

I am excited about where we're heading today.

We are starting a brand new series today.

This is the first week of our Advent series.

It's called Humble King, and we're going to be looking at the humility of Christ, and we're going to be looking at what that means for us.

why God calls us to humility and how humility really reveals the heart of God and the nature and the character of who he is in a lot of ways.

So if you would open your Bibles with me to Luke chapter 2, we'll read verses 1 through 7.

And then we'll read from John chapter 1 as well.

So Luke 2, verse number 1 says, At that time, the Roman emperor Augustus decreed that a census should be taken throughout the Roman Empire.

This was the first census taken when Quirinius was governor of Syria.

I'm going to stop here and take a side note because this was cool.

Jennifer and I got to go to Rome for our 20th wedding anniversary a few years back.

And we were walking through this market in Rome.

And it was like a farmer's market kind of thing.

So there were booths set up and people were selling all kinds of things.

But in the middle of this market was this big hole in the ground, right?

Because they're all constantly digging in Rome and digging up food.

ruins and ancient stuff.

And so there was this big hole in the ground and it was nondescript.

There wasn't any big signs.

There wasn't a whole lot going on.

It was still an active dig, but they did have this little plaque.

And so much to Jennifer's chagrin, every time we walk by any kind of plaque or any kind of info about historic things, I want to stop and read all of it.

And she wants to just keep moving.

But I stopped to read the plaque.

And the plaque described what they were digging out.

And what they were digging out was an ancient forum.

And they said this forum was built with the taxes that were levied by Caesar Augustus that would have sent Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem.

And I thought, man, that's crazy to think about that, that...

He was trying to build the glory of Rome, but God was using that tax that he levied to reveal his glory to a lost and dying world.

And I just thought that was so incredible.

And sometimes we may walk by something that is nondescript,

But it has a purpose and a plan and a place in what God is unfolding that we might not even perceive.

And so that was free.

We can dive back into the message for today.

So this was the first census.

This is verse number two, taken when Quirinius was governor of Syria.

All returned to their own ancestral towns to register for this census.

And because Joseph was a descendant of King David, he had to go to Bethlehem in Judea, David's ancient home.

He traveled there from the village of Nazareth in Galilee.

He took with him Mary, to whom he was engaged, who was now expecting a child.

And while they were there, the time came for the baby to be born."

And she gave birth to her firstborn son, wrapped him snugly in strips of cloth and laid him in a manger because there was no lodging available for them.

And then John chapter one, verse one says, in the beginning, the word already existed.

The word was with God and the word was God.

He existed in the beginning with God.

God created everything through him and nothing was created except through him.

The word gave life to everything that was created and his life brought light to everyone.

The light shines in the darkness and the darkness can never extinguish it.

And then we'll jump down to verse number 14 of John chapter one.

It says this.

So the word became human and made his home among us.

He was full of unfailing love and faithfulness.

And we have seen his glory, the glory of the father's one and only son.

Let's pray.

Father, I thank you for your word.

I thank you that it does not return empty, but it accomplishes what you send it out to do.

So let it have its perfect way in us.

In Jesus' name we pray.

Amen.

So I have friends who work in the music industry.

And some of them are songwriters and some of them are touring musicians.

And I've got some friends who work in production and, you know, kind of all over the place.

But sometimes they tell me stories about the folks that they get to work with.

And sometimes those stories are about how down to earth and how kind and how normal these big name celebrities are.

And others are a little bit different than that, right?

Let's say that other stories are...

not so favorable.

One example that I remember is a story about a really well-known country singer, and I won't call their name.

But I had a friend who was working as the monitor tech.

And so if you don't know what that is, it's a person who stands over to the side.

So there's one person that mixes all the sound that's going out to the front of the house, and then there's another person that's mixing the monitors on stage that the musicians hear.

And so that person stands on the side of the stage behind a mixer and, you know, whatever, they're there to serve the needs of the band and the artist and that kind of thing.

And so I had a friend who was working side stage as the monitor tech for this really big name country artist.

And no one in the band or on the crew was allowed to speak directly to the artist.

The artist had an assistant who stood next to them, and it was their job to stand next to that artist at all times.

And if anyone needed to communicate to the artist, they had to address the assistant.

And then the assistant would turn and speak to the artist, and the artist would respond to the assistant, and then the assistant would relay that message to whoever.

They were not allowed to speak to that person directly.

Of course, that created a barrier between the artist and everyone else.

And they couldn't enter into a normal conversation.

There was no way for them to have relationship.

There was just this wall of separation the entire time.

And my friend was out on the road with this particular person for like three months and never got to speak to them.

When humility is absent, separation is the outcome.

Humility is a trait where you esteem yourself lower than what you really are.

It does not mean the absence of self-esteem, but rather not putting yourself on a pedestal above others.

Humility is the absence of arrogance.

Humble people do not have an attitude of self-importance.

C.S.

Lewis summed it up this way.

He said, humility is not thinking less of yourself.

It's thinking of yourself less.

Humility was God's chosen doorway into the world.

Christ didn't arrive with pomp or power or prestige.

He came in humility.

He came lowly in a feed trough, poor and powerless.

He came in dependency.

And every year, as followers of Jesus, we celebrate the advent, the arrival.

That's what that word means, by the way, if you ever wondered what advent means.

It means arrival.

So we celebrate the arrival of Christ.

I don't think we can ever talk too much about the nature of Christ's arrival.

In fact, I think we should talk about the incarnation all the time.

It shouldn't just be something that we remember once a year.

It should be something that we celebrate and that we meditate on and we think about all throughout the year that God would put on flesh and walk among us.

The nature of Christ's arrival into the world tells us a lot, so much about the nature of God, about His heart, about His character, about His love for us.

And it's interesting that Jesus would choose to arrive in this way because in the Greco-Roman world, humility was considered a vice and not a virtue.

John Dixon, in his book, he wrote a book called *Humilitas, A Lost Key to Life, Love, and Leadership*.

And he says that honor, not humility, was seen as a virtue in the Roman world.

So boasting about your achievements was expected.

in the Roman world.

And so Jesus arrives into this world where boasting and pomp and all of this was expected.

In fact, it was considered virtuous.

If people sang your praises, that was considered a virtue.

And so Jesus arrives into that world in the most lowly and humble way possible.

In the Roman world, one never humbled themselves to others as that would sacrifice your well-earned status.

Humility was something for children and slaves, not honorable men and women.

So the scripture's call to humility stood in opposition to, it stood over and against the prevailing culture in Jesus' day.

And really it stands over and against the prevailing culture in our day.

We love to boast.

Maybe you don't think you do, but I bet if I look at your social media feed, it would tell me differently.

We boast all the time.

We show our vacations to exotic locations.

We shout out our wins on Facebook.

For you younger people, that's the social media that us older people mostly post on.

That was supposed to be funnier than it was, but that's all right.

We'll keep going.

But we boast about things.

Sometimes we do the humble brag, right?

We know we shouldn't, so it looks something like this.

You know, we have this picture of this exotic location and then we say, you know, but then we put a scripture verse underneath it and we put hashtag blessed.

But really, what we want is for everyone to see what we're doing and where we are and what we have and

And I'm as guilty as anybody else.

So if you're feeling like your toes are stepped on, I'm 10 toes down too, right?

Dixon, in his book, he said this about humility.

He said, humility stands alone among the virtues in that as soon as you think you have it, you probably don't.

And yet the reverse does not follow.

Not thinking yourself humble is no indication that you are.

You might be right.

Both the arrogant and the humble are unlikely to think of themselves as humble.

Isn't that an interesting thing?

Just another side note.

One of the most interesting pieces of scripture to me is the one that says that Moses was the most humble man that ever lived.

Because I don't know if you are aware of this or not, but Moses supposedly wrote that.

So I always said, I think maybe there was somebody else that added that later.

I hope that's the case and that Moses didn't.

Anyway, that makes me laugh.

I don't know about you.

But both the arrogant and the humble are unlikely to think of themselves as humble.

And when we do think we're humble, we probably aren't.

Jesus is a lot of things.

There are many things that we could use to describe him.

But in speaking of himself, Jesus only chose two traits.

And one of them was humility.

In Matthew 11, 29, he says, take my yoke upon you.

Let me teach you because I am humble and gentle at heart.

And you will find rest for your souls.

So humility was God's doorway into the world.

This is the way that he chose to announce himself.

If you can even call it an announcement, really heaven announced him to shepherds, which by the way, shepherds were considered dirty and like no one wanted to be a shepherd.

They didn't have the honor that they have now.



In fact, it would have been considered kind of scandalous that Jesus called himself the good shepherd.

Like the Pharisees and people like that, they didn't want anything to do with shepherds because they dealt with dirty, nasty sheep all the time.

They were always unclean.

And so the fact that Jesus even would have began to identify himself as shepherd, while people would have absolutely understood the image that he was creating that was not one that any of the religious leaders of that day would have chosen for themselves.

And we see over and over again where these, you know, as Jesus grows and as he enters into public ministry, where, you know, he says, you know, the birds have nests and, you know, but the son of man has nowhere to lay his head.

And we see him living in humility.

We see him humble.

And, you know, and so this was God's doorway into the world.

And that humility, Christ's humility reveals God's heart.

Because the only one who could rightly demand honor chose to become lowly.

The only one who had a right to boast chose instead to clothe himself in weakness.

He identified himself with the poor and with the marginalized and with the outcasts of society.

He didn't demand to be honored.

He still doesn't demand our praise.

He comes to us gently and he reveals himself to us in kindness and he invites us into relationship by giving himself to us.

Even in the incarnation, right?

Maybe even especially in the incarnation, he is giving himself.

John 1, 14, we read just a few minutes ago.

So the word became human and made his home among us.

He was full of unfailing love and faithfulness, and we have seen his glory, the glory of the Father's one and only Son.

And then in Isaiah chapter 53, verse 7, Isaiah prophesying about Christ said he was oppressed and treated harshly, yet he never said a word.

He was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep is silent before the shearers, he did not open his mouth.

In 1 Peter chapter 2, verses 21 through 23, Peter, speaking of Christ, first to us, says, For God called you to do good, even if it means suffering, just as Christ suffered for you.

He is your example.

And you must follow in his steps.

He never sinned.

He never deceived anyone.

He did not retaliate when he was insulted.

Nor threaten revenge when he suffered.

He left the case in the hands of God who always judges fairly.

And then finally Philippians chapter 2 verses 5 through 8.

We read this last week actually.

It says you must have the same attitude Christ Jesus had.

Though he was God, he did not think equality was with God as something to cling to.

Instead, he gave up his divine privileges.

He took the humble position of a slave and he was born as a human being.

When he appeared in human form, he humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal's death on the cross.

You see, God doesn't demand our worship.

He didn't come declaring who he was from the heavens.

He came in quietness and humility and in meekness.

He invites us into relationship with him.

He comes as a servant.

He comes as one, you know, who really whose glory becomes apparent only when you draw near.

But when we do that, our response is worship.

Humility reveals the heart of God.

Humility stoops low to help those in need.

God saw us.

He saw humanity in our poverty, both our physical and spiritual poverty.

And he came to our rescue.

Jesus, unlike the religious leaders of his time, willingly came near to those who were unclean, who were rejected, who were hated, and he befriended them.

In the parable of the prodigal son, Jesus describes how the father runs to the son as the son is returning home.

And that's a startling image in that story because men of wealth and status did not run.

And they especially didn't run to those who were beneath them in social standing.

And they certainly didn't run toward children who had disowned them and dishonored their families and were coming back having squandered their fortunes and shamed the family name.

Yet this is the picture that Jesus paints of our Heavenly Father, and this is exactly what Jesus enacts when He leaves His throne in glory and comes and walks in flesh among us.

He is the Father running toward those who have shamed His name, who have dishonored Him, who have squandered their fortune and have no ability to rescue themselves.

One of the most beautiful pictures to me in all of the scripture of Jesus and his humility is just before the last supper when they're getting ready to sit down together.

In John chapter 13, verse number four, it says, so he got up from the table, took off his robe, wrapped a towel around his waist, and poured water into a basin.

Then he began to wash the disciples' feet, drying them with the towel he had around him.

This is the heart of our Savior.

Washing feet was considered to be the lowest job in the household.

More often than not, it was performed by slaves.

And if a household had slaves...

Washing feet was not performed by the Jewish slaves, only the Gentile slaves.

And yet we see Christ in this moment getting up from the table, wrapping the towel around his waist, and taking the lowest job possible and washing the feet of the disciples.

Scripture tells us Jesus said himself, he said, the son of man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.

And so as we look at Christ's example of surrender, as we look at his humility, his willingness to come and submit himself to the will of the father all the way from the cradle to the cross, what that does for us is then invites us into surrender as well.

We so often strive.

We strive for recognition.

We strive for honor.

We strive for achievement.

We strive for things.

We want to be seen and appreciated for our contributions and our achievements.

But Christ invites us to stop striving and to surrender to him and to his lordship.

We're invited, just like Christ, to choose the way of humility by honoring others.

In Romans 12, verse number three, the apostle Paul said, because of the privilege and authority God has given me, I give each of you this warning.

Do not think you are better than you really are.

Be honest in your evaluation of yourselves, measuring yourselves by the faith God has given us.

A pastor friend of mine, his name is Sam, and Sam says all of the time, this was a mantra around their church.

He says, honor up, honor down, honor all around.

And he talks about that they want their church to have a culture of honoring others, of putting others before themselves, of serving one another.

And I think that's beautiful.

And I can't do it like Sam.

You'd have to know Sam to know.

I can't do the honor up, honor down.

You know, it's not my thing.

But I love the heart of it.

And I think it exemplifies the heart of Jesus, that he came to serve and not to be served.

And so we are called to do the same.

And the Apostle Paul is warning the church in Rome in these verses to say, hey, don't think more of yourself than you ought to.

Measure yourselves by the faith that God has given to you.

Be honest in your evaluation of yourselves.

He goes on in verse number 10 of that chapter.

It says, love each other with genuine affection and take delight in honoring each other.

In 1 Corinthians 9, 19, Paul again says, even though I am a free man with no master, I have become a slave to all people to bring many to Christ.

1 Corinthians 10, 24 says, don't be concerned for your own good, but for the good of others.

First Peter 5, 5 says, in the same way, you who are younger must accept the authority of the elders.

And then this is the part I want us to really latch on to today.

And all of you dress yourselves in humility as you relate to one another.

For God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.

I don't know about you, but I don't want to find myself in opposition to God.

And then James chapter four, verse 10 says, humble yourselves before the Lord and he will lift you up in honor.

You see, humility will lead to honor, but only if it's real.

Only if it's real.

So I want to go back to Dixon's observation on humility at the beginning, where he says, as soon as you think you have it, you probably don't.

The reality is that it's something that we have to consistently practice.

It's something that we have to do with intention.

The scriptures talk about, and Jesus talked about, when you go into a banquet, like...

Don't sit in the seat of honor.

Even if you're the honored guest, like this is the instruction that Jesus gives.

Take the lowest seat.

That way, if you're not the honored guest and they have to remove you from the seat, then you won't be shamed.

But then if they move you and put you in the place of honor, right?

So it's something that we have to practice, right?

We have to do it with intentionality.

Serving others is something that we have to make a habit, do it with intention, do it as a matter of practice and make time and room for it.

That's why one of the things that we encourage here at Lifespring is that you find a place to serve.

And a lot of times I think there can be the misconception is that we want you to find a place to serve because we got jobs that need to be filled and we got holes that need to be filled.

And sure, there are opportunities and places and roles and sometimes there's a hole there.

But I don't want you to serve just because there's a hole there.

We serve because of what it accomplishes in us and for others.

We serve because it is the heart of God to serve.

We serve because it encourages humility in us.

We serve because it works out the nature of Christ in us.

I heard another pastor friend say one time, he said, if you want to find out if you have a servant's heart, just let someone treat you like a servant.

I don't pass that test sometimes.

Can I be honest?

But the way of humility.

And this is why we're going back to the Roman Roman idea about honor and humility.

This is why the Romans didn't consider humility a virtue.

Because being humbled does not feel good.

But sometimes the things that God uses to work out the nature of Christ in us are not the things that feel best, but they are the things that accomplish the most in terms of shaping our character and teaching us what it means to know Christ and to be like him.

You know, if we look at the Lord himself, the way of humility led to his death.

The way of humility led to suffering.

We oftentimes preach the gospel as if it is an escape from suffering.

But sometimes suffering is the very thing that God calls us to because in it there is a greater glory that he is working out in us that we might not perceive or understand.

And I know that's not like the encouragement you came for today.

But let me encourage you.

Suffering is not in vain.

And that was why followers of Jesus were so very different from the world around them.

They didn't honor themselves.

They didn't seek their own glory.

They sought to honor Christ and they gave honor to others.

Serving becomes the highest value, not being served.

I referenced this verse a few minutes ago, but in Mark chapter 10, verse 45, Jesus said, even the son of man came not to be served, but to serve others and to give his life as a ransom for many.

You know, we opened this year, 2025, with a series we called Before, and that was our word for the year.

And in that series, I did my best to set the tone for this year, talking about what God had set before us, the opportunities that he was setting before us and how we needed to focus on what God had placed before us and in pursuing what he is calling us to do and where he is directing us to go.

And one of the things that I shared during that series was this.

That when we live with a you before me mentality, everyone gets served.

And as we close out this year and as we enter into this Advent season, I want to remind you of that again.

And I want us to see that there is no greater example of that truth than Christ Jesus himself.

He put the will of the Father first.



He put us first.

He offered himself for us.

He set aside his glory.

He set aside the glory of heaven.

In fact, what the scriptures tell us is that the Father emptied the treasure of heaven.

when Jesus came.

So he laid aside his glory.

He laid aside all of those things and he put on weakness.

He put on flesh.

And as followers of Jesus, I want us to ask ourselves and to invite the Holy Spirit to reveal to us how we might put others first this Christmas.

Let's ask the Lord to expose the places of pride in our hearts and give us the strength to respond and surrender so that we might be a reflection of our humble king.

And if you're not a follower of Jesus today, I want you to know that this is the good news.

This is the gospel that the king of all kings has.

The Lord of all lords, the sovereign ruler of all creation, the great I am, left his throne in heaven, clothed himself in weakness, and came as a babe in a manger.

He made himself vulnerable, dependent, and weak.

He lived humbly and he served the will of the Father, ultimately following that path all the way to the cross where he laid his life down for you and for me.

And his sacrifice made a way for us to have fellowship with God.

And today, he invites us in.

We can be accepted in.

We can be sons and daughters of God because he was willing to walk the path of humility.

And we can enter into relationship with him by faith.

Revelation chapter 3 verse 20 says, look, I stand at the door and knock.

If you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in and we will share a meal together as friends.

So would you bow your head and close your eyes with me this morning?

God, I thank you that you chose the way of humility.

Lord, you could have arrived from heaven with armies of angels.

could have wiped out all of the kingdoms of men and established your throne in power.

Lord, one day you will.

That's what the scriptures tell us.

That one day you'll return as a conquering king.

But Lord, you first chose to reveal yourself in humility, in weakness, to come and walk among us, to fellowship with us in our suffering,

And the writer of Hebrews tells us that you did that so that you might identify with us in our suffering, so that we would know that we have a high priest who understands our weakness.

And so that we might have the opportunity, Lord, to bow our knee today to the humble King of glory.

And Lord,

We can enter into relationship with you because you gave yourself for us.

So Jesus, we thank you.

If you would just keep your heads bowed for just a second.

I want to give you an opportunity today.

I read that verse from Revelation.

It said he's standing at the door and he's knocking.

And I want you to know he's standing at the door of your heart today.

My question for you is will you let him in?

In this season where we give and receive gifts, God offers to you the greatest gift of all.

He offers you himself and he offers you salvation through faith.

And so if that's you today and you say, Todd, I want to surrender my heart to Jesus today.

I want today to be the beginning of a new way of living.

So if that's you, just raise your hand and let me see you where you are.

I'll wait just a couple of seconds.

Maybe something's stirring in your heart and you know this is the day.

That's you.

All right.

So then church, I'd like you to look up here at me one more time and why don't you just go ahead and stand.

I want to challenge you this week to reflect on God's nearness in low places and ask the Lord how you might be like him in that way.

Slow down, practice hidden acts of kindness, and look for ways that you can choose to go low, to take the second seat.

As we prepare to dismiss this morning, I wanted to read a prayer for humility that I found written by Raphael Cardinal Mary Duval.

I know you all know him, right?

But it's beautiful and I wanted to pray it over us this morning as we prepare to go.

It says this, O Jesus, meek and humble of heart, hear me.

From the desire of being esteemed, deliver me, Jesus.

From the desire of being loved, deliver me, Jesus.

From the desire of being extolled, deliver me, Jesus.

From the desire of being honored deliver me Jesus.

From the desire of being praised deliver me Jesus.

From the desire of being preferred deliver me Jesus.

From the desire of being consulted deliver me Jesus.

From the desire of being approved deliver me Jesus.

From the fear of being humiliated deliver me Jesus.

From the fear of being despised, deliver me Jesus.

From the fear of suffering rebukes, deliver me Jesus.

From the fear of being forgotten, deliver me Jesus.

From the fear of being ridiculed, deliver me Jesus.

From the fear of being wronged, deliver me Jesus.

From the fear of being suspected, deliver me Jesus.

That others may be loved more than I, Jesus grant me the grace to desire it.

That others may be esteemed more than I, Jesus grant me the grace to desire it.

That in the opinion of the world, others may increase and I may decrease, Jesus grant me the grace to desire it.

That others may be chosen and I set aside, Jesus grant me the grace to desire it.

That others may be praised and I unnoticed, Jesus grant me the grace to desire it.

That others may be preferred to me in everything, Jesus grant me the grace to desire it.

That others may become holier than I, provided that I may become as holy as I should, Jesus grant me the grace to desire it.

May that be true of us, church.

Amen?

Amen.

I love you.

God bless you.

I'll see you again soon.