



The Beautiful Community: Humble Servanthood

Key idea:

If the Church is to be a beautiful community of unity and diversity, we must walk in humility, being willing to sacrifice our own rights in order to serve our brothers and sisters.

Key text:

Philippians 2:1-11

If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with 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 purpose. ³ Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. ⁴ Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.

⁵ Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: ⁶ Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, ⁷ but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. ⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death — even death on a cross! ⁹ Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰ 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.

Key points:

1. The Philippine church was struggling with disunity and Paul writes to encourage them in how to build unity in the midst of their diversity.
2. Our natural inclination to look out for our own self-interest rather than considering others is a major obstacle to the unity God desires.
3. The antidote for selfish interests is humility, a willingness to think of my own interests less in order to think of the needs of others.

4. Paul makes a strong appeal for a humble willingness to forego my own rights in order to serve others, basing this on the example of Christ Who gave up His rights as God in order to serve and save us.
5. Because Jesus humbled Himself, giving up His rights to serve us, God the Father exalted Him to the highest place so that even the enemies of God will bow before Christ.

Questions for discussion/application:

1. What part of Sunday's teaching stood out most to you? Why?
2. Is it surprising to me that the church at Philippi was struggling with disunity? How many of Paul's letters seem to include dealing with disunity in the local church as a key issue?
3. What does Paul identify as a major cause of disunity in Philippians 2:3-4? Does Paul seem to think this is an unusual problem or one that is widespread?
4. What does it mean to look not only to my own interests and affairs but also to consider the interests and affairs of others? Does this mean it is wrong to consider my own wants and desires? Why or why not?
5. Francis Schaeffer said "Since the Fall of man, we do not want to deny ourselves. Actually, we do everything we can, whether it is in a philosophic sense or a practical sense, to put ourselves at the center of the universe. This is where we naturally want to live." Do I agree with him? Can I think of examples of this in my own life and history?
6. When I hear the word 'humility' what comes to my mind? How would I define humility? How does this relate to Paul's idea in Philippians 2 of prioritizing the needs of others and being willing to serve others, even at my own expense?
7. In Philippians 2:7 Paul says that Jesus "made Himself nothing" or "emptied Himself". What does this mean? Of what did Jesus "empty Himself"? How did He make Himself nothing? Does this mean Jesus ceased to be God? If not, how did He empty Himself?
8. In what ways is Jesus described as humbling Himself in Philippians 2:5-8? How is God calling me to apply this in my own life?

9. When I consider following in the steps of Jesus in humble servanthood, what fears come to my mind? What am I afraid might happen if I do this? What excuses come to my mind as to why I should not follow Jesus in this behavior?
10. Is the Spirit bringing any specific area to mind where I have been exalting my own interests rather than humbly serving the interest of others? How is He calling me to humbly serve in this area this week?
11. Who will I call to encourage this week? What specific members of BRCC will I commit before God to call?