

November 11, 2018
Humility 101: Tapping into Christ, Our Power Source
Ephesians 4:1-6

Let's begin by reading our passage in **Ephesians 4:1-6**, **“Therefore, I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, with all humility, and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit just as also you were called in one hope of your calling: one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all in all. There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope or your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over and through all and in all.”**

Paul begins this section of his letter to the church in Ephesus by encouraging them to treat each other with respect because they are in the same Spirit of the Lord, the same body of Christ and in the same faith. Basically Paul is speaking about the importance of unity within the body Christ. Unity is a theme which runs through out all the Bible.

In the garden it was God's desire that there would be unity between Him and the man and woman He created but you know how that worked out. Adam and Eve messed that up.

The unity God had in mind didn't come back to earth until He sent His Son.

We are getting quickly in the season when we celebrate the gift of God's Son Jesus. The kids in Kingdom Kidz are practicing Christmas songs as they prepare for their Christmas program coming up on the 16th of December.

When the angels appeared to the shepherds out in the field, their message was glory to God in the highest and on earth, peace among men and women whom He is pleased.

Christ came to not only came to proclaim peace but to make peace between God and humanity. He did this didn't He. He is called the Prince of Peace. For those who accept Jesus' sacrifice for the forgiveness of sins there is peace between them and the Creator of the universe, the One who holds all things in His hand including the future and eternity.

Peace, unity has always been God's design. He started it with Adam and Eve, extended it through His Son through the work of the cross and will culminate with all things in heaven and earth being unified and in peace.

Ephesians 1:9-10, "He made know to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him, with a view to an administration suitable to the fulness of the times, that is, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heaven and things upon the earth."

The summing up of all things in Christ will be the beginning of a eternity of peace. Peace between nations, between people, between animals, the lion and the lamb lie together. Peace between God, Jesus and their children.

Peace is and has always been God's plan for earth and its inhabitants.

As I shared last week, learning about, accepting and entering into this peace with God is the starting point of our new lives living with Him. It is called humility. Realizing we need something more than what we can do for ourselves and coming to God for it.

But this act of humility is not a one time thing. It is an ongoing position we take before God and others. It is what the scholars of old would call one of the virtues of Christianity.

Paul begins this passage with a plea to the church. You have been called by God through Christ to enter into His eternal plan of peace in these days, especially within His church. So live with each in humility which looks like gentleness, patience, forbearance or longsuffering, in love...being diligent to preserve the unity in the Spirit in the bond of peace.

But living with humility, gentleness, patience and forbearance goes against the natural flow of our humanity doesn't it?

Some people, very few people today, have been raised by parents who, when they were young, helped them cultivate humility and the rest of the Christian virtues like love, kindness, gentleness and forbearance.

In days gone by these Christian virtues were taught not only in our homes, but in our churches, in our schools, in sports and even in business. But it seems like the cultivation of Christian virtues like humility has gone by the way side.

Our natural human disposition is more like what you see in this video.

VIDEO

While this is an extreme example of how people can be, selfishness and self-centeredness is something that, as Christians, we have to guard against.

As we seek to understand what it looks like for us to move in humility, I like one definition I found from **CS Lewis. Humility is not thinking less of yourself but thinking of yourself less.**

This what scripture tells us. **Romans 12:3, “Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought...”**

But I want to tell you that is harder than one thinks. During the studying and writing of this sermon, it has had me examining my motives, my actions and my words. As I interact with Michal, as I interact with some of you, as I interact with the church, as I interact with God, how do I see myself? Am I thinking more highly of myself that I ought?

Well the conclusion was yes, I probably do think more highly of myself more than I realize and I suspect the same is true for you as well. It is an easy trap to fall into because it is our human nature and it takes intentional effort to become humble and to stay humble.

So if we have been called, with all humility, and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. How do we do that?

I have listed just a couple of things, some from Billy Graham, that I believe can help us along our journey of humility.

Steps in becoming humble and staying humble

- 1. Treat pride as a human condition that always necessitates embracing the cross**

Luke 9:23, “...If anyone wishes to come after Me, they must deny themselves, take up their cross daily and follow me.”

It is our nature to be proud and it is God’s nature in us that brings humility. Committing to a lifestyle of daily dying to ourselves and living through Him is the foundation for true humility.

- 2. Routinely confess your sin to God**

Luke 18:14, “...for everyone who exalts themselves will be humbled, but those who humble themselves will be exalted.”

All of us sin and fall short of the glory of God. However, too few of us have a routine practice of rigorous self-honesty examination. Weekly, even daily, review of our hearts and behaviors, coupled with confession to God, is an essential practice of humility.

3. **Purpose to speak well of others**

Here's where we can jump ahead a bit in our study of Ephesians.

Ephesians 4:29-32, "Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear. Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you."

Paul pretty well spells it out for us doesn't he? Kind of a re-mash of the what he said in the first part of chapter 4.

How easy it is for us to let some unwholesome words slip out of our mouth and how hard it is to only speak words that edify.

If you are like me you are still a work in progress in this area. I do pretty good most of the time but isn't it easy to slip into that place where you think a little higher of yourself than you should and when that occurs it is easy to speak ill of others.

One of the things I have come to understand is that I don't know where someone has been. I have not been exposed to their journey. I don't know how bad they may have had it at home or in their life after. Their parents might have never taught them right from wrong, how to be kind, how to forgive, how to treat others. They may have been abused verbally, physically or sexually.

The world we live in is full of tragedy and there are a lot of people around us that may have been abused and beat up but they have put on faces to hide behind. I don't know the path they have been forced to walk, do you?

I think about others in this way and these increases my compassion for them, my thoughts about them and keeps me from speaking ill of them. They need Jesus just as we did don't they?

According to our passage in Ephesians the Holy Spirit is grieved when we speak ill of others. I think the Holy Spirit is grieved because we are no longer in a place that we can share the love, forgiveness and restoring work of Christ in that person's life. We step out of God's great redemptive work He plans for us to be a part of, the good works He has created for us to walk in, and we step right into the trap Satan has laid for us.

PAUSE

With humility, gentleness, patience tolerance, love and being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

One of the passages and teachings that we read in the Friday night marriage class fits really well here and helps us to be diligent in preserving unity.

Philippians 2:1-4, "Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, 2 then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. 3 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, 4 not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others."

Notice that I have underlined the “ifs.”

Paul is encouraging the Christians in Philippi to remember what they have received from Christ and God and these questions are good for us to ponder as well.

Have you received any encouragement from being united with Christ?

Have you found and received any comfort from His love?

Have you experienced God’s tenderness and compassion?

Remember these things. Ponder these things. Let your heart swell with gratitude because of these things and this will help you to be like-minded, being one in spirit and of one mind.

Remembering these things with a heart of gratitude will help you to do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility to value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

This is where we want to be isn’t it? This is who we want to be towards our spouses and with our families. This is who we want to be towards each other in this place. This is the example we want to be as a church for the world to see. They will know we are Christians by our love.

Amen?