

Open your Bibles to Philippians 2:3-11.

- We're continuing our Advent series.
- This morning we'll be considering the subject of Humble Service by looking at the example of our Lord in His Incarnation.

Selfishness is a common sin.

- Selfishness is the manifestation of pride. And some theologians have argued that pride is the root of all sin.
- So then, selfishness, a self-centered attitude that manifests itself in self-serving actions at the expense of others, is all around us and within us all the time.
- But we don't even think about most of the time, unless we've done something overtly selfish and/or someone calls us out on it.
- It's second nature for sinners to be self-focused.

It was talking about this with one of our Deacons, Bob Knox, and he said something I hadn't considered:

- We see things through OUR eyes, think about OUR wants, have OUR own internal monologues, put food in OUR mouths, feel things with OUR hands, and so on.
- Basically, everything we do is from our perspective and for ourselves.
- So, selfishness is a natural thing that we're disposed to as sinners.
- It takes a supernatural work of God for us to really become "others-centered" in our thinking.
- It takes divine power to re-circuit our minds to consider others and desire to serve them.

Think about this: Why do you have conflict with others?

- Most of the time, the answer is “selfishness.”
- Either you’re being selfish, or they are.
- We demand and insist on our own way. We think the agenda should be ours alone to set.
- We think that everyone should be like, think like, and act like us.
- We think only of our our personal preferences and desires and pleasures.
- That’s all a recipe for conflict. And it’s all selfishness.

And what’s funny is that selfishness is easy to spot in other people. But we’re slow to spot it in ourselves.

- And, honestly, it’s probably not hard to see in ourselves. We’re just reluctant to humble ourselves before God and others and admit it.
- Often, the thing we hate most in others is within ourselves. We just don’t want to see it.

Now, why do I want to preach about selfishness now that we’re two weeks away from Christmas?

- I want to preach on this subject because the Son of God taking on human flesh was the exact opposite of selfishness. It was the height of humility and service.
- In theology, we refer to the Son of God’s assuming a human nature, birth, life, suffering, and death as His “humiliation.”
- It was His self-humbling. He made Himself low for us and for our salvation.

And reflecting on the Incarnation of God the Son and the purpose for which He came into the world will burn selfishness out of us.

- How? Because it was the single most selfless act done in all history. And it was for us.

- Knowing that we have been served by God Himself, getting that deep into our hearts, will change how we view service.

- Seeing His humility with the eye of faith will increase our own humility. Seeing His service will increase our desire to serve. Seeing His infinite love will increase our love.

- That's the Apostle Paul's reasoning in our text today.

You see, the Philippians were having a problem with unity.

- There was strife within the church. There was bickering and fighting and disharmony.

- In a word, they were suffering from the disease of selfishness.

- And the medicine that the Apostle gave them was the example of Christ's humility, service, and love for sinners.

- For if the Son of God did these things, and He is our Lord and Master, how can any believer refuse them?

Brothers and sisters, my prayer is that God will use this passage to humble us and give us an earnest desire to serve others in every area of life.

- That we might become more like Christ in our homes, workplaces, with extended family, and in this church.

- That we might make ourselves low every day for the

good of others, as our Lord did for us.

- May God bless the preaching of His Word.

If you would, and are able, please standing with me now for the reading of the inspired, inerrant, and infallible Word of God.

Philippians 2:3-11

[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,

[6] 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.

(PRAY)

Blessed Trinity,

•Have mercy on us this morning and teach us.

- *Show us the glory of God displayed in the humility and love of God the Son.*
- *Show us our Lord Jesus, the Suffering Servant, who loved us and gave Himself for us.*
- *Speak to our hearts and lead us and transform us that we might better reflect our Savior.*
- *Father, show us your Son.*
- *Son of God, reveal yourself to us.*
- *Holy Spirit, show us the Lover of our souls.*
- *Triune God, sanctify us and cause us to love others as we've been loved by you.*
- *We ask these things in Jesus' Name and for His sake.*
- *Amen.*

1.) Normally, I go through a text verse-by-verse and walk it from beginning to end.

- But today I want to rearrange the verses to help you see the Apostle's reasoning.
- The commands in vv3-5 are rooted in what our Lord did in His Incarnation.
- Normally, the order is Indicative then Imperative. (What Christ did, then what you do.)
- But here Paul puts them in reverse. And that's inspired and definitely legitimate.
- But for this sermon, I'd like to start with Christ and then work our way back to Paul's commands, so we end with application after rooting it in Christ.

We are commanded to put away selfishness and conceit and replace those sins with humility and service.

- And the reason is CHRIST.
- So let's start with Him in vv6-11.

Speaking of "Christ Jesus" at the end of v5, Paul goes on to say, "...who, though he was in the form of God..."

- "Form of God" here means the exact nature of God.
- Our Lord is the Son of God.
- As we confess, "God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made; of the same essence as the Father."
- As the text goes on to say, The Son has "equality with God."
- Our Lord "is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of His nature..." (Hebrews 1:3)
- He is "the Christ, who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen." (Romans 9:5)
- He is "our great God and Savior." (Titus 2:13)
- He is the eternal Word of God. As John 1:1 says, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."

Our Lord Jesus Christ is truly God and truly man, two natures in one Person, who is God the Son.

- With regard to His divine nature, He is GOD, the second Person of the Holy Trinity.
- This phrase "He was in the form of God" refers to Christ's eternal existence prior to His Incarnation.
- He, as God, was "in the form of God." He was not yet in human form, having not yet united Himself to a human nature.

But, though He is God, He “did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped...”

- Though He is equal with the Father, He did not count that equality as something to be held onto at all costs. He was willing to be made low for a time.

- As God, He is higher than all, ruling over all, eternally blessed, dwelling in splendor and glory, equal to the Father.

- But He did not refuse, in a sense, in a very particular way, to humble Himself, to make Himself low.

That’s why Paul says that He “emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.”

- Now, let’s get something very clear because many people have abused this text and taught heresy from it.

- The literal wording of the text is “emptied Himself.”

- BUT those literal words are being used by Paul in a FIGURATIVE SENSE.

- It’s a figure of speech. Paul uses the metaphor of “emptying” multiple times in his letters.

- It means to “give up status or privilege” or to “make weak/make nothing” by comparison.

- This is why the KJV accurately gives the SENSE of Paul’s words by translating it, “But made Himself of no reputation...”

“Emptied Himself” DOES NOT mean that Son of God became something less than God.

- God cannot change in any way whatsoever. As He says in Micah 3:6, “I the LORD do not change...”

- The Son of God is the LORD just as the Father and

the Holy Spirit are the LORD. So He cannot change.

- As God, the Son gave up NOTHING.
- As God, He did not give up His glory, omniscience, omnipotence, omnipresence, holiness, righteousness, sovereignty, or any other thing.
- As God, He did not give up His equality with the Father.

But, nevertheless, He did, in a sense, empty Himself.

•How? "...by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men."

•As He was in the form of God, He took the form of man. HE TRULY BECAME A MAN.

•"And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us..."
(John 1:14)

The one Person who is the Son of God, equal with the Father, took a human nature to Himself.

•And in that nature, in His humanity, denied Himself all the privileges that are rightfully His as God.

•All the glory and splendor and blessedness of deity, which the Son deserves as God, were denied to His human nature.

•All the rights that are His as God, He withheld from Himself as man.

So the Son of God truly did empty Himself, though not by a loss of His deity.

•He emptied Himself by assuming a human nature. By becoming a creature.

•So then, because of the unity of the natures in the

ONE PERSON who is God the Son, we can really say that the Son of God was made low, humbled Himself, emptied Himself, gave up His rights and privileges, though not according to His divine nature.

- The “emptying” was becoming human, not ceasing to be God.

2.) Now, having set up those guardrails, take a step back and behold the holy mystery of God made flesh.

- We will never comprehend this. We will never fully understand it.

- We can affirm it because the Word of God declares it. But we will never fully grasp it.

- The Creator became a creature. The Son of God became a man.

- Let every soul bow its head in reverence at the humility of the Son of God!

We could have never asked for this. We could have never expected this.

- God came down to us in the form of a servant.
- Our God made Himself low.
- Though man is the highest of all creatures on earth, the gap between man and God is INFINITE! And yet, the Son of God jumped that gap and became one of us.

Can you see that this baby born in a manger in Bethlehem is of infinite value?

- Infinitely precious! Infinitely worthy! Infinitely valuable!
- Why? He is the Son of God in the flesh.

The glory of God the Son was hidden for a time, unseen in His human nature.

- He did not seem to be God, though He is God.
- When you looked upon Him, you only saw a man. So much so that He would be accused of blasphemy for declaring Himself to be equal with God.
- Though men could not perceive it, “...in Him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily...” (Colossians 2:9)
- “Veiled in flesh, the Godhead see! Hail, the Incarnate Deity! Pleased as man with man to dwell. Jesus, our Immanuel!”

The one called “God with us” had come.

- The King put on the common clothes of human nature and dwelled among His people, unknown to them.
- The majestic One laid aside His glory and became truly human.
- This is humility if you’ve ever heard of it!
- Who among us would do such a thing? Only our holy God!

And that infinite self-willed, self-humbling was only the beginning of His humiliation.

- He entered our sin-stained, wicked, broken, mess of a world. And, as a man, was subjected to the miseries of human existence in a fallen world.
- “Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise partook of the same things...” (Hebrews 2:14)

He was born poor. A crying baby in a stable.

- He was liable to sickness. He would grow tired and

hungry. He would cry. He would have to grow.

- He would have to learn. He would experience human emotions.

- He would endure every miserable thing we do, and all temptations, but would be without sin for He is the Son of God.

You'd think that if the Son of God assumed a human nature, He would've come in a great show of glory and power and honor, since that man is infinitely valuable and worthy.

- But He didn't come in pomp and circumstance. He didn't even come in the glory and splendor of earthly kings!

- He made Himself of no reputation. He made Himself NOTHING!

- Not even the most glorious palace in all the world would've been enough. But He gave Himself nothing.

- The Son of Man had nowhere to lay His head.

From His birth to His death, He, being truly higher than all, was lower than all.

The One who owned all things, owned nothing.

- The One who ruled all things, ruled nothing.

- The One who is in every way beautiful made Himself one who had "no beauty that we should desire Him."

- The One whom angels adore was "despised and rejected by men."

- The eternally blessed God became a "man of sorrows and acquainted with grief."

- The greatest Somebody, even God, became the lowest nobody-man you could ever imagine.

And do you see this? HE WILLED THIS!

•HE “emptied Himself.” As v8 says, “HE humbled himself.”

•This was voluntary. He chose to do this. He was not forced or compelled. This was His will.

•He had every right to do nothing. It was for LOVE that He came to earth. Love for sinners. Love for those who do not deserve love at all.

•He did this in order to save sinners!

•He could’ve rightfully said, “You fix the mess yourselves. Fix your own sin. I don’t care that you can’t do it. It’s not my problem.” And that would’ve been just of Him!

•Nobody could’ve ever accused Him of wrongdoing if that’s what He chose to do.

•But that’s not what He did! He bent LOW, lower than we will ever understand, in order to serve us.

3.) And that’s why the Apostle goes on to say, “And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.”

•Here the purpose of the Incarnation is put on display.

•Here is the glory of God.

•Here the humility of the eternal Son is made clear.

•He became a man and came to earth in order to humble Himself, obey, and die.

•He came to serve sinners and save them!

•Our Lord’s life was nothing but service: Service to God and service to men.

As a man, our Lord submitted Himself in perfect, humble obedience to God.

- He was subject to the OT ceremonial Law, the legitimate civil laws of His land, the Moral Law of God, and the extra commandment of God to live and die in the place of sinners.

- And He executed everything gladly and flawlessly. It was His great pleasure to submit to, obey, and serve God in all things.

- As He said, “My food is to do the will of Him who sent me and to accomplish His work.” (John 4:34)

As a man, our Lord submitted Himself in perfect, humble service to men.

- He healed, fed, taught, loved, forgave, was patient with, was gracious toward, human beings.

- He put others first at all times. God alone was put before men. But He put Himself before no one.

This is all exemplified in John 13 when He washed the feet of His disciples.

- This was the job of a slave. The lowest of the low.

- And the King, God Almighty, washed feet.

- Why? Because, apparently, none of His disciples were willing to stoop low to serve one another.

- So HE DID IT.

And then, in the greatest act of humility the world has ever seen, He died.

- “He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.”

- He died the shameful death of the cross.

The cross was the ultimate indignity. The ultimate act of humility.

- It was pure mockery. It was degrading and humiliating, in addition to being agonizing and indescribably painful.

- Stripped naked, beaten nearly to the point of death, forced to carry His own cross, nails driven through His hands and feet, hung up on the side of the road for all to see, mocked and spat upon, gasping for each breath, slowly suffocating, blasphemed and reviled...until He gave up His spirit.

- This was the antithesis of His majesty as God. And HE WILLED TO DO IT!

And He did so in order to save us from our sins.

- It was a cursed death, “for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree.’” (Galatians 3:13)

- He went to the Cross in order to suffer the curse of God for our sins!

- “For our sake He made Him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.” (2 Corinthians 5:21)

- “He Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By His wounds you have been healed.” (1 Peter 2:24)

- “In this is love, not that we have loved God but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” (1 John 4:10)

He took our sins! He bore our shame and guilt!

- The punishment that should've fallen on us fell upon Him instead!

- He suffered the wrath of God that we justly deserved for our sin!
- He offered Himself up in our place as the sacrifice to take away our sins!

The Creator was killed by His own creatures.

- He could've stopped it. But He didn't.
- That's humility. That's love.
- Apart from His will, His murderers would've ceased to exist, for He holds the world together by His will.
- But He permitted it! He volunteered Himself for this!

Brothers and sisters, hear me: Nails did not hold Him to the cross. LOVE DID!

- For you. For me. For sinners. For the glory of God.
- That was His motivation!

Behold your God!

- The man dying on the Cross, that is your God!
- What condescension! What grace! What love! What humility! What service! What glory!
- O, how He loves His People! How He loves the unworthy! How He loves and serves and saves sinners!
- The One greater than all made Himself less than nothing for those who are infinitely lower than Himself!

Our greatest need was to be reconciled to God.

- And Our Lord selflessly and humbly did what was necessary to meet the needs of others, dying on the cross as our sin-bearer.
- The Son of God made Himself a servant of God and men for us and for our salvation.

- This is not the way of the world. It's the complete opposite.
- But make no mistake, this is no fiction. This is fact.
- Behold your God!

4.) But that's not the end of the story. So the Apostle goes on to say this in vv9-11:

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

There are many glorious things in these verses. But for today, I want to highlight one simple thing.

- This is what God thinks of humility and service: It is the most glorious thing that anyone can do.
- Why? Because it's what His own Son did.

And He was rewarded for it.

- As the God-Man, He was exalted and given a Name that is above every name.
- And He was given a promise that every rational being that has ever existed will confess that He is Lord.
- Willingly or unwillingly. Gladly or begrudgingly. It doesn't matter. All will confess that He is supreme!
- All will confess that He is God come in the flesh. That He is above all.
- The whole creation is subjected to the God-Man who made Himself low to save sinners!

We learn from this what God values. We learn from this what true greatness is: CHRIST.

- And Christ is characterized by humble service to men and humble obedience to God.

- THAT is glorious and precious in God's sight.
- Christ is glorious and precious in God's sight. So Christlikeness is the same to Him.

God exalts the humble. Remember that.

- God loves the humble. He rewards the humble.
- We can't expect to be exalted as Christ was, for He is greater than all. But God will eternally bless those who imitate His Son, for He loves His Son.

5.) Now, we turn back to v5: "Have THIS mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus..."

- The traditional rendering of this verse is better: "Have this mind among yourselves, which WAS ALSO IN Christ Jesus..."

- "Have this mind..." What mind? The mind of Christ.
- We are to take up the mindset/attitude that Christ had that led to His Incarnation and death for us.

Jesus is first and foremost our SAVIOR.

- But that absolutely DOES NOT exclude the reality that He is also our EXAMPLE.

- Following His example won't save you. You won't be saved by your works.

- Salvation is found through faith alone in Christ alone.
- But the believer is to strive to be like the Lord.
- As 1 John 2:6 says, "whoever says he abides in Him ought to walk in the same way in which He walked."

Brothers and sisters, our Lord has set the pattern.

- Like a man clearing a path in a jungle, our Lord has went before us and shows us the way to go.
- And that way is the way of humility, love, and service for others.
- It's the path of self-denial and self-sacrifice for the good of those around us.
- It's the path of lowliness, thinking less of ourselves, and gladly submitting to God's command to love our neighbor.
- Friends, have THAT MIND which was also in Christ.

And we turn now to vv3-4 to see what that looks like for us in our daily lives:

- "Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit..."
- Don't look to advance your own agenda at the expense or detriment of others.
- Don't make accomplishing your goals and meeting your desires the great thing of your life, if it requires you to ignore others in order to do so.
- Whether they are big life goals, or small daily desires, don't pursue your own way if it requires you to ignore the needs of others.

And don't be proud. Don't do anything from "conceit."

- Stop pretending you're greater than you really are.
- Stop thinking you're always right and everyone else is always wrong.
- Stop thinking that your way is always best.
- Stop thinking that the world and everything in it is all

about you and what you want, as if you're the most important person.

- Enough with the pride! Enough with the self-centeredness! Think about somebody else!

DO NOTHING from these things.

- Do nothing that comes from self-centered thinking.
- Do nothing that comes at the expense of others.
- This means that we have to consider our motives for what we do each day.
- We need to ask ourselves, "Why do I want to do this? To what end? How will this affect others? Am I being selfish? Am I thinking only of me?"

Instead of acting out of "selfish ambition or conceit" we should "in humility count others more significant than [y]ourselves."

- We are to have lowliness of mind.
- This isn't false humility that is about making others THINK we're humble. That's also self-centered.
- Instead, this is a call to FORGET YOURSELF and remember others.

Counting others as more significant than ourselves means that we have to die to ourselves.

- We have to stop thinking that everything exists to please us and give us our desires.
- Think about it: If you believe that others are more important than yourself, then how can everything be about you? (Answer: It can't.)

And that's why Paul then says, "Let each of you look

not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.”

- Listen: Everyone looks out for himself. That’s human nature. But Paul tells us to look out for others like we do for ourselves.

- This is just an application of “Love your neighbor.”

- This is a call for all of us to ask ourselves, “How can I help? How can I bless them? What can I do for them? How can I serve?”

- What would you have another do to you? Then do it to them.

NOTE: This verse clearly isn’t telling you to serve so much that you neglect taking care of yourself or your biblical responsibilities.

- It’s assumed that you’re still going to look to your own interests to some degree. The text says, “Let each of you look NOT ONLY to his own interests...”

- Take care of yourself physically and spiritually. That’s right and good.

- Have goals. Have godly desires. Pursue good things in life, according to the Scriptures.

- But don’t think ONLY of yourself. Consider others. Don’t forget them. Don’t neglect. Don’t trample them.

- Live your life. And remember that loving others is part of living a true life in Christ.

This is all incredibly hard. It sounds good. And we agree with it right now sitting in church.

- But Monday morning is a different story. Your flesh will resist these commands.

- So when you find yourself resistant to any of this, ask

yourself some questions:

- Are you really more important than others? Are you really better? You, a sinner. You, an unworthy wretch.
- Does everything really exist for your pleasure? You, a creature. A being that the universe doesn't depend on.
- Think on these things and be humbled.

You know, we don't serve because we think people are beneath us. We're proud.

- And when we serve, we don't serve CHEERFULLY because we don't count others as more significant than ourselves. So we begrudge the work.
- And, often, we don't even THINK to serve others because we're self-centered.
- We don't look at each day as an opportunity to be helpful because we think, "That's not my problem. I didn't make the mess. I didn't put them in that situation."
- Or, God forbid, we say the horrible words, "I shouldn't have to..."

Brothers and sisters, Jesus Christ is the polar opposite of all these things.

- Everyone really is beneath Him. But He stooped to serve. He has no pride.
- He being truly more significant than others, nevertheless served as though others were more significant. So He gladly volunteered to humble Himself to death.
- Everything really does exist for Him. But He did everything for others.
- Though our sin really wasn't His problem, and He really didn't have to do anything, we praise Him forever

that He made it His problem and did everything for us.

6.) Brothers and sisters, how can not at least strive to obey these commands?

- Are we greater than God? Are we greater than the One who has the Name that is above all names?
- No. We're not. Not even close.
- So, if we have any love for Christ at all, if we have even an ounce of understanding of what He has done, then we cannot and will not turn our noses up at these commands to imitate our Lord.

Since the Son of God humbled Himself to serve and save you, let me tell you what you can do:

- You can get up at 4AM to take care of your crying baby.
- You can sacrifice sleep to help your overwhelmed wife clean the house.
- You can set your evening pleasure aside to help and teach your children.
- You can tell someone, "We can do what you'd like."
- You can not be annoyed when someone asks for help.
- You can actually listen to another person during disputes instead of just thinking about how to win.
- You can put your phone down and turn your TV off and lead family worship when you're tired.
- You can take the new believer under your wing and patiently help them grow in the Lord.
- You can take the time to really listen to someone talk about their problems, without internally complaining about it being a "waste of your time" or rushing to get

back to what you want to do.

- You can not be irritated when your day is “interrupted” by another person’s needs.

- You can take a daily approach to life that says, “How can I serve today?”

And why can you do these things?

- Because the Son of God served you in greater ways. So, surely, you can serve in these lesser things.

- To refuse a life of service is to declare yourself more worthy of being served than God Himself.

- And there is not a true believer who would ever do such a thing.

So you who love the Lord, strive to walk after Him.

- I know you love Him. So follow Him.

- And when you fail (and you will), He will still stoop to serve you again and again.

- He will forgive you, pick you up, and set you back on the path, saying, “Follow me.”

May God help us to have the mind of Christ, that we might love others as He has loved us.

- Amen.