

Grace, mercy and peace to you from God our heavenly Father, through the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Philippians 2:5-11 (EHV)

⁵ Let this attitude be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus. ⁶ Though he was by nature God, he did not consider equality with God as a prize to be displayed, ⁷ but he emptied himself by taking the nature of a servant. When he was born in human likeness, and his appearance was like that of any other man, ⁸ he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross. ⁹ Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Dear Heavenly Father, send us your Holy Spirit so that we may humble ourselves in the same way as Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

Have you ever noticed how we Australians are extremely good at bringing people down to our level?

For example, if anyone thinks too highly of themselves, or isn't willing to mix it with the common folk, then we soon cut them down to size by mocking them or making jokes about them. If anyone seems too big for their boots, too cocky, or even too 'up themselves' (to use a common term), then we want to bring them down a rung or two!

Whether we do this because we've got an inferiority complex or just because we don't like anyone to think they're better than us in any way, I'm not really sure. But what we do know is that we Australians are well known for this so-called 'tall-poppy syndrome'. That is, unless people are able to meet us down at our level without any fancy airs or superior attitudes, then we'll soon try to bring them down to our own level, or perhaps even lower!

On the other hand, if a big wig, a big star, or a big head of business or government can come down to our level, then we might think they're 'alright'. We love to see them grab a shovel, lend a hand, or get down alongside someone who's hurting or in trouble.

Now, knowing this about Australians, we might wonder why all Australians don't think Jesus is 'alright'.

After all, Jesus, who is equal with God in every way, came down to our level.

The God who created the sun and moon and flung stars into space wrapped himself up in our sun-beaten human skin. The God who made the first humans allowed himself to become reliant on his own mother's breast for milk, her dressing him while he was young, her soothing voice and arms for comfort, and her gentle touch for reassurance. Even though Jesus helped create the universe in all its wonder and mystery, had to learn how to walk and talk, and he willingly submitted himself to Joseph's teaching on carpentry and manhood. No doubt as he grew up, he endured the pains of blisters, sunburn, splinters and stubbed little toes.

When he finally began his public ministry at the age of thirty, he constantly endured ridicule and anger from stubborn religious people. Despite his growing fame due to his miracles and teaching, he shunned the public spotlight and people's misguided attempts to crown him as their king, including the time he entered Jerusalem on a donkey. He put the church leaders in their place and helped out the underdogs, including prostitutes, lepers, outcasts, and the demon possessed.

But that's not all! He willingly allowed one of his closest mates to betray him with a kiss. He tolerated false accusations in a court case, but he never objected to any of them or got angry in self-defence. No matter how much people insulted him, he never insulted them back. He willingly allowed people to mock him, insult him, spit on him, hit him with their fists, beat him with sticks, and crown him with the

thorns that grew as a result of human's first sin.

The Judge over all the earth allowed a human judge to sentence him to death. The One who is in charge of heavenly angelic armies willingly allowed soldiers to run nails through his wrists and fix him to a rough wooden cross. The God who once clothed Adam and Eve to hide them from their shame, was stripped of his clothes so that he hung naked on that splintered cross. The God who breathed life into our nostrils made a loud cry as he gave up his own breath for you and me.

Surely, by all accounts, Jesus is 'alright'! He knows how to mix it with the common people. He knows what it's like to suffer pain, humiliation, and even death. Even though he was able to, he never used his 'God-powers' to defend or save himself. Instead, he used all his powers of healing, forgiveness, humiliation, and death to save you and me.

Even though Jesus never showed those annoying proud, selfish, and big-headed qualities needed for us to cut him down to size, we humans cut him down anyway. Even though he showed his equality with us and shared our same pains, problems and frustrations, too many times we reject his humble ways and want to do things our own way.

Yet, no matter what we might think of him, God the Father thought he was 'alright'. He restored his Son to his own level and authority. He raised the humble and obedient Jesus to sit in power at his right hand. Even though 'Jesus' was a fairly common name of the day, perhaps as common as 'John' or 'Peter', God raised up his Son's name in such a way that at the very mention of the name of Jesus, all creatures above the earth, on the earth, or even under the earth, will kneel before him in submission to honour him and his name.

Even though he alone is worthy of the name above all names, he graciously and lovingly placed his own great and holy name on each of us. Unworthy as we are, when we were baptised into his name he shared his divine Sonhood, righteousness, inheritance, and glory with us. Through his forgiveness, he restored us as people who are 'alright' in God's sight. He now shares his willing, humble, and servant nature with us so that we may live out this same humble servant attitude.

But how are we doing? Are we living out this servant nature of Christ, or not?

Well, let's think of all the people we came into contact with this week. These people will probably include our husbands and wives, our children and grandchildren, our parents and grandparents, our teachers, doctors, shop assistants, friends, neighbours, and some random people we bumped into down the street.

How did we relate to them? Did we always try to have the last word? Did we give plenty of advice as if we alone knew the right answer? Did we ignore them, mock them, or abuse them? Did we consider them lower than ourselves in status, intellect, or physical abilities? Did we grumble and complain about them when asked to do something for them? Did we selfishly make up excuses not to help others because that would upset our own leisure time or routines?

If we did any of these things, then we weren't sharing the nature of Christ that we've received from him.

On the other hand, did we serve them, help them, and encourage them? Did we hold our tongue, even though we thought that what we had to say was more important or impressive than what they said? Did we willingly do as they asked, even though we really wanted to do something else? Did we put them and their needs first and ourselves last?

In other words, did we share Christ's nature with them?

Even though we can't help ourselves muck up our relationships through our own greed, selfishness, and

pride, we who are baptised, who are recreated in God's own image, and who have received the same nature as the humble and obedient Christ, are to have the same unpretentious, subservient, and compassionate nature of Christ, even with difficult people.

As we look back over the last week, we may realise we've failed to live this way. We haven't always lived as renewed humble and obedient people.

This is because Ukraine and Iran aren't the only places where there's a war on. As God's children, a battle rages within each of us. Our old nature with all its selfishness, greed, pride, and pig-headedness, constantly battles against our new Christ-given nature of humbleness, obedience, and selflessness. As this battle rages, Paul urges us to keep looking to, and having in mind, Jesus Christ.

We look to Jesus Christ as the ultimate example of a 'good bloke' who shows us what our new nature looks like. Of course, we know he's much more than just a 'good bloke' for us to emulate, after all, he's our almighty and majestic God come down to our level for our forgiveness, life, and salvation. And yes, he forgives us for not sharing his humble nature with people around us.

But even though he did all this in a once-off historic event, he still continually comes down to give us the benefits of all he has done for us through the church. His word still has power to do what he says.

This means he continues to give us all the benefits of his humility and death as he forgives us for all our sins of pride and selfishness and promises us life eternal through faith. By constantly looking to Jesus Christ and his example of humbleness and sacrifice, he constantly renews us so we may live as holy children of God by slowly transforming us into his own image.

Even though Jesus is a 'good bloke', we know he's no 'ordinary bloke'. He left aside all his 'God-ness' to become like you and me, and yet he remained fully God. He's someone we can trust, someone who doesn't put us down, someone who never thinks of himself above us in any way, and someone who can identify with us in all our troubles. He put his life on the line and died on the cross for you and me, and he doesn't abandon the ones he's died for. He was raised from death so that we would have hope in a life eternal without death. Surely by all counts he remains 'alright' in all our eyes!

Through Jesus Christ and his humble nature that he willingly shares with us our own relationships with those around us will slowly change. By constantly looking to his ultimate example of humble servanthood and allowing Christ's own selfless nature to work through us, we'll also be known as someone who is 'alright' in other people's eyes. Also, by constantly looking to and trusting in Jesus, we know that through his sacrifice, we're now 'alright' in God's eyes. Because of this, may...

...the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, guard and transform our hearts and minds so we might adopt the same attitude of Christ Jesus. Amen.

Pastor Stuart Kleinig
South Burnett Lutheran Parish
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