

# Genesis 39

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[ 0 : 00 ] A few weeks ago, a prominent American pastor said these words to their congregation, causing a bit of a stir. They said this, I just want to encourage every one of us to realize when we obey God, we're not doing it for God.

I mean, that's one way to look at it. But we're doing it for ourselves, because God takes pleasure when we're happy. That's the thing that gives him the greatest joy. So I want you to know this morning, just go do good for your own self.

Do good because God wants you to be happy. When you come to church, when you worship him, you're not doing it for God, really. You're doing it for yourself, because that's what makes God happy.

See, the main issue with this is that it sounds good to us. It just makes sense. Well, kind of. God wants me to be happy. Well, actually, the apostle Paul would disagree, according to the book of Philippians.

And as a matter of fact, Paul would argue that our lives are not to be oriented around our happiness, but rather the glory of God. But what is glory? And if our lives are not now oriented around the glory of God, what are they oriented around?

[ 1 : 10 ] Well, we being a Baptist church believe in the authority of the Bible as the word of God, and so we look to the word of God and preach from the word of God. Meaning it's important that we hear the word of God.

So this evening's text is going to be Philippians 2, 1 to 11. It's page 980 in your pew Bibles. When you have it, please say amen. Starting with verse 1.

Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.

And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore, God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

So tonight I ask a question. Whose glory are you living for? Whose glory are you living for? So first, it's important that we get some background about the Philippian church.

[ 3 : 02 ] The main thing to know is that the Philippian church is a church that Paul loves deeply. This letter is saturated with his affection for this church. Philippi, in northeastern Greece, was the first major city in Europe where Paul brought the gospel.

He planted this church. These are people that he cares deeply about, and these are people who care deeply about him. In the first chapter, we learned of their concern for him in the midst of his imprisonment, as he's writing this letter from prison.

But Paul's encouragement to them, even in the midst of his own plight, is in chapter 1, verse 27, which provides the heading for our entire section of scripture this evening. In verse 27, he says this, This is the life that we as Christians seek.

This is the life that we as the church are supposed to exhibit to the world. But what is it? And how do we do it? Paul continues in chapter 2, So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord, and of one mind.

So the question is, what does this say about the Philippian community? Well, when you see a warning label that seems a little bit ridiculous, chances are it's the result of a lawsuit.

[ 4 : 26 ] For example, on a lighter, you may see the warning, Warning, do not ignite in face. Chances are somebody lit it in their face, got hurt, and sued.

On a set of earplugs, you might see the warning, These earplugs are non-toxic, but may interfere with breathing if caught in windpipe. Why would you see this warning? Because clearly somebody made this mistake.

Well, if Paul is going to great lengths to encourage that the church be united, Of one mind, and with the same love, It makes sense to assume that that very unity that Paul is encouraging is threatened.

He's already talked about exterior attack from opponents in chapter 1, But what is in view here is the threat from within. What is it that causes strife in the church? He explains this in the next verses. Do nothing from selfish ambition 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.

[ 5 : 30 ] So here it is. Apparently, strife and arguments in the church Are caused by selfish ambition and conceit. But let's dig into that.

The King James translation is very helpful in this verse. The beginning of verse 3 reads in this way. Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory.

Vainglory. Huh. That's the literal and best translation of the Greek word translated selfish ambition in your Bible. And it gets to the root of our sin and the Philippian problem.

You see, this is precisely what pride is. Vainglory. Which means where vain means empty. So if glory is honor and renown, Vainglory is empty glory.

Or glory that is fleeting. So when we act out of pride, We act for empty glory. When I seek my own advancement, I seek an empty glory. When I seek accolades for myself, I seek an empty glory.

[ 6 : 33 ] While someone may respond, Yeah, right. That glory is not empty. My co-workers, friends, and family love me. Okay, well let's think about the seeking of your glory.

Let's think about that. Let's think about that project at work That you're pouring yourself into Because you know it's going to make you look good. Even at the expense of some relationships that you may be neglecting.

Is your glory worth that sacrifice? That paper that you have to write for class, That paper that you're staying up hours and hours and hours And sacrificing, Sacrificing whether it's your health or relationships.

Is that sacrifice worth your glory? Not to mention that. But is your glory guaranteed to even last? Even if it may last a few years, Eventually, you will die.

And chances are, You will be forgotten. You will decompose. Where will your glory be then? And yet this is how we orient most of our lives.

[ 7 : 37 ] Our primary concern is our concerns. Our comfort. Our safety. Our happiness. Our power. Often at the expense of our neighbor.

And this is what sin, And this is a manifestation of sin. It is a rebellion against the concerns of God. It is the declaration that I am the God of my life.

And so therefore, I can decide what is best for me. It is this mentality that rubs people the wrong way. And creates inner conflict. Especially in the church.

And needless to say, It's a pretty big deal. So this is why Paul pulls out what I like to call the nuclear option. If our problem is pride, Then the answer is this thing called humility.

But what is that? First, what it is not. Humility is not me walking around downcast, Thinking, Woe is me. I'm a worthless sinner.

[ 8 : 40 ] A minuscule speck in a vast universe. A wretch before a holy God. Well, mind you, All of these things are true. But, in some cases, Self-pity is just another side of pride.

Because it's still about me. And how I feel. C.S. Lewis says that, Humility is not thinking less of yourself, But thinking of yourself less. Yes, Mr. Lewis.

But what are we to think of otherwise? In a quote often attributed to Augustine, It says this, Humility is the foundation of all the other virtues hence.

In the soul in which this virtue does not exist, There cannot be any other virtue except in mere appearance. Whatever this humility is, It's serious business.

And this quote from Augustine, You can get a good idea of it from this. There cannot be any other virtue except in mere appearance.

[ 9 : 45 ] Take a look at honesty. If I'm telling the truth to hurt someone else, Because that will make me feel better about myself, That's not honesty as God would have us, That's not honesty as God would have us be honest.

And that's an honesty that's rooted in pride, Rather than in true humility. We could do this with any number of other virtues, But the fact remains, That if that act does not come out of a root of humility, It's fake.

And not true virtue. So, How do we do this? How do we walk in power together, As the community of believers, On the path that God has set for us?

What is our inoculation against personal, Petty struggles? So, Paul answers that question with a hymn. Perhaps the most beautiful verses in scripture, And undoubtedly the crux, The very center of the book of Philippians.

It is in these verses, That Paul's encouragements find their strength, As it is in the person, Whom these verses describe, Where we find ours. Let me read it again.

[ 11 : 06 ] Verses 5-11, Have this mind among yourselves, Which is yours in Christ Jesus, Who, Though he was in the form of God, Did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, But emptied himself, By taking the form of a servant, Being born in the likeness of men, And, Being found in human form, He humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, Even death on a cross.

Therefore, God has highly exalted him, And bestowed on him the name that is above, Every name, So that at the name of Jesus, Every knee should bow, In heaven, And on earth, And under the earth, And every tongue confess, That Jesus Christ is Lord, To the glory of God the Father.

We're going to have to walk, We're going to have to walk through this. We're going to have to look at this verse by verse. So verse 5, Have this mind among yourselves, Which is also in Christ Jesus, Who, Though he was in the form of God, One might even say, Because he was in the form of God, More on that later, Did not count equality with God, A thing to be grasped.

Wait, Stop. This starts off crazy. One assumption that we have when we see power, Is that individuals in power, Want to stay in power.

After all, It's better at the top, Isn't it? Meaning, But this was not, The intra-Trinitarian conversation. By the way, As suggested in the name of the church, We believe in the Trinity.

[ 12 : 37 ] Namely, That the God of the Bible, Has revealed himself, To be three eternal persons, And yet one, And in one being, The Father, Son, And Holy Spirit. So here, A conversation, Between the Father, And the Son.

Father, So, Son, I'm going to need you to take on flesh, Submit yourself to death, Be spat on, And humiliated for my glory. And to save, These, And to save these individuals, Who have sinned, Who have sinned against us.

Son's response, Mmm, No, I don't really want to do that. I kind of like it up here. Is that how we, Is that how we view, That inter-Trinitarian, That inter-Trinitarian conversation?

No, Instead we have a picture, Of someone, In a place of great dignity, Who voluntarily steps down, For the sake, Of those under him. But where do we have, A little picture of this?

Well, We have a little picture of this, In the beginning of every episode, Of Undercover Boss, The CBS reality show. So it begins, With a CEO, Who's pegged as an out of touch, Who's pegged as an out of touch, Workaholic, Who's generally obsessed, With money, And winning.

[ 13 : 51 ] So in an effort, To improve their company, They step down for a week, And work with the rank and file, Workers in their company. And so in these shows, The CEOs learn a little bit, Of humility, As many of them, Fail to do the jobs, That they set out to do.

So if you're a non-believer, This may be your idea of God. He may be, An out of touch CEO, Who issues commands, That are difficult, And unreasonable. But that is not the God, Who is revealed to us, In Christ.

In verse 6, In describing Christ, It could read this way, Christ Jesus, Who, Because he was in the form of God, Did not see equality with God, As a thing to be grasped.

In saying that he's in the form of God, He's saying that Christ was, And is all that God is. Form is not just outward appearance, That he looked like God.

No, He was, And he is, God. We're talking the all-powerful, All-knowing creator of the universe. So it would seem, That all that power, Would be something that you would hold on to, And wield for your own purposes.

[ 15 : 00 ] But that is precisely, What Christ does not do, Because it is not the character of God, To do so. Instead, He, According to verse 7, Empties himself, By taking the form of a servant, Being born in the likeness of men.

So it seems, That this God that we serve, Is not a God, Who merely sits high. Oh now he does sit high. That's clear from verse 6. But, That position is not something, That Christ thought to hold on to, In selfish ambition.

Instead, He emptied himself, Poured himself out, For us. How? He went, From the lord of the universe, To a slave, Of men.

He went from having the rights, Of the master, To having no rights, No privileges, No dignity, As a slave. Think, The man who in John 13, Washed the feet of his disciples, An activity that only a slave would do, And dried their feet with the towel, That he wrapped around himself, Was the very one, Who created all of those things.

And that's just the tip of the iceberg. You see, Sometimes we gloss past this next part, Being born in the likeness of men. But it is no less amazing. The God of the universe, Who has no beginning, Gives himself a beginning.

[ 16 : 27 ] He's born just like any other normal dude. He could have just come out of the sky fully grown. But no, He literally goes through the gestation period, Within the womb of Mary.

He went through all of the life stages, That we go through, From infancy, To childhood, Into adulthood. Our savior, Is foreign, To no part, Of the human experience.

And it is that fact, That brings us, To verse 8. The climax, Of the humiliation, Of Christ. The Lord of the universe, Did not just veil his glory, In taking on flesh, Though he did do that.

He did not just become a slave, Primarily of God, But also of his disciples. He, In verse 8, Humbled himself, By becoming obedient, To the point, Of death.

Hear what the apostle is saying here. Paul Washer said this in a sermon once, When you say something like, Jesus died, Shouldn't you stop or something? Indeed we should.

[ 17 : 33 ] The immortal son of God, Took on mortality, To obey his father's will, And to save the people, Whom he had chosen for himself. The one impervious to our great enemy, Death, Succumbed to it, To save us.

As Peter said in Acts 3.15 to his audience, You killed the author of life. How else could this be possible, If the author of life, Had not willingly given up his life, To save sinners?

Now one would think that, This picture of humility would be enough, But Paul is not done. Hence the last part, Of Philippians 2.8. Even death on a cross.

Even death on a cross. What's so special about death on a cross? Well, a few things. First, the obvious one.

There is no dignity in being crucified, And Paul's entire audience would be aware of that. In hearing of the cross, Images of criminals and insurrectionists, Would flash through their minds.

[ 18 : 38 ] But Jesus Christ, An innocent man, Was flogged, And scourged, With a whip that probably had iron balls, Tied a few inches from the end of each leather thong, On the whip, With sharp sheep bones, At the end, To maximize flesh cutting, And they marched him, Bleeding, To Golgotha, Carrying his crossbeam.

They offered him wine and myrrh, Which was a mild anesthetic, But he did not take it. They nailed his wrists to the crossbar. They lifted him up, And nailed his heels to the post.

Now in that position, It's very hard to breathe. After being beaten, And carrying a 100 pound cross, Chances are, Christ had little strength left. But he hung there, For at least three hours, Periodically being forced to lift his scourged, Torn back, Up to the rough, Splintered wood, In order to struggle to draw a breath.

Lifting his back, Not only against the weight of his own body, But against the weight of our sin, Which was laid upon him.

The Lord of glory, Reduced to a bleeding, Naked mess. And on top of this, Deuteronomy 21, 23, Anyone hung on a tree is cursed by God.

[ 20 : 02 ] Christ, In taking on our sin, Became on the cross, Cursed for us. The one who was in the form of God, The blessed one, Descended into utter, And complete, Accursedness.

Thank God the story did not end there. Thank God that he is the one who opposes the pride, And gives grace to the humble. Christ's own words would come to fullest fruition in himself, When he said, Everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, And he who humbles himself will be exalted. Verses 9 to 11 are Christ's vindication. Verse 9, Therefore God has highly exalted him, And bestowed on him the name that is above every name, So that at the name of Jesus, Every knee should bow in heaven, On earth, And under the earth, And every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, To the glory of God the Father.

Christ's ultimate and utter humility, Christ's complete and utter humility, Lead to God super exalting him. In his resurrection and exaltation, The man Jesus Christ now sits on the throne of heaven, Awaiting the day when he is to return, And every knee will bow to him.

Every angelic being, Every demonic being, Every human being on earth, And every human being who has died, Every creature will acknowledge the lordship of Christ.

[ 21 : 35 ] The question is, Will you do so willingly? Or will the glory of his judgment Knock your knees out from under you? Paul has not forgotten why this hymn is here.

Our problem is pride. Our problem from the garden has been a desire to be God. A desire to be lord of our lives.

A desire for others to serve us. And our desires. The irony is that that picture of God is a distortion. And that's the real issue of our pride. We don't know who God is. But I assure you, If you see Christ as he is displayed in this passage, Your desire for vainglory will fade.

Let the glory of Christ fill you with awe. When we look at Christ, Our rebellion is revealed to be the childish stupidity that it is.

[ 22 : 40 ] I really want the credit for this thing that I did. But Jesus spent his entire life being ridiculed and humiliated when he was worthy of nothing but worship.

It is in Christ that we find true humility. And it is only in Christ that we can exhibit his humility toward one another. Paul uses this hymn about Christ to show the Philippian church the mind that they are to have in their interpersonal relationships.

Not only the mind that they are to have, But the mind which is theirs in Christ Jesus. Insofar as they are in Christ Jesus, This mind is the mind that they as the church are to act out of.

So what does it look like to set others' interests above one's own? What does it look like to look to the interests of others as well as to my own? Oh, sorry. So what does it look like for me to consider others greater than myself?

What does it look like to look to the interests of others as well as to my own? Ultimately, it is a forsaking of seeking vain, empty glory.

[ 23 : 52 ] And it is a desire to seek the glory that lasts. That is, the glory of God the Father. To all eyes, Jesus' life seemed like a failure.

The Messiah was supposed to conquer, right? Wrong. According to Isaiah 53, the Messiah was supposed to suffer. And suffer he did.

Are you prepared to do the same? Will you ask the Lord to humble you in order that he might exalt you? Are you willing to fail in the eyes of the world so that the Father will say to you on the day of judgment, Well done, my good and faithful servant?

God calls us to be broken before him. Instead of seeking your own glory, seek the Lord's. May we live our lives, do our work, and love our neighbors not for us, but because Christ loved us first and died for us.

The Son of God, the one by whose strength each of us breathed, became a man, a mortal man, and died a brutal, humiliating death. He lived a life of poverty in order that we might enjoy an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading.

[ 25 : 14 ] He lived a life of homelessness in order to secure for us an eternal home. He lived his life in ridicule and shame before men, so that before God, we might, through union with Christ, enjoy God's fatherly gaze instead of the gaze of the condemning judge.

Jesus took that condemnation, that curse that we deserved, in order that all who repent and believe in him might truly be set free.

Do you believe it? Do you trust him? Will you build your life around that? Will you release your grip on your pride, on your vain, empty glory, and instead seek the glory of God with all your heart?

Will your most constant thought not be, how will I look? But rather, how does what I do, think, or say make God look?

Brothers and sisters, let us have the mind of Christ. Amen.