

Becoming Like Jesus

This series is meant to help us wrestle with what it means to follow Jesus.

- To be known for what He was known for
- To be like Him
- To be on mission with Him

For the past 2 weeks we have taken a look at the first one- to be known for what Jesus was known for. We can summarize the main point like this...

**if Jesus is in the room... the wrong people start getting seats.
And if we follow Jesus...we make room at the table.**

This morning we are going to look at the second category- to be like Jesus.

How would you describe Jesus?

There is only one time in the Gospels where we have Jesus using adjectives to tell us what He is like. He never says, "I am loving." "I am righteous." "I am all-powerful, all-knowing, all-good."

He does say this in Matthew 11: 28-30

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

I am gentle.

I am humble.

So, whatever picture you have of being more like Jesus should look like a more gentle you, a more humble you.

If your time praying, reading the Bible, going to church, listening to Christian radio, etc... is not producing a more gentle and humble you and it is only producing a you that is more "religious" and not a more righteous version of you. Biblical righteousness or sanctification isn't primarily marked by religious activity or the avoidance of sin, but by becoming more like Jesus.

This morning, I just want to focus on the word, "humble." I want to take us to a familiar passage of scripture found in Philippians 2 that has often been preached in a way that misses the entire point of the passage by focusing only on the end of the passage. This is how the passage ends in verses 9-11.

Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Phil 2:9-11)

Jesus has been given the name above every name.

**"And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written:
'KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.'" (Rev 19:16)**

Beyond any shadow of doubt we can and should believe Jesus was not lying when He said,
"All authority in Heaven and Earth has been given to me" (Matthew 28:18)

Every earthly authority from the President to the Pope and politicians to the police are lesser authorities. They will all bow their knees one day and acknowledge that there is only one true King.

**"For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him."
(Colossians 1:16)**

But the Supremacy of Jesus is not the point of this passage. This passage was not intended to be used as an evangelistic club to beat people into submission and surrender to Jesus. It was meant to help us be more like Him.

Notice that verse 9 begins with the word, "Therefore." There is a reason God the Father exalted Jesus and gave Him the name above every name. It wasn't because it was His birthright, or because He was God-in-the-flesh. It was because of something Jesus did.

Philippians 2:6-8 says this..

**(Jesus,) Who, being in very nature God,
did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;
rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.
And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death
— even death on a cross!**

(Sidenote: Paul is probably quoting an early Christian hymn in verses 6-11. It is called the *Carmen Christi*-the Hymn to Christ and focuses on Christ's "kenosis"= self-emptying)

Orthodox Christian theology bears witness that Jesus is God. The Bible testifies to this.

**Colossians 1:15: "He (Jesus) is the image of the invisible God."
John 1:1 "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."**

Colossians 2:9: "For in him [Christ] the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily".

Titus 2:13: "...our great God and Savior Jesus Christ".

**Hebrews 1 says this in verse 3: The Son is the radiance of God's glory
and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word."
And verse 8 tells us: "But to the Son [God] says: 'Your Throne, O God is for ever and ever'"**

**And Jesus says this of Himself in Revelation 1:8
"I am the Alpha and the Omega,"
says the Lord God, "who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty."**

Now, imagine, if you have all the power in the world what would you do with it?
Imagine sustaining all things by the power of your word...every electron spinning around in the estimated 2 trillion galaxies in the known universe is upheld by the Power of Jesus' word.
Every human heart beat of 8 billion people is beating right now because of the Power of Jesus' word.

And... Jesus did not use His equality with God, His power, to be used for His own advantage. He did something very different. The reason God exalted Jesus is because Jesus chose not to exalt Himself.

He chose not to use His power to get people to serve Him like pawns on a chess board.
He has chosen not to snuff out our lives and stop our heart beats when we sin against Him
He has chosen to do the opposite of almost everyone else who finds themselves with power and privilege. He surrendered it. And He used it so He could save us, redeem us, and exalt us back to God's original status for us- as His image bearers.

The text tells us **"Jesus made Himself nothing and took on the very nature of a servant and chose to take on human nature."**

Some theology: The early church wrestled with how to best understand the nature of Jesus and Divinity.

- **First Council of Nicaea (325 AD):** Condemned Arianism, which argued that Jesus was a created being, by affirming that Christ is fully divine and of the same substance (homoousios) as the Father.
- **First Council of Constantinople (381 AD):** Reaffirmed the Nicene faith and addressed Macedonianism, confirming the divinity of the Holy Spirit. Creed.
- **Council of Ephesus (431 AD):** Condemned Nestorianism, which taught that Christ was two separate persons (one human, one divine). The council declared Christ to be one person with two natures.
- **Council of Chalcedon (451 AD):** Rejected Monophysitism (which argued Christ had only one nature) and defined the "Hypostatic Union"—that Christ is one Person with two distinct natures (fully human and fully divine) without confusion or change.

So we accept Jesus is the God-man. One person with 2 distinct natures- fully divine and fully human.

He chose to live in our world as not ½ human but fully human...and not use His Divinity as something to be used for His advantage. In fact, Jesus would tell us, in Matthew 20: 28
"the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

And the text in Philippians tells us that **"Jesus humbled Himself and became obedient, even to death on the cross." (Phil 2:8)**

He didn't have to die. He could have come as a conquering ruler and forced His way and rule over us. He could have left us to destroy ourselves without any future hope. He chose the path of sacrificial love. He chose the path of servanthood. What kind of King gives up His life to redeem and rescue rebels? What kind of King suffers death willingly to prove His love when every earthly king we have ever known is willing to cling to power even if it means causing the death of those who oppose him? Only King Jesus.

And here is the focus of this text... it all begins by telling us that we should be like Jesus. Before Paul quotes the *Carmen Christi* hymn he writes this...

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others. In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage... (Phil 2:3-6)

So, the clearest evidence of whether you and I follow Jesus is..

- What do we do with our power and privilege?
- How do we define success in the world we live in?
 - Who do we celebrate in our lives?

We often view success as how high up the ladder we can climb. With every rung we accumulate more. We accumulate more wealth, more privilege, more prestige, and more power until we are at the top. And those at the top are recognized by how many people are underneath them, who exist to serve them. And the world wants to convince you and I that stepping on people on our way to the top is the only way to get to the top. It wants to convince us that the only way we will ever be happy is to not be content to stay on lower rungs. It wants to convince us that the whole world exists as a game of "King of the Hill."

Jesus is King of the Hill. Jesus is King of the World. And Jesus redefined for us success. That success in the eyes of God is not how high up the ladder we can go but how far down the ladder we are willing to climb to make sure we bring others up with us. He did that for us. He not only reached down to lift us. He climbed down to get us. And the death we deserved He died. The resurrection we didn't deserve He chose to share and give- not as a reward for good behavior but as a gift for all those who will believe in His name and confess Him as Lord.

The only way the world will come to know this saving King is when we, the followers of Jesus, emulate our King- by giving away power instead of protecting it, by sharing prestige and privilege instead of striving for it.

Jesus offers you something more than a life of "success." He offers you a life of significance. Success might be how high up the ladder you can get but significance is making sure you have that ladder against the right wall and that you are bringing others up the ladder with you.

I leave you with the words of Jesus in Matthew 20:25-28 from Eugene Peterson's translation of the Bible called *The Message*.

Jesus said, "You've observed how godless rulers throw their weight around, how quickly a little power goes to their heads. It's not going to be that way with you. Whoever wants to be great must become a servant. Whoever wants to be first among you must be your slave. That is what the Son of Man has done: He came to serve, not be served—and then to give away his life in exchange for the many who are held hostage."

If Jesus is in the room the wrong people start getting seats. If we follow Jesus we will make room at the table. Because the King who deserved every seat of honor chose to share it with us.

And the world will come to know and follow Jesus not when Christians choose the protection of their power or leveraging it to make sure those with social agendas we don't like always stay a rung beneath us. They will only experience Him when those who claim to follow Him actually follow Him...by climbing down off our ladders and our high horses to bring people up.