

JOY In Humility

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 24 July 2016

Preacher: Sam Low

- [0 : 00] Sometimes we get in the habit of trying to make bad things seem good. My son has a gift for this. When he gets in trouble, we try and have a conversation to make sure that he understands what's gone wrong.
- And usually the conversation begins with me asking him, Bailey, why are you in trouble? What have you done that's made Daddy have to punish you? And he has this incredible gift to take what he's actually done and twist it into a more positive light.
- Well, so instead of punching his brother, he was trying to stop him from doing something naughty. Instead of stealing something out of the cupboard that's not his, he was helping with the cooking.
- No matter how he spins it, he's still doing the wrong thing. But it is incredible how he can take something which is bad and try and make it seem good. We do it the same when we're trying to convince our kids to eat foods that don't taste nice, like broccoli or Brussels sprouts.
- If you like them, we forgive you. We know the kid's not going to like them, so we try and trick them. We drown it in butter or in cheese or in tomato sauce or in something that is good to their taste to somehow convince them that this other thing tastes good as well.
- [1 : 13] We take bad things and we try and make them good. You could be forgiven if you've been here for the last couple of weeks of this series to feel like we're trying that same trick in this series.
- We've got a series called Joy for Everyone. And so far, we've been encouraged that there's joy in relationships. Now, you might say difficult but plausible. Last week, we said that there was joy in suffering.
- And then today, joy in sacrificial service. So like I said, you might be forgiven for feeling like we're trying to take bad things and make them sound good.
- But stick with us. Let's be clear. When it comes to following Jesus, serving is part of the deal. It's not an optional extra. It's not a maybe for those who are particularly keen.
- It goes with the territory. If you've been loved by God, forgiven by God, then the expectation is that you serve Him. Verse 1 that the kids read out for us. This is from Philippians 2.
- [2 : 13] If you've got your Bible there, you can open it up. If not, as you heard, it would be really encouraging to them because they're going to be bringing their Bibles if we brought our Bibles as well. Philippians 2, verse 1.
- So the gospel demands that having received so much from God, that the right response is to show that same kind of love to other people.
- And Paul gets explicit about what that looks like in verse 3. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility, value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests, but each of you to the interests of others.

Value others above yourself. That's what it looks like to respond to God's generosity, not looking out for yourself, not looking to your own interests. Now, as basic as that might sound, as noble and obvious as that might sound, it's much harder to deliver on.

It's much harder to actually live out. And as if it's not difficult enough, Paul takes it up the level in verse 5 when he says we need to have the same mindset as Jesus himself. So it's not just be selfless anymore.

[3 : 34] It's be Jesus selfless, like completely selfless, always putting other people first, seeking their good. And I mean, by definition, serving people, sacrificing is costly.

That's what it means. It means giving something up for someone else. I mean, it requires self-denial. It requires that you miss out on something because you're busy doing something for somebody else.

And Paul wants to convince us that the gospel can make doing that a source of joy. How?

It is costly. He's not denying that. But Paul wants to convince us that the message of Jesus can take sacrifice, can take giving up and missing out and make that something that is deeply satisfying and joyful.

How? Well, firstly, the gospel reveals. Have a look at verse 5. In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus, who being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage.

[4 : 49] What the gospel does is not just tell us a story about what happened, but it actually reveals who God is. It reveals what Jesus is like.

It shows us that he is God, that he's all-knowing, he's all-powerful, he's all-creating, he's holy. He's everything God is because Jesus is God. Have a look again.

Being in very nature God, verse 6, The gospel shows us that the Jesus who is fully God enters our world, becomes a man and an unimpressive man at that.

He's arrested, tortured, unjustly tried and crucified by the people that he created. And all of that is in perfect obedience to his heavenly father.

This is the gospel. That Jesus came from heaven, lived a perfect life, died in our place, and then, verse 9, Therefore God exalted him to the highest place, gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

[6 : 24] Therefore, because of his perfect obedience, because of his selfless service, because of his sacrifice, God exalts Jesus and gives him the name above every name so that one day every knee will bow to him.

Every tongue will acknowledge that he is the king, that he is the rightful ruler over all creation. The gospel transforms service and sacrifice by revealing who Jesus is, who it is that we follow, who it is that demands that we sacrifice and serve in the first place.

I mean, the gospel shows us that the one who demands selfless, humble, sacrificial service of others is none other than the one who sits on the throne over all creation, having served, and now is exalted with all authority and is therefore worthy of at least sacrificial service from those who claim to follow him.

He sits in authority over all creation. He has the right to demand anything from us. The gospel shows us who it is who is asking. It's not a suggestion from somebody who's just trying to maybe guide us in a good way to live.

It's God who created us. It's Jesus who died for us and rose again. It's Jesus who sits on the throne with all authority. Jesus who is God made the decision to serve us.

[7 : 55] He didn't have to. It was a choice. It was a decision. He could have just stayed in heaven and looked after number one because he is literally number one.

He is the name above every other name. It would have been reasonable and right for him to just stay in heaven and look after himself because he is the most important. He is the most worthy.

But he did not consider his position. He did not consider his equality with God something that was there just for his own advantage. He doesn't just demand service from us.

He does demand it but he doesn't just demand it. He models it to us. God serves us at incredible personal cost.

And yet we find it difficult to put our family before ourselves or our friends let alone our enemies.

[9 : 00] The Bible tells us that when we were still his enemies Christ died for us. That as Jesus hung on the cross he served and prayed for those that put him there.

And somehow he did it with joy. Hebrews 12 tells us that it was because of the joy set before him that he endured the cross.

I mean let that mess with your head just for a second. All the pain and suffering of that first Easter everything that Jesus went through the cost that he paid his suffering and his anguish was actually a path of joy.

Just let that sit for a second. The gospel demands sacrifice and service from those who claim to follow Jesus but it also reveals the God who demands it from us to motivate us to show us that it's reasonable for him to demand that from us.

The gospel strikes at the heart of the two main reasons we find it difficult to serve and sacrifice for others. Fear and selfishness. Fear and selfishness.

[10 : 19] Have a look at verse 12. Therefore my dear brothers 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.

It's another therefore. It's pointing us to what was just before. Because of who Jesus is because of what he's done work out your salvation with fear and trembling.

Now this is really really important. These are two verses that it's easy to trip up on. This isn't a baton passing. This isn't God saying I've served I've loved now it's your turn.

This isn't God saying I've done my bit and I've forgiven you and I've loved you and I've given you a clean slate and a second chance now put some effort in. Now kind of you know live up to the standard that I require of you.

That's not it. In these verses at the same time you've got God working in us to will that is to want to do the right thing to want to serve and empowering us to do the action as well.

[11 : 32] He enables and empowers and we're told to work together at the same time. This isn't an excuse to be lazy. But have you ever wondered why the words fear and trembling?

Paul's just given one of the most incredible descriptions of how unconditional God's love is. About the incredible price that Jesus paid for people who didn't deserve it and then he says with fear and trembling.

What does fear and trembling have to do with grace? Have to do with the unconditional gift of God for you? What is there to fear if we're forgiven? The gospel message is the good news that Jesus did all that he did so that we could be in a relationship with God.

a perfect God a powerful God a holy God a righteous God a God who is just.

The gospel is not the message that we just got out of getting in trouble. The gospel is Jesus drawing into a relationship with the almighty creator.

[12 : 51] God is not a domesticated God once you hear the gospel. He doesn't go from being big and intimidating to being small and fluffy just because of Jesus. He is a fierce lion.

C.S. Lewis describes him in the Narnia series by saying he's good but he's not safe. He is still God. He is still powerful and mighty and he's to be treated with awe and reverence fitting for the creator and sustainer of all things.

The gospel motivates us out of being self-seeking out of pursuing our own gain in life as the most important thing by showing us the majesty of the one we claim to serve.

By showing us the worthiness of the God who asks that we would serve on his behalf. It's hard to be selfish. It's hard to see yourself as more important or more valuable than others when you stand in the presence of the God who created you.

The God who sent his son to die in your place. The God who reigns over all of creation. The God who paid the highest price just so that you could know him and know the joy of being loved.

[14 : 15] God and the gospel crushes our fear because as Paul says somewhere else if God gave Jesus if God gave that which cost the most if God gave the bit that was hardest to give that mattered most to him how will he not also along with him graciously give us all things?

the fear that makes us not serve and not sacrifice is the fear that if I give this up I'll miss out.

If I put you first who's going to look after me? If I spend all my time looking after other people's needs then does that mean I'll just spend all my life missing out?

I'll spend all of my life going without? What the gospel does is it shows me who I serve and who serves me.

As it reveals God who I sit under and who I have given my allegiance to and who I seek to obey it also reveals the God who is committed to me who is committed to my good who has proved that in sending his son Jesus the gospel shows me who I'm called to follow and who loves and provides for me in every way.

[15 : 33] There is no fear for those who are loved by God because he has proved he will give you the good that you need. He will never hold good things back from us and this transforms our perspective when it comes to serving and sacrificing.

Do you remember what life was like for the Philippians? They lived under the persecution of the Roman Empire. The same people who had imprisoned Paul who was writing this letter for preaching Jesus.

There would have been social consequences, economic consequences for being a Christian and yet having called them to gospel-shaped service and sacrifice, Paul turns the knife even more and raises the bar in verse 14.

Do everything without grumbling or arguing so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation. Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky as you hold firmly to the word of life and then I will be able to boast on the day of Christ that I did not run or labor in vain.

But even if I am being poured out like a drink offering on the sacrifice and service coming from your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you. So you too should be glad and rejoice with me.

[16 : 58] Do it without complaining. Do it without grumbling. Give up things that matter to you. Miss out on things that matter to you without grumbling or complaining.

Wouldn't you permit them just a little bit of complaining? I mean we've already kind of conceded that service and sacrifice and in their case dealing with the oppression of people is a difficult situation.

haven't we agreed that sacrifice is costly? That there is loss associated with what's being asked of us here? So isn't complaining a reasonable response?

Don't we normally reserve joy and gratitude for things that are enjoyable? Things where we win? Things where we get benefit? But that's just it.

The gospel so transforms our perspective that selflessness and service and sacrifice what is costly what is difficult is actually a gift and a joy at the same time.

[18 : 15] Those who are loved by Jesus can pay great cost for the sake of others. Can love in a way that is personally expensive. and rejoice in it and see it as a gift from God.

I mean complaining only makes sense if you don't have Jesus. Complaining makes sense because you're giving something up that you won't get back.

But the message of the gospel is that in Jesus we have all we need. The message of this series is that ultimate joy is in knowing that God loves us unconditionally and being drawn into a relationship with him as his precious children in such a way that all other things are just peripheral.

And so Paul can sit in prison with shackles on and rejoice because he has an immovable hope and satisfaction in an immovable savior. when we have Jesus complaining does it make sense because even if I give up my time give up my money give up my energy give up my relational energy my emotional energy give up whatever it is that I have to love and serve those around me I will still always have more than enough in Jesus.

I will still always be loved unconditionally I will still always have the certain hope of the fact that God promises I will never be without what I need.

[19 : 48] God promises to not withhold good things and he proves it in sending Jesus. And so for a Christian complaining is illogical.

What are we complaining about? We're full we have everything we need we have more than we need and no one and nothing can take that away. I mean even here Paul's getting explicit like he did last week to say even if he dies he's going to rejoice.

That's what he means when he says he's being poured out he says I'll rejoice and you Philippians you too should rejoice. What is it that makes that possible?

Is it just hey I've got heaven in the future so I don't need anything now attitude? Well it's at least that but I think there's something more here. Look back at the beginning of the passage.

Verse 1 follow the logic of what Paul is saying here. The gospel demand to serve and to put others first flows out of the gospel blessings of love and comfort and encouragement and even the spirit himself.

[21 : 02] They're connected they're inseparable it's those things that God gives you flowing in and overflowing and flowing through you that produces sacrificial service and it's in that Christ-like service that the joy of his love for you in the gospel is most fully experienced.

Let's try and unpack this because this is so important. It's almost like when you begin a relationship with that special someone and you get this incredible joy from this person.

They just seem to understand you, they love you, they put you first, you're just happier when they're around and there is so much joy in that relationship but have you noticed how when you get the opportunity to brag about that, your joy grows?

When you get the opportunity to tell other people how amazing that person is and how much you enjoy them, it's almost like your awareness of how much enjoyment is there grows as you have to articulate it and tell other people it just, it gets bigger or it's like that time you discover an amazing restaurant that's hidden away in a laneway that no one else has ever been to and the food is fantastic and the atmosphere is perfect and it's the greatest culinary experience you've ever had and you love it but it's not until you take someone with you and they share that experience, they share that joy, that your joy kind of can reach its fullness.

It's not that the first meal wasn't amazing but it's there's something extra when you get to give that joy to someone else, when you get to share it. See, when we get to share God's love for people by serving them, when we get to sacrifice and show God's love for people by putting their needs first, by valuing them the way that Christ does, when we get to see them experience God's love for them through us getting to serve, God is actually giving us a fuller experience of His love.

[23 : 20] I mean, being forgiven by God is incredible. Being loved by God, being guaranteed heaven, let's not sell that short, that is overwhelming and we could spend our whole lives exploring that amount of joy but God, because He is so generous and so gracious and just God, gives us the opportunity to understand it more fully by passing it on, by loving people in that same way, by putting us almost in His shoes when He came to us.

Because we're getting to love them, not because they're love worthy or because they deserve it, but just because, that grows our confidence that, hey, that's how God loves me.

Not if I'm good or bad, just because He chose to. And so that incredible joy is getting deeper and stronger. God has made it possible for serving and sacrificing and giving up and missing out to be an opportunity to get more engagement and a fuller encounter and experience of His incredible love for us in Jesus.

isn't the gospel amazing that God can take something that seems bad by definition, that seems like you lose by definition, you have to give up and make it a win, make it an opportunity to encounter Him more fully.

Full gospel joy, full Jesus joy is not found in just being a recipient from God, but in when what you have received, enables you to serve others on Jesus' behalf, when you get to be the conduit for other people to experience God's unconditional love, when you get to be the connection point, the instrument, there can be joy in self-denying sacrificial service, because ultimately it's just a full expression of the gospel joy that you received when you placed your trust in Jesus, when you heard that He loved you, even though you didn't deserve it.

[25 : 37] If serving joyfully is a struggle for you personally, could it be that you see serving as a task that has nothing to do with the gospel?

could it be that you've separated out, Jesus loves me and I need to serve? And so you've separated the source of joy from the task that He's put in front of you and of course it's going to be hard work.

You've kind of cut yourself off from the good bit and you're just holding on to the giving up and sacrificing bit. For service and sacrifice to be joyful, it's got to be connected to the way that God has loved you and served you in Jesus.

It's got to be the result of what God has done for you. It's got to be the result of the sacrifice and service that God has given you. Christian joy is always Jesus' joy.

I said it before, I can't remember if I said it in the morning, but week one I said this series could have been called Jesus for Everyone because Jesus is the source of joy. Each week Paul is unpacking ways that Jesus has chosen to give us access to more of him in the Christian life and here he is calling you to serve others and at the same time calling you to know him better as you do it.

[27 : 11] Calling you to know his love more fully as you do it. Service is an opportunity for joy when in it you grab hold of the opportunity to engage the Christ who loved and served you.

Serving and sacrificing is an opportunity for joy when it is done in the strength and love that has come to you first through the cross. This isn't about making bad things good.

This is about encountering the greatest thing where he has chosen to reveal himself in serving just like he did. Let's pray that God might shift our hearts and our eyes to see him and to chase him and to pursue him and to find him in serving as he demands.

Father God I want to ask that you would give us eyes to recognize what it means to follow you what it means to embrace all of the good gifts that you have placed in our lives including the opportunities to serve including the opportunities to go without to sacrifice to miss out so that others might be blessed and loved in the ways that we have been.

God I want to thank you for including us in what you're doing not because you need us but for our sake help us to recognize that the agenda is always that we might know you better that we might taste more of your goodness that we might be more fully satisfied in you as we understand what it is to love unconditionally what it is to serve and to sacrifice confident that we still have all we need in you God please fill us with your love and grace in such a way that it just flows out of us that our service might be wholehearted humble sacrificial and joyful and we pray it in Jesus name Amen