

This morning I have two questions for you?

Who do you think is the Least Important Person in our Church? What do you consider most desirable in this life?

Let's start with the least important person.

- Is it the newest member? Is it the pastor?
- Is it the person who cleans the building?
- Maybe it is the children?
- Maybe you think its someone from the older crowd.

Who you consider the least important person in our church is a direct result of what you desire most, or what you consider most glorious.

What you desire most will determine what you pursue and how you view people in relation to that desire. The gospel targets these two questions, calling you to adopt the same perspective as Jesus on them.

Paul highlights the perspective the Philippians are to have throughout his letter.

- He draws attention to the leaders right away so that they might pay close attention to how they view themselves.
- He shares with them his confidence of how God is at work in them, encouraging them to also be confident in God's persevering work of sanctification.
- He shares his prayer with them so that it might shape how they relate to everyone.
- When he tells them about his circumstances it is explicitly for encouragement about the gospel mission.
- He shares with them multiple times that the most important thing to him (and as it should be for them) is that Christ is proclaimed and the church strengthened (Remember, to live is Christ and to die is gain.
- He even goes to the extent of saying that they all should be like a single person in their perspective, acting like a body with a single mind.

Your views, beliefs, passions, desires will shape your whole life, and will shape how you treat others in your relationships.

Our text today says that we are to have the same perspective as Christ Jesus. As followers of Christ, His greatest desire should be our greatest desire. How he views himself and others should shape how we view ourselves and others.

⁵ Adopt the same attitude as that of Christ Jesus,

⁶ who, existing in the form of God,
did not consider equality with God
as something to be exploited.

⁷ Instead he emptied himself
by assuming the form of a servant,
taking on the likeness of humanity.

And when he had come as a man,
⁸ he humbled himself by becoming obedient
to the point of death—
even to death on a cross.

⁹ For this reason God highly exalted him
and gave him the name
that is above every name,

¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus
every knee will bow—
in heaven and on earth
and under the earth—

¹¹ and every tongue will confess
that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.

How you view yourself and others will determine how you treat others. How you view others needs to be shaped by the humility of Jesus.

***Jesus made himself the least important person for the church. So each of us should wholeheartedly believe that we are the least important person in the room.

Jesus answered the question for us, saying that he made himself the least important person in the church. He told his disciples that he who wants to be first must be last, and the greatest among you must be your servant. For the Son of Man himself did not come to be served but to serve and give his life as a ransom for many. What follows in our passage is art displaying the greatest act of humility.

Paul introduces again the name of Jesus as he walks you from a throne room, to a dressing room, out the back door to Beggars Alley, where the king stands in the place of a thief, liar, and murderer, saying he's only come to do His Father's will, allowing Himself to die, to die in your place, to die as you look at the coins in your hands, hands smeared with innocent blood. The King of glory humiliated Himself to set you free, and the Father speaks up from the throne room to say, Well Done.

This story is not just Jesus's story but your story. By placing these lines at the center of his letter, Paul is artistically saying that the gospel drives who we are at our very core. The gospel is not just something that we are to believe and articulate. It is the message that should move us. It is THE story behind every great story. It is THE message behind every glorious theme that moves our very souls. It is THE beauty that leads us to cry tears of joy when we see it imitated.

While there is a place for defining and explaining terms found within this passage, we miss the point if we treat it like a specimen in biology to be dissected. Sometimes poets are more suited for theology than seminary professors.

Casting Crowns: Love Moved First

This is the story of a runaway
With no way home and no way out
I threw the best of me away
I had my chance, it's too late now
Too far gone and too ashamed
To think that You'd still know my name
But love refused to let my story end that way

You didn't wait for me to find my way to You
I couldn't cross that distance even if I wanted to
You came running after me
When anybody else would've turned and left me at my worst
Love moved first

What kind of grace, relentless grace
Would chase this rebel down
Crawl into this prisoner's cage
Take my hand and pull me out
You knew I couldn't make the change
So You became the change in me

And now I live to tell the story
Of the God who rescues

From the throne to the manger
From a manger to the grave
Your cross is the proof
Love made the first move
From a grave meant to keep You
To a stone rolled away
Your cross is the proof
Love made the first move

I remember where You found me
I'm amazed by where I stand
Your cross is the proof
That love made the first move

Before he died, Rich Mullins composed a song titled, Man of No Reputation

With unsettling emotion and accuracy, Mullins describes how the King of Glory could be treated as a man of no reputation by those controlling the people.

He was a man of no reputation
And by the wise considered a fool
When He spoke about faith and forgiveness
In a time when the strongest arms ruled

But this man of no reputation
Loved the weak with relentless affection
And He loved all those poor in spirit just as they were
He was a man of no reputation

Look at vv. 6–7 again

⁶who, existing in the form of God,
did not consider equality with God
as something to be exploited.

⁷Instead he emptied himself
by assuming the form of a servant,
taking on the likeness of humanity.
And being found as a man,

We start the passage with an assumption about the Trinity, that God has always existed as Father, Son, and Spirit in perfect relationship. Father, Son, and Spirit are equal in power, authority, and equally deserving of worship, for each is fully God and yet there is only one God. Still, the Son willingly submits to the Father, and the Father, as we will see, exalts the Son after calling Him forth. It is this STATUS as God that Paul want to focus on for the Son. The Philippians had the background of Roman dress codes. I'm not talking about your school or work dress code. Dress codes equaled status. The Roman dress code depicted what social class and status one held. To dress as someone of a greater class carried severe financial penalties that the lower classes could not afford. To dress as someone of lower class was unheard of because such foolishness carried penalties of dishonor. In a shame and honor society, you don't cross those lines, or you will be immediately shamed by those around you, who also would expect you to be ashamed of yourself.

By saying that Jesus emptied himself, Paul is saying that Jesus willingly set aside the status that others should have been compelled to recognize. He didn't try to cling to his rights as God like a Roman citizen would cling to his status garments. He descended in the eyes of all viewing him by becoming one of us. He humiliated himself. In the eyes of those in a shame and honor society, he dishonored himself.

Do you recognize the magnitude of this statement, that God would dishonor himself by becoming fully human so that he might identify with us and die in our place?

Maybe a brief game will illustrate the depth of what happened.

Front Page Stories: 3 lies and 1 truth

1. Donald Trump set aside all he has been doing to meet and grieve with Ahmad Aubrey's family, weeping with them and sincerely listening to them for a full day.
2. Nancy Palosi sold her 20 million dollar mansion and donated all the proceeds to provide for children in her region who have lost parents.
3. Queen Elizabeth II auctioned off her crown to provide financial relief to businesses at risk of laying off employees.
4. The glorious Son of God willingly and knowingly humiliated himself by becoming man, died for sinners, and was considered the refuse of society through death on a cross, all to obey the Father and rescue sinful rebels.

The gospel is God's greatest answer to human pride, especially within the church. Do you remember Job's stance before God met with him? God, show yourself, so that I may justify myself. Present yourself so that I may vindicate myself. God met with Job, declaring many of his mighty works. Job fell silent, not needing an explanation, as one does before beautiful artwork that somehow captures all that you've been through. But God did not play his strongest card with Job. It was still to come, the artwork intended to wreck and ruin human pride. In response to our clamoring for our own benefits, our pride, our way, our glory for all to recognize, God makes Himself known,

(READ ISV TRANSLATION)

⁶In God's own form existed he,
and shared with God equality,
deemed nothing needed grasping.
⁷Instead, poured out in emptiness,
a servant's form did he possess,
a mortal man becoming.
In human form he chose to be,
⁸and lived in all humility,
death on a cross obeying.

Here is the servant of Is. 42 who does not break a bruised reed yet does not stop obeying the Father until justice is fully established on earth, even at the cost of his glory and life.

—Jesus did not exploit His status as God to avoid our need for a Savior. There is no level you can achieve in life that makes you too great to serve others with deferential respect.

—Jesus emptied himself by becoming man. Man is creature. No matter how highly we think of ourselves, it was dishonoring for God to become man, to become incarnate. Nothing we go through can measure up to his dishonor and suffering. Christian, endure insult with the same Spirit and joy that Christ had.

—Crucifixion was reserved for the lowest criminals of society. It was improper for Roman citizens to even speak of such humiliating disgrace. The King of Heaven took the cross for you. Can't you toss aside your pride and self-absorption for your brothers and sisters?

Who is the least important person in the room? Each of us who know this Jesus should be able to say, "I am. I am the least important person in the room."

So what about the other question, "What do you desire most?"

*** You should desire most the glory of God by exalting Christ through humble unity as a church proclaiming the gospel together.

⁹For this reason God highly exalted him
and gave him the name
that is above every name,
¹⁰so that at the name of Jesus
every knee will bow—
in heaven and on earth
and under the earth—
¹¹and every tongue will confess
that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.

Here is the economy of God. Pride is worth nothing but judgment. Humility is priceless and will be honored by God. Special clothes and formal ceremony mean nothing. Rend your hearts and not your garments. A broken and contrite heart the Lord will not despise. Those who are great among people in the eyes of the Lord are those who have made themselves lowly servants.

—True glory is found not in exalting oneself but in humbling oneself in obedience to God. It is better to empty yourself by humiliating yourself in service than to be filled with empty pride.

Do you want to find honor, do you want to find what is most glorious? Then you're looking for a name. If you get the opportunity to view status symbols from Roman history, you'll likely find names attached to these symbols of honor. Your value was equated with your name. What you most desire should not be the elevation of your own name but the acknowledgment of another's.

Your heart desires a name that is most precious and true. What you're seeking is the honor of the name that is above every name.

The name that is now above every name is the same name that was dragged through the mud, the same name that was blasphemed and cursed. The Father gladly acknowledged the glory that was Jesus's from before time, but has now acknowledged it before men through the resurrection and ascension.

What is that name that is above every name? At what name will all bow, regardless if they are king, president, ruler, or resident? What name will be confessed as Lord one day by all, whether through saving faith now or by divine compulsion on the final day of judgement?

Jesus

The glory that Jesus pursued was the glory of the Father through humble obedience for our salvation. That pursuit should shape our pursuit. We pursue the glory of the Father by exalting Christ as Lord now, especially through our humility and unity as a church.

The King of glory made himself nothing. It is such humility that the Father honored. So we should look out not for our own interests but the interests of others. He emptied himself by taking on the humility of humanity. So when we deal with each other, we should not demand devotion due to deity. Like Jesus, we are to lower ourselves in humility, so that God might lift us together in unity, so that we might go forward proclaiming the name that is above every name.

Consider again the gospel story
How the King of glory
Stepped into humiliation
For our salvation
Suffering disgrace and loss
Following the Father to the cross
Mighty men killed and cast down

The Father raised and crowned with renown
Lifting the humiliated one above all
So at the name of Jesus, every knee will fall

Who am I to display my glory?
May I make myself nothing for you
Submitting to what the Father calls me to
As did the Christ in the gospel story
All hail the King of glory.