

Today we're going to continue with our Advent series that Tyler started. and as we heard last week, Advent is a season when we examine everything that has changed with Christ's coming. Tyler helped us look ahead to the Second Advent, how Christ's rule and reign brings us hope. Next week Stephen will look more closely at the First Advent and how the light of Christ entered the world. I'll be preaching today about what it means for us to live between these two events. We're going to explore the difference that Jesus makes in our lives now. How we change in light of what he's done. How God changes us.

Our main text for today that we heard read earlier is Philippians 2:1-11. In that passage the Apostle Paul encourages believers to love others by looking to Christ's example of how he loved us and came for us by humbling himself.

Humility.

Humility is almost like dirty word. We, of course, appreciate the stories about the virtue of humility in others. I mean, It's inspiring to hear of people who have given their time and their resources to serve others, but too often we can have a hard time seeing ourselves doing the same. Humbling ourselves sounds nice, but the cost seems too great. This is because the way of success and security in our world seems to come through pride, arrogance, and greed. These are all ways that we worship ourselves and they makes a ruin of our relationship to God and our relationship to others.

Selfishness and self-exaltation is the song that the world is playing. While this isn't a song the Church is singing, we know the tune and if we are not careful, we will hum along. This should not be though, and Jesus through the Gospel has given us a much better song to sing and in love, he is teaching it to us.

So our big idea for today is this:

Those converted to Christ live lives of humility and love toward others.

Points

Between the First Advent and Second Advent, we've been called to

- Put our trust in Christ
- Humbly Imitate Christ
- Invite Others to Know Christ

So one more time, let's look at our main text for today. Open up your bible or flick your screen to

Philippians Chapter 2 verses 1-11.

1 So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, 2 complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. 3 Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. 4 Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. 5 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, 7 but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. 9 Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, 10 so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

I've always loved this passage, but I've got to admit when I was preparing for this, it seemed kind of backwards for me. Paul tells us to do some things in the first five verses and then beginning in verse 6 he tells us why. He tells us what we should do and then why we should do it.

It has to do with who Paul is talking to. He's writing to a Church and He assumes that he's talking to believers. This is a home crowd he's speaking to of people who believe in Jesus.

And this is our first point for today.

Between the First Advent and Second Advent, we've been called to

1) Put Our Trust in Christ

This is foundational. To understand and to put in to practice what we'll hear today, you must be in Christ. Our passage starts with this as a presupposition. To be in Christ means that you have responded in faith and live life in relationship with God, trusting that Jesus, and Jesus alone, has done everything required to save sinners and restore you to God.

Believing this is what makes you a Christian. It's what makes US Christians.

This belief is what makes us a church. It's what has brought us all into relationship with one another. And this unity among believers and care for one another is what Paul gets to right off the bat.

He says in V. 1-2

1 So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, 2 complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.

Do we receive encouragement through Christ in the knowledge of the Gospel? Comfort, love, fellowship, unity and affection? Yes, yes, and yes. Of Course we do. Our unity within the Church flows from our unity with Christ. Our care for one another is a result of believing and trusting in Christ's care for us. So when we consider all we have received in Christ, we ought to express comfort, encouragement, love, and unity toward our fellow believers.

Before we go any further, In this season of disconnection, have your thoughts turned to someone from Church? Have you said to yourself, "I wonder how he's doing?", "I wonder how she's doing?" Brothers and sisters. I want to encourage you today: Don't wonder. Reach out. Call, text, ZOOM® if you must. But don't wonder.

Look around the room. There are people who are are part of our Church who we haven't seen on a Sunday morning for months. Who haven't you seen in a while that you used to see each week? Reach out today. Don't wait. Find simple ways to comfort, care, and sympathize with those around you. Consider all the ways that God has cared for you.

And for those at home who have been joining us online. We love you. We miss you.

We want you back when that can happen. We'll rejoice with you when you're able to return.

Whatever reason of conscience is compelling you to stay home, I want to encourage you to still be joined to us in spirit, in fellowship, and in community in all of the ways that you're able to. But don't be passive. Don't just wait for others to reach out to you. We all have a responsibility to one another. None of our relationships are one sided. Don't miss the opportunities that **you** may have to build up the body of Christ even in the midst of this time of caution.

Let **your** love for the Church and the people in it lead you to bring comfort, kindness, affection and sympathy.

So is there any encouragement in Christ? Yes. More than enough for this season and enough to fill our hearts for an eternity of worship. But we need to be in Christ to draw from this well.

If you're here today or watching online and you would say that you're not a Christian, that you're not "in Christ", I'm glad that you're here. Thank you for joining us. Today's message is about seeing the beauty of Jesus and having our lives transformed by him, so that the things we do, say and think might glorify God. If you want to know more about that, you're in the right place.

Putting our trust in Jesus is humbling because it exposes our need and that doesn't just happen once. Having a relationship with Christ will daily expose our need for Him. Naturally, we are self-centered and self-serving. Wanting to hide the bad, wanting to do good to be seen as good.

In order to be Christ-like, we need to be changed by Christ.

As we continue in our passage, we encounter an encouragement to believers, to the Christians, to humble ourselves with the incarnation of Jesus being given as a picture that will encourage our hearts toward that.

This is our second point
Between the First Advent and Second Advent in our world we're called to
2) Humbly Imitate Christ

Continuing on in our text starting with verse 3.

Philippians 2:3-8

*3 Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.
4 Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.
5 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, 7 but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.*

It would be easy today to read this text and hear a list of things we need to do to be good.

It makes me think of sermons I've heard over the years. These kind of character study sermons. Be courageous like David and face your giants. Be a leader like Nehemiah. Or in our case today, be humble like Jesus.

I don't know about you, but I have always found sermons like that crushing. Because I'm not Jesus. I'm not even David. I'm just Jonny.

When you hear calls to moral living like this
"3 Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit
but in humility count others more significant than yourselves."

When you hear that, you probably have a tendency to lean one way or the other. You might hear this call and say "I can't do this. I give up. It's too much." and so you do nothing. Nothing Changes. Or you hear this call, and get to work at striving towards perfection while being crushed by the thousand ways that you break this command everyday.

Whether you are crushed on one side or crushed on the other, I want to share with you that there is a better way forward here that is so much better than giving up or moralism.

Jesus is not just an example to follow.
Jesus actually enables us to follow him.

One of our Pastors here, KJ, you might know him.
He has this big truck. I think you'd call it a dually. I don't know. I don't know truck stuff.
It has Harley Davidson stickers on it. It's crazy. It's very big.

Now imagine KJ's truck breaks down and he asks me to move his truck across the parking lot back here.
Like with my body. It's not going to happen. I can't do it. It is actually impossible.

But what if he gave me a tow truck and some straps and the phone numbers of Sean Lenahan and Ken Stephens. Well then, that truck is getting moved. It's no longer an issue. I'm even happy to do it.

Sometimes we miss what we have in Jesus.
He doesn't make chains, he breaks them.
He doesn't ask you to do impossible things, he does impossible things through you.
He doesn't bring chaos and a million things to do, he brings rest.
Rest in the middle of it all.

Jesus is not just an example to follow.
Jesus actually enables us to follow him.

Now the hinge point of this passage is verse 5

It says

5 Have **this mind** among yourselves, **which is yours in Christ Jesus**

Do you see it? What Jesus does?

*3 Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.
4 Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. 5 Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus*

Jesus has given us what we need to follow him. This passage isn't shoving more morality onto our to do lists. It's showing us how those who have been saved by our Lord Jesus Christ are having their minds changed. This **happens** to Christians. Your mind will be changed by being in Christ Jesus.
If you are in Christ, this will happen.

Now you can get in the way of it. Christians still give in to sin. But this mind, counting others more significant than yourselves, is where you are headed in Christ. You can get in the way of this, or you can lean into this and we lean into it by humbly imitating Christ.

How do children learn to speak?

Do we command them to do it? No. We get in their fat little faces and say: Ma-ma. Da-da. We have them imitate us. They can speak. They will speak. They need to imitate.

And the Apostle Paul gives us the example of Jesus humbling himself in the incarnation, his becoming a man.

V. 5-8

5 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, 7 but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

I had said that verse 5 was the hinge verse here and that's because, above the hinge we are told what to do and below the hinge we are told how Jesus did it. We're told what it looked like when the person who could humble themselves the most, did.

Now, it's important to note that we are not called to do everything that Jesus did. We can't. We are not God. We cannot live a sinless life, we cannot pay the penalty for the sins of others, we can't even pay the penalty for our own sin.

The point of this example that Paul is giving us is not the degree of what is accomplished, it's the direction. It's the mind, the new motivations of our heart that we have in Christ.

Because everything that Jesus is going to accomplish is perfect. He is God. Omnipotent and Holy. And in mercy, he becomes one of us to provide a way of salvation to God that we could have never imagined.

Think about it.

The all powerful God humbled himself and became a helpless baby so that you might be helped. Think of what he set aside.

The Creator of the universe humbled himself and he got a blue collar job working with his hands.

The King of Glory, worthy of all praise forever, humbled himself and was mocked, beaten, tortured, crucified, and killed. The worst of punishments for the only one who didn't deserve any.

The eternally begotten son of God, present from eternity past, existing in perfect community, fellowship and love with God the Spirit and God the Father, was forsaken so that we might be restored to God in Him. What Jesus accomplished through his incarnation, his life as a man here on earth is amazing. No one has ever humbled themselves more than Jesus because no one has ever been in a higher position of authority. No one has had more to lose than Jesus. And Jesus doesn't do this because he likes pain, or because he was curious about what it's like to sleep on hay. Jesus humbles himself for the sake of joy.

Hebrews 12:2

2 looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

Jesus humbles himself and can endure humiliations of every kind, because of the joy to come. It's enough for him.

Can we imitate Christ and endure lesser humility for the sake of joy?
We can if our joy comes from eternal things. Imperishable things.

We were dead in our sin and condemned to death forever but in Christ we have been made alive and will live forever, with a citizenship in heaven. To be a Christian is to be in a position of perpetual gratefulness. Trusting in Jesus works this change in us. As we humble ourselves for Christ's sake, pour ourselves out for the sake of others we see his power working through us and are filled back up with gratefulness again.

Jesus enables us to follow him. The more we imitate, the more we see the joy and the more natural it becomes. We can consider others and not worry about being forgotten because Jesus has considered our need and remembered us. Because of Jesus can we lose ourselves yet we gain everything.

When we imitate Christ, we lay down our way of thinking, take the mind that is ours in Christ and love and obey God even when it's hard. We lay down our way of thinking, take the mind that is ours in Christ and we're able to come down **to** someone, without looking down **on** them. In-Christ is the only way we're able to love our neighbors as ourselves.

In Matthew 22 Jesus was asked what the greatest commandment was.
Of all the commandments and rules to follow in scripture, what is most important.

Matthew 22:36-40

*36 "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?"
37 And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. 38 This is the great and first commandment.
39 And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.
40 On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets."*

When you hear this commandment do you see Jesus fulfilling it in the incarnation?
I do.

Jesus obeying the Father, pursuing his Father's glory, humbling himself.
No one had more to lose. He lays it all down. With all of his heart. All of it for God's glory.

And to his neighbor's. Has Jesus loved us well?
We had nothing. We had less than nothing. We had a debt that could never be paid.
And not only did Jesus come and pay our debt, personally in his body
He has given us what only he deserves: In Jesus, we are counted as righteous.
Our sins no longer condemn us, and even our deaths one day will only serve to bring us into the presence of the one who loved us and gave himself for us.

Jesus doesn't just give us the greatest commandment, he keeps it. And then he helps us keep it.
Isn't that wonderful. To know that Jesus doesn't just give commands, but that he fulfills them.

Jesus perfectly fulfills the commandments. And what is his reward?
Worship.

Let's finish our passage:

Philippians 2:9-11

*9 Therefore God has highly exalted him
and bestowed on him the name that is above every name,
10 so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

What is Jesus' reward? Worship.

Worship everywhere forever. From every corner of the universe and reality.

From every plane of existence. From every nation tribe and tongue on the earth.

From every created heavenly being. From everyone, everywhere without ceasing.

This is what Jesus is worthy of.

And so out of love for our neighbors and because of the beauty and worth of Jesus.

We Invite Others to Know Christ

And this is our Third Point

Between the First Advent and Second Advent we're called to

3) Invite Others to Know Christ

To bring them in on this worship of Christ.

Jesus crossed the greatest of distances and the deepest humiliations to bring the message of the gospel to us.

And we know stories of Christ followers who have imitated Jesus in this way, missionaries like Adoniram Judson, Jim Elliott, many others who have crossed oceans, and endured hardship and even death for the sake of the spread of the gospel and for the sake of inviting others to worship Christ.

How are people saved?

Paul in Romans 10:13-15 answers this way

13 For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

But he continues

14 How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? 15 And how are they to preach unless they are sent?

The good news of God. The gospel of Jesus goes forward, out into the world when we believe it and tell others about it. All of us here today are here because someone loved us enough to humble themselves and be faithful to tell us about how Jesus changed everything.

Have **you** been imitating Christ in this way? Have you been faithful?

Parents have you been faithful to share your hope with your children?

Have we been faithful to share this wonderful news with our neighbors?

Students, have you shared the hope that you have in Jesu with your friends and roommates ?

How are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard?

We're about to head into a new year. And a few months into it, we'll be in a new building. We'll be in a new neighborhood. We'll be entering into an entirely new season of ministry in the life of our church. And we'll be entering a year where everyone around us is absolutely desperate for hope. What an opportunity to make a change.

We have an opportunity to say that "I'm going to make changes this year".

I'm going to deeply consider what Jesus has done for me and live in light of that.

I'm going to fill myself with the truth of his word, I'm going to meditate on the scriptures

I'm going to pray for a heart that feels again and that I might have eyes to see the needs around me that God would use me to meet those needs where I can.

To count others more significant than myself.

God has loved us perfectly in Jesus and every imperfect step we make to be more like Christ glorifies God. Every fumbled word and botched effort. Every step we take in humble imitation glorifies God. We will never be anyone's savior, but we know where salvation is found. Where hope is found. Where satisfaction and beauty and peace meet. They meet in Jesus. God with us.

Between the first and second advent, that's where we are.
And this time in-between is God's grace to us and to a world in need.
We have the knowledge of the Gospel, a treasure we're humbly carrying in a jar of clay.
And we know that Christ will return one day to rule and reign. Worthy of all our praise forever.

We are not even promised tomorrow, but if the Lord gives us 2 days or gives our Church 200 more years, may we, for joy set before us, Trust in Christ for salvation, Imitate Christ in Humility, and Invite others to know Christ so that together we might worship him to the glory of God the Father.