

Christ Community Covenant Church
The Jesus Mindset: Philippians 2
Pastor Dave Scherrer - September 16, 2012

Managing life is a lot of work and energy. I have a habit of saying life is relentless. It just keeps coming at you. It wouldn't be so bad except for money...and things...and work...and school...and people...and stuff. I think the real problem is people. I know for church work if it wasn't for the people this would be a lot easier to plan my week...I think it is people that seem to usually mess up life. People take time. Relationships are messy and often other people's lives do not fit nicely into my schedule. People make for lots of decisions. We have to ask, "What is the right amount of time for the various people we love?" and then you have to ask, "What is the right amount of time for the various people you don't love?" It is hard enough trying to decide how to apply your own *personal priorities* in what you do with the minutes of your days—eating, working, exercising, sleeping, reading, entertainment, conversations, evangelism, praying? Then you add people into the mix - relationships – and it gets very tricky. And then you add children.

But people aren't the only problem. As Christians we have the mind numbing task of trying to live a life that honors God and contributes to His will on earth. We need to think about having our citizenship decisively in heaven, not decisively in America.

How do you live on the earth when your life is hidden with Christ in God (**Colossians 3:3**), when you are an alien and exile on this earth (**1 Peter 2:11**), and yet called to submit to the people who are in power here and now (**Romans 12:1**). We are charged with loving our neighbor (**Matthew 22:39**), and we still have to make a living (**1 Thessalonians 4:10–12**), and subdue the earth (**Genesis 1:28**) all at the same time? Here's one that will wake you up from a sound sleep into a cold sweat - How shall we be *in* the world and not *of* the world (**John 17:15**)?

Can I say something? I'm your pastor and I have no idea on earth how to manage all this. I have no idea. No idea on earth! But . . . I have an idea that is not from earth. This book, the Bible, is filled with eternal answers to the imponderables of life. That is why we spend so much time here at 4Cs actually going through the Bible not just talking about the Bible.

Looking at this little letter called Philippians we can find truths that transform our lives, give us answers on how to move forward when life seems so frustrating and irrational and out of control. I invite you to turn with me to Paul's letter to the Philippians, chapter 2. I think it is close to the heart of what this topsy-turvy, people-plagued, all-done-in culture we live in that we are talking about.

I invite you to turn with me to Paul's letter to the Philippians, chapter 2. There is an eternal answer to our problems in this very chapter.

Philippians 3:3-11

Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. 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, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. 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 is a lot in this passage but I want to go to one idea stated most clearly in verse 4.

"Count others more significant than yourself"

This is the secret answer to your troubles. “Count others as more significant than yourselves.” No more thinking that you are entitled to anything before anyone else. For any reason. You take all self-expectations out of life and there are virtually no problems. How’s that for an answer.

Now you might be saying, that seems a little extreme. Are you saying I’m no longer entitled to my due respect and to state my opinion and demand my fair share? At home, I’m the dad - are you telling me that I don’t have the right to be king of my home? Are you telling me that as a teenager I no longer have the right to pout my way into getting what I want?

Now remember I’m not telling you anything. I have no idea on earth how to make the struggles of life go away. But this answer is not from earth. This isn’t what I am telling you, it is what the Bible is telling you. Then Paul intentionally illustrates verse 4 by bringing in Jesus, himself, Timothy, and Epaphroditus as living examples that we can model after. So that is what we will do. We will take note of verse 4, and then look at four ways that it is lived out in four different people’s lives in Philippians 2. My prayer is that you will join me in making this your prayer: “Lord, work so deeply in my heart that I am freed from the bondage of self-centeredness and given the disposition to look not only to my own interests, but also to the interests of others.”

Look at verse 4: “Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.”

“Looking out for others”

The word *interests* is a filler. In the original, it’s open-ended. All that is specified is “your own (something)” or “the other’s (something).” So it could be, “Let each of you look not only to your own financial affairs, or your own property, or your own family, or your own health, or your own reputation, or your own education, or your own success, or your own happiness—don’t just think about that, don’t just have desires about that, don’t just strategize about that, don’t just work toward that; but look to the financial affairs and property and family and health, and reputation, and education, and success, and happiness of others.”

In other words, verse 4 is a way of saying the words of Jesus, “Love your neighbor as you love yourself”. If you are watching television and your child says, “*Would you play with me?*” don’t just think about how tired you are. By an act of gospel-fashioned, Christ-exalting will, put the child’s interests before the pleasures of your relaxation. You make your child’s play your relaxation.

One of the keys to this radical way of living is in the second half of verse 3: “Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but *in humility count others more significant than yourselves*”. Now this is an interesting idea because for some of us we have a hard time of the opposite, of thinking of ourselves as more significant as others. And this is true for many of us who have been wounded deeply. But still the reality is that even if we don’t feel as significant as others we are still jealous of their significance. We wish we were. And it is in the desire to be more important than others that Jesus is addressing through his apostle Paul.

And where does that other-oriented commitment come from? Verse 3 says, “*In humility count others more significant than yourselves.*”

Humility and its source—the Cross of Christ

It comes from humility. Literally: “lowliness.” This is the great opposite of a sense of entitlement. Humility is the opposite of “You owe me.”

[Entitlement, what is that all about?]

Illustration: *It was John Ruskin (19th century social critic and Christian reformer) who said, “I believe the first test of a truly great man is his humility. I do not mean by humility, doubt of his own power, or*

hesitation in speaking his opinion. But really great men have a ... feeling that the greatness is not in them but through them; that they could not do or be anything else than God made them." Andrew Murray (S. African pastor, revivalist and writer) said, "The humble man feels no jealousy or envy. He can praise God when others are preferred and blessed before him. He can bear to hear others praised while he is forgotten because ... he has received the spirit of Jesus, who pleased not Himself, and who sought not His own honor. Therefore, in putting on the Lord Jesus Christ he has put on the heart of compassion, kindness, meekness, longsuffering, and humility."

Why? Why do Christians walk through life feeling a humble sense that we owe service to people, rather than them owing us? The answer is Christ and the cross. Christ loved us and died for us and forgave us and accepted us and justified us and gave us eternal life and made us heirs of the world when he owed us nothing. He treated us as worthy of his service, when we were not worthy of his service. He took thought not only for his own interests but for His Father and of ours **first**. He counted us as greater than himself: "Who is the greater," he said, "one who reclines at table or one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at table? But I am among you as the one who serves".

That is where our humility comes from. We feel overwhelmed by God's grace: by the grace of the cross and moment-by-moment arriving grace promised for our everlasting future. Christians are stunned into lowliness. Freely you have been served, freely serve.

So the crucial relational mark of the culture of our church should be Philippians 2:4: "Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others." This is the Jesus "mindset" that we should have in life together. This is the relational atmosphere where God will grant wisdom for the perplexing work of living in this world.

Four examples of Jesus' mindset

1. Jesus

First is Jesus himself. Verses 5–9:

Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, (the Jesus mindset) who, though he was in the form of God, did not count [notice the word!] equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing [literally *emptied himself*], taking the form of a servant [that is what it means to look to the interests of others], being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself [he laid down all his legitimate divine entitlements] by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

If you ever struggle with humility or self-denial or serving those who are hard to love, think on this picture of Christ. This is what he did for you. He is the great example of verse 4: "Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others." That is what he did when he came to die in your place.

There are other examples that Jesus gave us:

John 13:12-17

When he had washed their feet and put on his outer garments and resumed his place, he said to them, "Do you understand what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you. Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.

Or in this passage:

Luke 22:27

For who is the greater, one who reclines at table or one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at table? But I am among you as the one who serves.

To be sure verses 9–11 show that he was gloriously rewarded for this self-emptying, servanthood obedience even unto death: “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”. And it will be true for you as well. “Whoever humbles himself will be exalted”.

2. Paul

Second is the example of Paul himself. Verses 17–18:

Even if I am to be poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrificial offering of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all. Likewise you also should be glad and rejoice with me.

I am the least of the apostles. 1 Corinthians 15:9

I am the very least of all the saints. Ephesians 3:8

I am the foremost of sinners. 1 Timothy 1:15

Paul loved this church. He loved all the churches. And he died every day to serve them. “I die every day!” he said in his letter to the church in Corinth. He compared his life to a drink offering poured out on the sacrifice of their faith. In other words, he didn’t take thought just for his own interests; he took thought for their faith and was willing to deny himself over and over, and in the end die, that their faith would be strong.

3. Timothy

Third is the example of Timothy. And here the wording is an explicit recall of verse 4. Watch how Paul contrasts Timothy with others. Verses 19–22:

I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, so that I too may be cheered by news of you. For I have no one like him, who will be genuinely concerned for your welfare [literally: your interests, your things]. For they all seek their own interests [there’s the exact wording of verse 4], not those of Jesus Christ. But you know Timothy’s proven worth, how as a son with a father he has served with me in the gospel.

I pray and hope that that this mind of Christ—to take thought not only for our own interests but for the interests of others—is not be as rare at 4Cs as it was in Paul’s experience. “They all seek their own interests.” “I have no one like Timothy.” I pray that as we move forward to a new place as a light on a hill that this Jesus mindset will be the mark of the relational culture of our church.

4. Epaphroditus

Finally, the example of Epaphroditus. Verses 25–30:

I have thought it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier, and your messenger and minister to my need, for he has been longing for you all and has been distressed because you heard that he was ill.

[Notice how amazingly *their* interests dominate: He was not distressed that *he* was ill, nor was he distressed that they had *not* heard he was ill, like most of us who want others to know if we are sick; instead he was distressed because they heard he was ill! Would they be too worried? Would they fear he died? *Their* interests were on his heart.] Indeed he was ill, near to death.

But God had mercy on him, and not only on him but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow... So receive him in the Lord with all joy, and honor such men, for he nearly died for the work of Christ, risking his life to complete what was lacking in your service to me.

The beauty of looking out for others' interests that that I know longer am trying to mind read what would Jesus do. I instead begin to pray, "Dear God, I want to have the heart of Jesus, the humility of Jesus. I want to nurture in me the sacrificial spirit of Jesus who would rather die than see His will satisfied before the Father's will."

WWJAB? What would Jesus' attitude be?

A truly humble man is hard to find, yet God delights to honor such selfless people. Booker T. Washington, the renowned black educator, was an outstanding example of this truth. Shortly after he took over the presidency of Tuskegee Institute in Alabama, he was walking in an exclusive section of town when he was stopped by a wealthy white woman. Not knowing the famous Mr. Washington by sight, she asked if he would like to earn a few dollars by chopping wood for her. Because he had no pressing business at the moment, Professor Washington smiled, rolled up his sleeves, and proceeded to do the humble chore she had requested. When he was finished, he carried the logs into the house and stacked them by the fireplace. A little girl recognized him and later revealed his identity to the lady.

The next morning the embarrassed woman went to see Mr. Washington in his office at the Institute and apologized profusely. "It's perfectly all right, Madam," he replied. "Occasionally I enjoy a little manual labor. Besides, it's always a delight to do something for a friend."

Who you looking out for?