

Muhammad Ali, who you know died this week, his shtick was, I am the greatest. Now, his life was very humble, but that was his shtick.

[3:48] All right. And then Billy Graham, his shtick is, I'm a sinner saved by the blood of Jesus. So where are you?

Probably most of us are somewhere in the middle. And God's purpose is to bring us over to the Billy Graham side. And that's what's going on in today's epistle lesson.

So we're going to look in that chapter, the two chapters. We're going to start with verse 27 of chapter 1 and give you a little review.

Kayla's already given you the review. Philippi, a city in northern Greece, was at that time called Macedonia. It was a major city.

It was a protector city on the road to and from Rome. And it had been settled by a lot of retired Roman officers, military officers.

[4:49] It was actually the city of Rome transplanted to Philippi. Same customs. Same beliefs. Same people.

Same people. The Jewish faith never really made much of a dent in Philippi. They never even had enough. You have to have a minion. You have to have ten men to have a minion.

They didn't have enough. So when Paul arrived in Philippi, he had to go out to the river where the women were washing their clothes and praying.

That was the Jewish community at that time. It was what we call hard stone preaching. And so, so Paul now, now we shift several years later.

Paul is now in prison in Rome and he's written this letter to his Philippians. He loved the Philippians. He loved all his churches, but he especially loved the Philippians.

[5:54] But the epistle to the Philippians has a nickname and that is Paul's love letter to Philippi. He just loved them. And so we're going to look a little bit.

Caleb last week preached up through verse 26. So I'm going to pick it up there on a line by line basis. In 26, he left off that you're rejoicing for me may be more abundant in Jesus by my coming to you again.

So he's in verses in verse 26. He had said, I'm going to come to you again. I'm going to come and visit again. Now, verse 27. He says, but let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I might hear of your affairs that you stand fast in one spirit with one mind, striving together for the faith of the gospel.

Paul is putting in that letter a little escape clause. He thought he'd be released from prison and come and visit them.

But just in case, he says, whether I come or whether I'm absent, I want to hear that you have stood tall for the gospel. Now, we don't know what happened when Paul was killed.

[7:19] We do know he was beheaded because he was a Roman citizen. We do know that that must have been around 65 or 66 A.D.

We have a pretty good idea that this letter was written about 61 A.D. We had about a five-year gap by the time he was killed. Some scholars believe that he actually was released from prison, probably did visit Philippi, probably went to Spain and preached the gospel, then was apprehended and brought back to Rome where he was killed.

But we don't know for sure. But we do know that he was saying to the Philippians, whether I come or whether I don't make it here, stand for the gospel.

That's what he calls us to do today. Stand for the gospel of Jesus Christ. And he says this over and over again to get the point.

One spirit, one mind, striving together for the faith of the gospel. And then verse 28, If you've ever had anybody persecuting you, the main thing they want to do is frighten you.

[8:51] They want to scare you. Abusers get a kick out of seeing how they have intimidated someone. Paul knows this. So he says, You don't have to be terrified.

You don't have to give them the payoff of seeing you afraid. Because you know you have salvation. What's the worst they can do to you? Kill you.

And you're going to bounce back. Oh, death, where is thy sting? He was taking the stinger out of the Roman government in Philippi.

Do you remember what happened to Paul in Philippi on that first visit? He got thrown in the husk. He got beaten badly. Thrown in jail.

And it was only the next morning. Remember what happened during the night? They converted the jailer. Baptized his whole family. Here's the Anglican speaking. Probably infants too.

[9:54] All right. Anyway. He had difficulty with the Roman leaders in Philippi. Paul is saying, You're going to have the same problem.

They don't like Christians in Philippi. And then finally, verse 29. For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for his sake.

Wait a minute. I didn't sign any contract about suffering. Isn't Christianity all just smiles? Is it?

Is it? I just broke my leg, but Jesus loves me. It's all fine. Seems like suffering is part of being a Christian.

It's how we deal with the suffering that makes the difference. But you are going to suffer, and I am going to suffer. We probably already have.

[10:56] In the world around us, I don't know if you've noticed, but it's a little more difficult to be a faith-filled Christian in our society than it used to be.

We are seeing government encroachment on an open expression of faith. In effect, we're being told, Go back into your hole and stay there.

We don't want to see you. Lawsuits all over the place. This group called Freedom From Religion, they just had a big rally in front of the Lincoln Memorial last week, and had thousands of atheists there, saying, We are going to stamp out religion.

Raising its head, Satan, this is the chance. We're going to do them in this time. This time we're going to win. Suffering for the sake of Jesus.

And finally, in verse 30, Paul says, Having the same conflict which you saw in me, and now here in me. So Paul's saying, Look, I'm in prison here, not in the Philippines, but in Rome, and you are here, not in the Philippines, but in Philippi, and you're going to be suffering as I am.

[12:19] Stand up to it. You will have the ultimate victory. So that's that first section of Philippi, verses 27 through 30.

The key is, then, back then, and now, we stand for Jesus Christ. You, church, have stood for Jesus Christ.

You've paid a price for that, haven't you? But you've stood for the faith of Christ. You've stood for gospel values. We pay a price for that.

You know, I think back to around the second century. I don't... Leroy, were you there then? I think back to the second century.

And, in the city of Lyon, in what's today France, the government decided to encroach upon the Christian community. They started by, you cannot have a job if you're a Christian.

[13:33] They second, began to make inroads into their taxes. You know they paid taxes back then? Can you imagine? They began to throw them out of their houses.

And finally, with the crowd wanting more and more, they began to punish them. There was a bishop at that time called Pothemus.

Pothemus was 90 years old. He forgot to retire. 90 years old. And he had a deacon, Sanctus, and a great woman of the faith, Blandina.

The story of these three is illustrative as to what happens when Satan decides he's going to win. Well, the good old bishop, the leader said, what you have to do, we know you're old, we respect your age, all you have to do is put some incense on the picture of the emperor and acknowledge him as a god.

You don't even have to renounce Jesus. Just worship the emperor. And the bishop said, I am a follower of Jesus. I can't worship another god even if I can still worship Jesus.

[14:57] Done. Dead. Deacon, Sanctus, would you renounce Jesus? I am a servant of Jesus.

I will not renounce him. Boom! Dead. Blandina, they kind of saved till the end. They had to warm up the bulls.

And so, on a particular day, the amphitheater was full of yelling people. And they brought Blandina into the arena with her 15-year-old son.

And the mayor said, at this time now, will you renounce Jesus? And she said, I am a Christian. I've done nothing wrong. Well, will you renounce him? I'm a Christian. I've done nothing wrong. The crowd came up into the arena.

[16:02] wrapped her and the 15-year-old in a net, hoisted the net up, invited the bulls in. And they had fun with her. And then, when the bulls had finished with her, they let Blandina down and her son, and then they stabbed her with a sword till she was dead.

Now, why am I saying that? It's so gruesome. Well, because you know that's happening today. In the Middle East, in Nigeria, in Somalia, it's increasing around the world.

Will this happen to us? Will this happen to our children or our grandchildren? We don't know, but we know that we are victors.

We do not need to be afraid. We are victors. We cannot let persecutors see us frightened. We must stand for the truth.

We've got, you know, I talked about Mahabat Alley and Billy Graham, and I don't want to use those characters, but I want to use a lifestyle. We have kind of two ways of living in this world.

[17:15] We have the earthbound way of living and the heavenbound way of living. The earthbound is what's in it for me. How high can I go? Who do I step on to get there?

how much can I accumulate? We know that that's certainly a limited view of success in life.

Because at some point, the earthbound person is going to be snuffed out.

And if I've got 15 billion dollars, it's going to be left for my family to fight over. Why are we so, why do we want to be a bishop?

Why do we want to be president? Why do we want to be the CEO? Part of that is good. It motivates us to do what is right. But every time we make another promotion, get more money, what do we look at?

The next promotion, the more money. John D. Rockefeller, well, how much would be enough for you? And he says, just a little bit more. more. That's kind of the earth bound view of life and we're all stuck in it.

[18:31] But the heaven bound view is all for Jesus. As Billy Graham said, I'm a sinner in need of being cleansed by the blood of Jesus.

Heaven bound life gives us freedom. God. It gives us a sense of who we are in the face of Jesus. I hate to tell you this, but Jesus does not care if you're the CEO or if you're a janitor. He cares about your heart. He cares about bringing you into his kingdom.

So that's what Paul is talking about in those first few verses. We need to stand tall for the gospel. for gospel values. But how do we do that?

I thought you'd never ask. Chapter 2, verses 1 through 5, standing tall in humility.

[19:40] Anybody ever have an ouchy tummy? Raise your hand. All hands rise. We all have ouchy tummies sometimes. When the ouchy tummy takes over, it takes over.

Nothing feels good after that, does it? While you've got that ouchy tummy, your toenails hurt. It's awful. It's just all bad.

For us to be healed, our whole system has to be in line for God to do his wonderful healing thing in our lives. Mind, body, spirit, all move in line with God's healing touch.

Whether that means a physical healing, we don't know. We pray it does. But what happens is we pray that God will so touch us that we will have the healing he wants us to have.

It's a wonderful thing. But sometimes, sometimes our body can work against itself. Do you remember when Jesus was at the pool at Bethesda and the lame man was sitting there and Jesus inquired and realized he'd been sitting beside the healing waters for 38 years.

[20:58] So we kind of looked at the guy and he said, do you really want to be healed? That's what happens to us. We sometimes get in the mode where we are nursing our pain, emotional, physical, or spiritual.

We just nurture that pain. What does a dog like to do when it's injured? Go off by itself. Don't touch me or I will bite you.

And that sometimes happens to us. Our body can work against itself. We're hearing a lot about transplants today. Almost anything can be transplanted in our bodies.

But there's a step two. And that is helping our body not to reject the transplant. Everything in our body says, that does not belong to me.

It's dangerous. I want to kill it. And so these anti-transplant dealy bobbies that go into our body help us.

[22:02] That's a technical medical term. They guide us, our whole body, back to acceptance of that transplant. That's what happens in our lives.

And the same goes for a parish, doesn't it? We are always on the edge of complete unity or complete division, depending on the day of the week and how we're feeling.

One for all and all for one sometimes gets lost in the frenzy of you did it to me, I'm going to get back at you. each side gains forces to go to battle.

Some people have stopped going to church because they don't like the drama. Well, guess what? Drama exists in all of life and it does exist in church.

But what Paul is calling for is for us to unify, to stand tall for the gospel in humility with one another, not driving out what could be healing in our lives.

[23:15] So in this five verses that we're going to read now, Paul speaks of the healthy church body, humility. He says, chapter 2, verse 1, therefore, if there is any comfort in Christ, if any consolation of love, if any fellowship of the spirit, if any affection and mercy, don't you love those words?

Those words are meant to produce inner peace in our lives. Church is really meant to bring us inner peace in a world that drives us batty.

Church is the place where we have the peace of Christ. Paul says if there's any comfort, and that comfort is from an old English word which doesn't mean like a blanket you put over yourself to keep warm.

Comfort means strengthen. If there's any strength in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, and consolation doesn't mean coming in second.

You know, they talked about you've won first prize is a week in Philadelphia, second prize is two weeks in Philadelphia, that kind of an idea. It's not the consolation thing.

[24 : 31] If anyone is from Philadelphia, I take back everything I just said. Comfort in love comes from brothers and sisters in Christ, in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit.

Affection and mercy is what comes in a church, and we strive for that in the midst of our sinfulness. Paul goes on, fulfill my joy by being like minded, here we go again, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.

Paul knew parish churches. He's giving them a hint on how they can stand tall for the gospel.

And then he says, let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind, let each esteem others better than himself.

Okay, who's got a Bible? Anybody got a Bible? Okay, would you look up Mark chapter 10 verse 45? And we've got lots of time.

[25 : 49] Anybody in a rush? I was going to ask the young lady. I'm sorry. I'll get you in a second. Mark 10 verse 45.

Yes, go ahead. Yes. Let's see.

Mark 10 verse 45. Thank you.

The son of man came not to be served, although he deserved that, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many. Okay, now Carol, John 13, 3 through 5.

John 13, John 13, John 13, John 13, John 13, 5. John 13, verses 3 through 5.

[27 : 05] Jesus, knowing that the Father could get all things into his hands, and that he had come from God, and was going to God, set up to the table, stood up to the ground, and tied a towel around himself.

Okay, thank you.

it's not hard to see the needs of someone and to meet them. A story from when I was a young, young man.

I was a first lieutenant in the Marine Corps going through navigator training, stationed at Naval Air Station, Sanford, Florida. one day, I was scheduled to navigate a flight up to Washington, D.C., to Andrews Air Force Base.

The next day, Mary Ellen, to whom I was engaged, was living with her parents in Washington, D.C. Do you want to have lunch together tomorrow?

[28 : 12] I'm flying up there. Sure. Meet me at the base ops. All right, so I was going to navigate up, and then my buddy Dennis was going to navigate back. All right, now, there's something about aircraft.

They don't want to work exactly when you want them to work. We had a maintenance issue, which made us an hour late.

Okay, so we got up to Andrews, and the pilot said, we're late, we need to get right back, we don't even need to refuel, we're going to head back. There was a man in the airplane, I remember his name, I never saw him again, Commander Peck.

He was getting out. The reason we were flying up there actually was to get him up to the Pentagon. So I tapped on his shoulder and I said, there's a cute blonde. I'm supposed to have lunch with her, would you tell her that?

I'm sorry, I can't make it. He said, yeah, no problem. He went out of the hatch. A minute later, he came back, pointed at me. I came down, he said, you know, I'm flying back home, this was a Friday, I'm flying back home to Sanford on Sunday, you're my guest for the weekend.

[29 : 29] He didn't know me from Adam. That's what we're talking about. I remember his name. how can we be a commander peck?

How can we just touch lives? That's what Paul calls us to. He says, let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.

Okay, so we beat that to death with a stick. The last section, so how can I be humble? Once again, I thought you'd never ask.

How can I be humble? Verses 5-11 tell us this, because Jesus shows us what humbleness looks like.

Paul says, let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God.

[30 : 39] All right, quiz. Was Jesus God? Yeah, that's basic. We are Trinitarians, Father, Son, Holy Spirit, one God, and three divine persons.

Jesus didn't need to sneak up and grab Godhead out of his father. He was the second person in the Trinity existed before time, what we call the preexistent Christ, but made himself of no reputation, taking the form of a servant and coming in the likeness of men.

Galatians 4.4, somebody look that up. Galatians 4.4, you didn't know we were actually going to do a Bible study here in this sermon, did you? Galatians 4.4, whenever you find it, raise your hand.

Yes? Okay, that is the nativity scene according to Paul.

You didn't know he had a nativity scene, did you? In the fullness of time, when the time was ripe, when things were ready, God sent forth his son.

[31 : 59] Born of woman, that means human, from God, of God, Jesus, God in the flesh.

Okay? And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death on the cross.

There are two words we bat around which we don't use at the Walmart. One is called propitiation, the other is called atonement. Propitiation, in very simple terms, means the debt has been satisfied by Jesus on the cross to bring us freedom.

Atonement has been called at-one-ment. Through the cross of Christ, Jesus brings us back at-one with God.

Therefore, it says in verse 9, God also has highly exalted him and given him the name which is above every name. Do you remember Matthew 28, 18?

[33 : 10] Jesus is up on the mountain. Remember what he says before he says, go and make disciples? All authority has been given me.

If you look at the Bible, it all comes together. God, the Father, has exalted Jesus above all. The cross represents that wonderful sacrifice he made to bring us at one.

He did this all through humility. He had more power than all of us in this room put together. He had more power than all the powers in the world put together.

He chose to be humble, to die for us. And therefore, verse 10, at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow of those in heaven and of those on earth and of those under the earth and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

What about the persecutors? Someday, they will kneel and acknowledge Jesus as Lord. everyone above, here, below, will have to acknowledge Jesus as Lord.

[34 : 33] Thank you for doing that now. You're saving yourself a lot of trouble. Summary. Paul taught his beloved Philippians how to keep on keeping on.

One, standing tall for Jesus and gospel values. Two, encouraging one another in a church body. We all need to be in a church body to give and to receive.

It's God's pattern. And number three, following the example of Jesus in humility. Inner peace is the result.

So, does any of this make sense to you? I pray that it does. today as we dedicate this worship space, it's a wonderful opportunity for us to rededicate our lives to Christ.

Or maybe dedicate our lives to Christ for the first time. So, I'm going to lead us into prayer as a conclusion to this sermon. let us pray. Lord God, we simply love you.

[35 : 39] We simply want to be your children. We acknowledge the sin that separates us from you. We offer it, that sin, in confession.

And we receive Jesus Christ, Father, as our Lord and Savior. We rededicate our lives to you this day. For it's in his name we pray.

Amen.