Joyful Humility

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[0:00] no, you can't do that. You're not good enough. You will stuff it up again. I don't have the time to teach you how to do that.

You are just not worthy of my time. Have you ever had someone speak to you like that? Have you ever felt pushed down, like you were the last one chosen?
Don't you hate it when other people think less of you and treat you like scum? We would call people in these positions toxic. They're arrogant.
They don't understand people's value. In year six and early in year seven, when I was a young man, old boy, one of those two, I was quite short and quite round.
And I was always the last picked for any team. And then puberty hit and I just put on like a foot and a half. But we so hate it when this is done to us, when people don't consider us, when we are pushed down, when we are humiliated.
[1:16] And yet I wonder if we do it to other people and we don't even realise it. Friends, come and ask us for help and we just say, oh look, I'd really like to help you, but I'm sorry, I just don't have time.

Kids, come and ask for attention. No, I'm busy. Go away. Here's a screen. People at work. I need help with this. Oh, look, that's your job.
I don't have time for that. And in effect, are we saying, I'm more important than you. You are not good enough for my time.
Do we count others as more worthy? Or are we good at making excuses and conditions as to why they don't deserve our time and attention and money?
This week we come to Philippians chapter 2. Paul, the author of the letter, has called us to be united by joy.
[2:18] And the key here for us is humility. If we are arrogant and we are putting others down, we will not have unity.

But if we value others like we want to be valued, like Jesus valued us to go to the cross and die for us, then we can have unity.
So today, as we look at Philippians chapter 2, we will see how humility leads to unity with joy. And I'm going to pray and I'm going to ask my dear wife, actually, if you can grab that clicker that I think is on my chair and just send one of the children up.
Oh, yourself, that'd be wonderful. I thank you. What a humble servant my dear wife is. Thank you. Let's give her a round of applause. Yes. Thank you, my dear, my dear wife. Let me pray. Heavenly Father, I thank you for partners in ministry.
Like my wife, I thank you for partners in ministry that we've seen like the Sandtiches, the McGrathes, and the Lowe's. And Lord, I thank you that we get to have church partnerships.
[3:23] Lord, as we look at Philippians chapter 2 this morning, I ask that you would help us to understand how to be humble so that we can have unity as a church and with church partners and more broadly as well, Lord.

And we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Now, I've got the clicker. Let's see if the clicker works. Yes, there we go. First of all, we're going to see that we are to be humble. So before calling the Philippians to humility, Paul reminds the Philippians of why they should be humble.
And he uses the word if four times here. And these questions assume a yes answer. It's like when a child is complaining that their parents never do anything and the parent says something like, I don't ever do anything for you.
Well, the answer is, of course, yes. I do many things for you. And so the answer to all of these if questions is a positive yes. These do happen. So therefore, if you have any encouragement from

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being united with Christ, because you are, if you have any comfort from his love, if there is any common sharing in his spirit, if there is any tenderness and compassion, if there's an encouragement from being united with Christ, if the Jesus who left heaven to come alongside us to bring salvation, but also now continues to strengthen and lift us up when we are discouraged and downhearted, if we have this Jesus, if we have comfort from his love, comfort, the sense of lessening of anxiety, a comfort for a trembling heart, comfort for a heart worried about the future, about children's future, if there is common sharing in the spirit.
And this language is the same business term we saw last week. If there is a partnership with the Holy Spirit to bring the comfort of Jesus to the very depths of our heart, if there's any tenderness and compassion, the spirit causing the blessings of Jesus to be experienced, if there is these.
[5:35] And do you know what church? I'm sure that if I sat down with each of you for a couple of moments, you would be able to think of a time when God has picked you up. That his love came to you at the very right time.

That his fellowship and faithfulness have been real when everyone else has deserted you. If there is this experience of love and comfort from the Lord Jesus, and there is, we should share it.
We should share it. We should be united in this love and comfort and sharing. Verse 2, Then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, having the same spirit, and the same mind.
Paul says, share this experience of love that you've got from God, and Paul will get joy. He will get joy because he's seeing the work of God in the church.
It's not just thinking the same thing or doing the same thing. It is the full body. Their hearts and their affections are going in the same way. This is a picture of true church partnership.
[6:52] And so on the basis of Christ's love and affection and comfort, we are called to share love and comfort and affection. The challenge to this, though, is how we view other people because some people are hard to show love and affection and unity to.

So Paul says in verse 3, Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility, value others above yourselves.
Last week, we saw that Paul's ambition was to see the gospel go out, to see as many people come to know and love Jesus as possible. And now he says, watch out for a selfish ambition about building up our own little kingdom instead of God's kingdom, a kingdom that is self-seeking and self-promoting, pride that says, I am worth promoting.
Instead, have humility. We can often think that humility is about lowering ourselves, but that's not a good biblical definition.
Humility is considering ourselves right. Doing some math on who we are and understanding who we are before God.
[8:14] And so firstly, we would understand that we deserve nothing good from God. And yet, because he is good, he chooses to value us and love us.

In relationships, we cause problems. We cause conflicts. We are prickly. We are exhausting. We're people who only talk about ourselves. We need to know who we are.
That is what humility is. Knowing who we are and what we deserve. To view ourselves rightly. And so Paul is calling on us to have humility where we understand who we are, but then to value others. To view others. And so he has this mathematical language, to value others. It's as if, I'm not sure if anybody here is particularly good at math, but it would be considering your value and considering somebody else's value and seeing that somebody else is actually quite significant.
Seeing that, do you know what? I don't deserve anything good from God and yet he chooses to love me. This other person, do you know what? They're loved by God too. And so I need to consider them highly.
[9:26] So verse four, Paul is stressing here that Christians must take the concerns for themselves and apply it to others.

To look out for the interests of others. C.S. Lewis has a wonderful quote about humility. Humility is not thinking less of yourself, but thinking of yourself less.
We are very good at thinking of our own needs. What do I need to do today? What do I want to do for me? But what would it look like for us to think about others' needs more than ourselves? Everything in the Christian's life is to bring humility and greater care for other people. Jesus' death on the cross tells us that all we bring to salvation is our need for it.

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It's impossible to enter the Christian life with pride. The cross sends us to our knees with open and empty hands. Now I'm sure all of us here would say that we are pretty humble.
[10:38] I know you all, you're all very nice people. None of you would go around saying how great you are. I'm just checking.

I don't think there's anybody who I know here who would go around saying, do you know what? I'm really excellent. And I wonder how cultures do humility differently.
Americans, they have a different way of doing humility which has positives and negatives. they are very good at self-promotion.
They like to talk themselves up. And this can be a bit jarring for Australians because we don't like to talk ourselves up. But Americans like to talk themselves up a lot. And so it can appear that they don't have humility.
However, one thing they do is they will talk up other people very well. They will actually say, you are great, you are excellent at this. We don't self-promote.
[11:36] Australians, in Australia, if we compliment somebody, we have false modesty and say, oh no, I'm not that great. So, you know, if I was to say, oh, who can I pick on?

I'll pick on James Cason. You know, there's James Cason. He's, oh, James, I saw you do this and that was really excellent. Now, what's the normal response going to be?
No, no, it's not. No, it was, I'm just okay at it. Even if he knows that he is excellent. So, let's just say James Cason runs a running race and I say, James, you ran so well today.
He's not going to say, yes, I did so well. The Australian culture must have a false sense of modesty, which is, no, even though I came first, oh, I've got room to improve.
This is just how Australian culture works. As I've been learning the Chinese language, I've been learning about the Chinese culture as well. And so, I often have this strange thing where I try and speak Chinese and people say, oh, your Chinese is so good.
[12:37] And it's, that's a strange thing. But one of the things I've been told to say, instead of just saying, oh, thanks, you say, gnarly, gnarly, where? Where is this? Again, I think it comes back to, it's, it's not humility, it's modesty.

Australians and Chinese are far more modest than Americans, but neither of these are humility. So we can think as a culture, we're very humble, we're not self-promoting compared to say the Americans.
We're very unassuming, but humility is actually valuing someone else more. Understanding my value and understanding someone else's value.
Modesty is not shouting about your greatness, but humility is celebrating someone else. And so Paul here, he's not calling on Christians to be modest.
No, this is real humility. Understanding that I am not great and anything great is a gift from God, but to value my neighbor. We have a wonderful example here.
[13:46] Jesus. Real humility and valuing others is hard. Paul gives us one of the earliest descriptions of the awesomeness of Jesus, his life and death and resurrection summed up in a couple of verses.

And it calls us to humility. And so verse five, in your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ. No greater model. This humble Jesus, who being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage.
Again, Jesus is not modest. He never says he's not powerful. Jesus doesn't walk across the water and get on the boat and go, oh, actually, it was mostly ice.
It was pretty straightforward. It was just really shallow. He knew who he was and he would say, I and the Father are one. But he was humble.
God himself was made nothing. Not literally nothing, but a human. He took on the nature of a servant or more literally a slave.
[14:59] And one of the defining characteristics of a slave is that they are worth nothing. They have no rights. They are no bodies. Slaves can be bought or sold.

But this is the eternal son who has all the rights to deity. But he valued us more than himself. Jesus, the son of God, who had always existed with the father and the spirit, took on the limitations of humanity.
Staying fully God, he takes on humanity. He was a man who hungered and thirsted, who got tired, he worked, he was tempted and he was pressured.

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And he humbled himself. Verse 8, being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross.
the Jesus that we are called to follow and to worship and to serve made himself a nobody, becoming a slave to death for us.
[16:08] And then humbled himself even further by becoming bound to a body for us, us sinful, rebellious, worthless people. He said, I will give you worth.

He obeyed his father and valuing us so much, he died on the cross. Verse 9, 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 earth and under the earth.
And every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. This Jesus is amazing who now sits at the right hand of God.
It challenges our thoughts of pride when we think, do you know what? I deserve better. Everyone around me needs to know how great I am.
The people at work, they should be paying me more. How dare they treat me like this? That the Jesus who was in heaven for eternity allowed himself to be treated the very worst.
[17:22] And he did it because he valued us more than himself. And so then, we start with humility and we move on to obedience.

Jesus in humility obeyed his father and Paul calls us to do the same. My dear friends, as you have always obeyed, not only in my presence but now much more in my absence, continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling.
For it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose. The call to obedience here is twofold. God is working to change our will so we can press on in obedience. obedience. There is no fight here in these verses about what people do for salvation versus what God does. We do not work at all for our salvation but we are working out what God has already worked in.
It's a call to obedience and holiness that requires work. Every Christian is called to resist temptation, to avoid sin and to pursue the love of others.
[18:35] We do it not out of dread to God but reverence and a sober realization that we need to take this God seriously. Maybe you have been following God for a long time and you were once a more serious Christian.

Maybe you sought to get to know him, to obey, read his word and now maybe you're feeling like you're going through the motions and the fear and awe of God have gone and God has just become sanitized and he is in a box and he's more like a teddy bear God, one who just brings comfort or he's a kind grandfather who helps or he's a puppy dog to give you comfort.
This is a reminder that our God is far beyond us and it calls for a serious devotion to faith and our walk but this is also a book about joy and so it's a serious faith but it's also a joyful faith.
It is a joyful trembling following God and this humility leads to obedience, leads to unity in the church so do everything without grumbling, without arguing so you may become blameless and pure.
grumbling and arguing are the products of contentious spirits that feel need to constantly question what is being done. Do you know what?
[20:05] My ideas aren't being listened to. I'm not catered here. Everyone is wrong except me. It's the attitude of heart and the tone of voice that lifts themselves above everyone else.

But these behaviours can't exist, can't coexist when there's humility. These are the secret displeasures not spoken about openly.
Maybe you complain at community group or you whinge about that person on the way home from church grumbling about people oh they don't, they don't get it how dare they do that.
Grumbling about people and complaining won't happen if we value other people more highly than ourselves. Paul has called on the church to have humility.
Humility that leads to obedience which leads to unity. He's given the life-changing example of Jesus and now he gives the example of Paul and Timothy and Epaphroditus because it's almost as if the example of Jesus is too hard to follow.
[21:10] He's too perfect. He's too God and so I can't really follow his example. I recently heard someone talk about WWJD bands.

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I'm not sure if you were a young person in the late 90s or early 2000s. I definitely was and I had this bit of fabric that I wore on my wrist that had stitched into it the letters WWJD.
What would Jesus do? And I'm concerned looking at some of the young faces in the room scratching their heads because it makes me feel very old that you don't know what that is. And this was a fad for a little while.
I'm pretty sure I actually still have one at home. I couldn't find it. The idea was that you wore this on your wrist and as you went to sin you would be reminded oh hang on what would Jesus do in this situation?
Oh I won't do the sin. And that worked for about 38 seconds and then it just became another thing you wore on your wrist. Jesus' example is wonderful and helpful but it's almost like his example is too hard and so Paul gives us another couple of examples of Christians having humility that leads to obedience that leads to church unity.
[22:31] Paul, Timothy and Epaphroditus. Paul was sending Timothy to the church in Philippi and he says of Timothy I have no one else like him who will show genuine concern for your welfare.

Paul would value the Philippian church over himself so he would send Timothy. Remember Paul is in jail he's in prison at the moment. He has very little and he has Timothy and Epaphroditus and he's going to send Timothy back because Timothy has genuine concern for their welfare.
he is valuing them more than himself. And they also the Philippian church have sent to him Epaphroditus. I think it is necessary to send back to you Epaphroditus my brother my co-worker and fellow soldier who is also your messenger whom you sent to take care of my needs so that when you see him again you may be glad and I may have less anxiety.
Paul sends back Epaphroditus he was there to care for Paul but he values them more than himself. He would send Timothy back he would send Epaphroditus back Timothy had genuine care Epaphroditus would bring joy to them.
Humility or valuing others leads to obedience before God and it builds unity in the church. Which of these is getting in the way for you?
[24:06] Which of these is your real challenge today? Is it the humility? You need to be practicing and asking God to help you to value others more than yourselves? Or is it the obedience?

Or is it the church unity? I wonder if for most of us the real issue is humility. I wonder if it's possible that we've gotten so used to the idea that Jesus died for me that we've internalized it and the world view around us that we earn things has so crept in that we start to think that we deserve our position as a Christian.
We'd never say that I'm saved by what I do but I think I wonder if we've become so used to this world view that we earn our good things that we start to think we have some value and it can lead us to looking down on others.
Are we valuing people based on what the world says about people or are we valuing people based on how God has valued us? If we are lacking humility before God and other people there is no way we can obey God's call to love them.
How can we love our neighbours as ourselves if we don't value them? It's a challenge to view others highly and to have humility. And so a couple of thoughts for us today.
[25:35] This morning take real time to get to know people. You can't value them more highly than yourself if you don't know them. And so the very simplest thing we can do is value time with them to get to know people.

So a challenge this morning. Talk to somebody you don't know. Talk to someone you don't know.
Another thing to do this week, sacrifice time to help someone.
Time is very precious in our society. We are busy with work, we are busy with our rest, and when we're not busy with those, we're busy looking at a screen.
And so to actually choose to sacrifice a chunk of time to help someone else is a practical way to value someone more than ourselves. Third thing is to ask what is taking your attention?
What is grabbing your attention? And I wonder if for many people it is technology or phones. I read about a study done recently that was targeted at teenagers asking teenagers about their parents.
[26:54] And the majority of responses came back and teenagers said they wanted more attention from their parents because their parents are looking at their phones too much. Have you ever had a conversation with someone and they're looking at their phone, they're doing these ones?

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This is not a phone, but what does that say? I value this, and I don't value you. It says it immediately.
You are not important. Me and my time and this thing is more important. Now I know we're busy, I know we've got to do things, I know phones are a useful tool, but they can say so much about how we view other people.
Imagine if Jesus came and he's standing there at the foot of the cross going, oh sorry, I don't have time to get on that. I've got to do this. And so take one step in humility this week, one step closer to loving other people.
Our great God who loves us has valued us. Jesus didn't just take one step to value us, he took every step to that cross to show his love and value for us.
[28:11] Let me pray. Dear Heavenly Father, I thank you for your word and for your reminder reminder about the humility of Jesus that he would humble himself by taking on humanity, by obeying you and going to the cross and dying in our place.

Lord, I thank you for the unity that brings, that we get to be a church together. Heavenly Father, I ask that we would not be a church in name only, but that we would value each other over ourselves, that we would show real Christ-like love, that we would be growing more like him and growing closer together in love for each other today, Lord.
I ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.

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