

**Christ Community Covenant Church**  
**Philippians 2:1-11 – “What kind of King steps down from his throne?”**  
**Pastor Dave Scherrer - December 28, 2014**

It has been a wonderful advent season this year. We've had a Christmas tea, the musical *Unto Us*, the Spectacular and Christmas Eve. Part of the wonder for the staff was planning and implementing Christmas programming for the first time in the new building. All with a feeling of gratitude but still even decorating the building was a new problem so to speak.

The peace of God has been our theme, surfacing like a ribbon strung between Sundays. Do you remember the song sung by our girls at the tea and spectacular? (Laura, Karissa, Jessica)

How many kings stepped down from their thrones?  
How many lords have abandoned their homes?  
How many greats have become the least for me?  
How many Gods have poured out their hearts, to romance a world that has torn all apart?  
How many fathers gave up their sons for me?

The advent miracle is more profound than any believer can imagine. It makes the boldest legend and the most fantastic of ancient myth seem simple and tame. God breaks into His creation not to conquer or to punish or to procreate with lesser beings that take his fancy but to serve them. Instead of bursting on the scene with Mt. Sinai fury demanding allegiance once and for all, He dies quietly and naked and alone once and for all. This is so far beyond imagination that it demands an entirely new form of category.

The Apostle Paul attempts to put words to this strange turn of Christmas events. And he even challenges us to partake in this strange *emptying of oneself attitude* along with Christ:

**Philippians 2:1-11**

So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, <sup>2</sup> complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. <sup>3</sup> Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. <sup>4</sup> Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. <sup>5</sup> Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, <sup>6</sup> who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, <sup>7</sup> but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. <sup>8</sup> And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. <sup>9</sup> Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, <sup>10</sup> so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, <sup>11</sup> and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Paul begins in this passage by inviting us into the very character of God - into the person of love and peace - by asking us to embody His nature by giving and loving unconditionally. It turns out it is not about us but we are ***instead to look out for the interests of others.***

***Looking out for the interest of others***

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

**Philippians 2:4**

Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.

The word *interests* in this sentence is actually a filler put there by the translating team. In the original, it's open-ended – that word doesn't exist in the original Greek. It reads more literally, “Look not only to your own . . . but to others.”

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.” What other god asks this of His people?

In other words, verse 4 is a way of saying the words of Jesus, **“Love your neighbor as you love yourself.”** That is, make the good of others the focus of your interest and strategy and work. Find your joy in making others joyful. 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.

But Paul continues to unpack the Godly motives and the ways of the Divine manner. Not only are we to watch out for others **but we are to count others as more important than ourselves.**

### **Counting Others as More Significant**

Look at the motive for verse 4 in the second half of verse 3: “Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but *in humility count others more significant than yourselves.*”

#### **Philippians 2:3**

Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.

The point was not what others *are*. The point is what you *count* others to be. And the focus is not on how smart they are or how they help move forward your life agenda you have for yourself, or any other skill or trait. The focus is: Will you *count* them as worthy of your help and encouragement? Not *are* they worthy? But will you *declare* them as worthy? Will I serve my brother and sister? Will I take thought not just for my interests but for theirs? Will I encourage them and take the time to help others and build others up? The passage says that it all starts with *humility*. This is not a 21<sup>st</sup> century character trait of choice. Where will we find an example for the kind of humility that is demanded to have, not only in *your mind* but have it in your heart to put other’s first? We must look to our Savior, to **His crib and His cross.**

### **Humility and its source—His crib and His cross**

We find the example of our humility in the Christmas nativity and the Easter passion: The humility of the infant God’s crib and the lowliness of the criminal’s death on a cross at Calvary. “*In humility count others more significant than yourselves.*” Literally: “lowliness.” This is the great opposite of a sense of entitlement that all other gods seem to model. Humility is the opposite of “You owe me.” It is “I owe you.”

Why do Christians walk through life feeling a humble sense that we owe service to people, rather than them owing us? ***The answer is that 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 ours. He counted us as greater than himself and challenged us to be the same:

#### **Luke 22:26-27**

<sup>26</sup> But not so with you. Rather, let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as one who serves. <sup>27</sup> 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.

This is where our humility comes from. We feel overwhelmed by God’s grace: by the grace of the manger, by the grace of His resurrection. In the moment-by-moment arriving grace promised for our everlasting future. Christians are stunned into lowliness. Freely you have been served, freely serve.

### **Three examples of Jesus' mindset: Jesus, Paul and David**

First is Jesus himself. Verses 5–9:

#### **Philippians 2:5-9**

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,

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.

Now, to be sure verses 9–11 show that he was gloriously rewarded for this self-emptying, servanthood 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" (Matthew 23:12).

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

#### **Philippians 2:17-18**

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. <sup>18</sup> Likewise you also should be glad and rejoice with me.

Paul loved this church. He loved all the churches. And he died every day to serve them. 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.

#### **David (DLS Testimony)**

I'm not talking about King David but of Pastor Dave. Like St Nicholas, I too am a prideful man. My life for far too long has been marked by self-will, pridefulness and self-centeredness.

- As a young minister I can remember when I was passed over for a position as Chair of the YFC regional training committee. It actually went to someone more deserving and more skilled but I was livid. My pride wanted that assignment.
- In 1991 I became the Director of the largest and most influential YFC local program in the nation and in the not so back of my mind my eyes were on the YFC Presidency.
- 16 years ago I donated a kidney to my wife suffering with kidney failure and though I knew I had nothing to do with the process (God and the transplant surgery team were much more important). I still felt a modest self-pride that I could participate in her rescue.

Then God began the process of breaking my pride. Systematically stripping me of myself.

I was fired at YFC for seemingly no fault of my own – my dream job taken from me. Susan's life was almost taken six years ago in a massive brain hemorrhage and there was nothing this time for me to do but sit at her side and wait. And rather than leading 4Cs to new heights of ministry and influence under my early years of leadership here we seemed to simply struggle. Struggle to build and struggle to grow.

Do you have trouble with voices of lies and confusion in the middle of the night? I do sometimes. The Liar told me over and again I was not only not qualified but I was even perhaps hindrance. My faith was too

shallow, my walk too wandering, my will too prevailing. Actually all of that is all too true. But that has never not been true. Without Christ and His saving love and sustaining grace, everything we do melts before Him into wheat and hay and chaff.

Yet through it all God has patiently stood by me. Little by little I have embraced His will in my life, giving up my own. And in even this He has given me the faith; it is not of me. Increasingly I strive to give up trying to fix things and instead ask for courage to simply forbear another day, to stand in obedience and to serve you His church. To simply believe that God will have His will and that will be enough. I set my heart on not solving problems but to simply be found deeper in Christ and to seek His will and His timetable. I began to simply pray that God increase my faith and the faith of this church. And God has done that. I have found that I never had any credentials except Christ. It has always and only been Christ alone. I am far from perfect; just ask my family or the staff or elders here. I am far from the end of my journey in Christ - still barely at the start - but Christ has made good on his promise to perfect me, to mercifully conform me to the image of the Son through suffering and grace.

So this verse from this same letter has found its way into my life;

**Philippians 3:12-14**

Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. <sup>13</sup> Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, <sup>14</sup> I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

**2015: Consider the *Fidelity* of looking out for the interests of other**

***Fidelity***

- : the quality of being faithful to your husband, wife,
- : the quality of being faithful or loyal to a country, church, etc.
- : ***the degree to which something matches or copies something else***

Prayer and offering

***Discussion Questions for small groups:***

***What kind of 'spiritual' Christmas did you have this year. Did the celebration of Christ's advent have any special meaning in 2014?***

***Have you ever thought of how different the Christ story is from all other 'god' stories, considering again the idea that God left His throne as the Son to serve and to save not to punish or condemn?***

***Dave talked about a Christmas message of humility. What does that word mean to you? What do you think of when you hear the term 'Christian humility'?***

***Dave spoke of the 'crib' and the 'cross' as examples for us to look to model our Christian lives after. What does that mean to you?***

***Do you struggle with pride? How does it take form in your life? The Bible speaks of three categories of sin; lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes and the pride of life.***

***How do you think you could better represent Christ's message of humble service in 2015? What does this kind of ministry look like in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?***