

GLOW: “The Glow of Humility”, Philippians 2:1-11, 5/31/20

Pray for George Floyd and Justice.

Peanuts Cartoon. Can you ever relate to Linus? People have a way of getting under our skin. Especially online! **[Blank slide]** An article I read recent said, *“In the early days of the internet, tech utopians envisioned a glittering digital future in which people from very different backgrounds could come together online and, if not reach consensus, at least learn something from one another. In the actual future we inhabit, things didn’t work out this way. The internet, especially social media, looks less like a dinner party and more like a riot. People talk past one another, and the discussion spirals down accordingly.”*

We humans can do this over incredibly trivial issues, like **Dressgate** 5years ago, some people swore they saw white and gold, others thought they saw blue and black...this crashed the internet and was the most argued about topic for a couple weeks. Some articles suggested that the dress could prompt an "existential crisis over the nature of sight and reality or that the debate could harm interpersonal relationships." And if relationships have the potential to get harmed over this, what happens when we fight online over politics, racial issues or whether or not we should continue quarantining.

[Blank Slide] But it’s not just with people out there...it’s with people in here, possibly in your living room. For some families, I wonder if being quarantined with these people has brought out some extra frustration? You didn’t used to think your house was too small but suddenly you feel the need for more space away from these people! Things that your husband or wife or roommate used to NOT have much of an opinion about- cleaning, routines, parenting... suddenly they care and are questioning you and it’s annoying. For some this has resulted in far more than minor offenses, but have revealed deeper wounds in your relationship.

And it’s not just people here in your living room. It’s among us, the church, Christians. Some of us have been part of church meetings that looked more like the British Parliament than the church. Or have experienced the loss of a close relationship because of a conflict. This is what Paul is most concerned with in this **passage to the Philippians**. To say it negatively: He knows the wounds and heartbreak, the division, the confusion, the ruined witness for Christ, that comes when conflict reigns. To say it positively: He knows the beauty, the love, the joy and the impact that can happen for Christ when unity reigns. Church family, we are being, and will continue to be tested by this. We are about to roll out re-entry plans for in-person services while continuing our virtual services. And within the same church family we have a variety of opinions, some very strong or opposite ends. And Satan would love to attack the flock by having sheep fighting sheep, taking a fight to Facebook or gossiping to friends, or allowing it to even divide households. And so we need Philippians 2 now more than ever. Whether you are struggling with people out there online, or in your living room or among our church- Paul is going to show us how to make unity reign: In your friendships, marriage, family, church body.

The Source of Fighting

The Secret of Unity

The Power to Change

The Source of Fighting:

³ *Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit.*

Selfish Ambition: origin of this word described the jockeying for political power, willing to do whatever it takes at the expense of others to get ahead. This is the perfect word to describe our political system in America right now. But, selfish ambition isn't reserved for politics. Here's how I define selfish ambition. **Me Before You, Me Instead of You, Me > You.**

There was a mom, she was driving her five-year-old son to McDonald's. And there was a traffic accident. And as they were getting closer to McDonald's, and mom always taught the kids whenever we see an accident by the side of the road, we pray for those people. So she said to her son, let's pray for this accident. So from the back seat, the little five-year-old boy could be heard praying, "Please God, don't let those cars block the entrance to the McDonald's. Amen."

It's cute when it's a 5 year old...not so cute when it's an adult. It's not so cute when we saw people fighting over TP in grocery stores, people disregarding wearing face masks in public places, more concerned with their own comfort and rights, than they are the health of others.

How does selfish ambition show up in relationships? When siblings fight over who gets to pick the movie for movie night. In marriage when we want to have our own sexual needs met but we aren't concerned about the emotional needs of our spouse. Selfish ambition can show up in the church when we want our musical style preference at the expense of someone else, in a friendship, when you dominate the conversation or find a way to turn every topic back to you. It's not hard to see why Paul says selfish ambition lies at the source of fighting, is it?

The second source of fighting: **Vain Conceit: In the Greek: "Glory Empty"- To be starved for validation and approval.** To NEED respect and honor out of your own insecurity. Since the Fall of man, there is a validation vacuum in us. We were designed to have that validation and worth satisfied by God, but when we were separated from God because of our rebellion, we were left with a giant hole, a God-shaped void, as Blaise Pascal once said, that we attempt to fill with relationships and things, any means necessary. Humanity is desperately glory empty.

How does Vain Conceit show up in relationships?

-Looks like the child who constantly needs attention and will get it anyway they can. Looks like the boss who can't acknowledge your work because they are so afraid of you taking their position. The teenager that is quick to judge or pick on other kids, which is a way to feel better about themselves. The girl who is obsessed with her image, with just the right picture and filter to get enough follows, likes and comments on Instagram. The church member who must have a certain ministry position in order to feel like they are an important Christian. The married spouse getting validation and attention from their co-worker more than they are from their spouse, leading to an affair. The mom who is really hard on herself and who feels like she doesn't measure up to the other moms that seem like they have the perfect family on social

media, their kids never struggle with online schooling, and they are always coming up with creative things to do.

Have I made us uncomfortable yet? One more...it looks like the person on social media who refuses to consider another viewpoint, who must attack, demonize and alienate the other side in order to protect their fragile identity. All of this points to the attempt to fill the God-shaped void in our hearts for acceptance, respect, unconditional love. And do you see why this so often causes fighting? When we don't get the validation we desire we get wounded, and then we wound others. Hurt people, hurt people. Maybe in God's grace he has allowed you to see some of your tendencies right now. Good! You are in a position to hear...

The Secret of Unity

Philippians 2:2-4

² then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. ³ Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, ⁴ not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

Humility is the secret sauce of unity. What is humility? Well Paul defines it better than any dictionary right here. "Value others above yourselves, look to others interests over your own interest." **Humility is a quality best measured in relationships.**

C.S. Lewis once said **"Humility isn't thinking less about yourself as much as it is thinking about yourself less."** In his parable of heaven and hell, **The Great Divorce**- he describes the people in Hell not as being tormented by literal fire, but rather self-inflicted with the consuming fire of self-centeredness that began on Earth and continued unchecked in Hell for eternity, these sad, selfish people become less and less human and more ghostly the more they self-obsess and they move further and further away from each other in complete self-isolation. In contrast, the people in heaven are consumed with love for God and the well-fair of others, enjoying just the presence of one another, and in doing some become brighter and more beautiful, although there is little thought about their ego or preferences. What C.S. Lewis brilliant depicts is this: **Selfish-ambition and vain conceit is a living hell, humility is a living heaven.** We are never more like the devil when we are selfish and never more like Jesus when we are humble.

How does humility show up in relationships? They are good listeners, and make great friends, leaders and spouses, they are quick to say sorry and ask for forgiveness, vulnerable and willing to share their flaws and take advice, willing to concede to other's preferences, the don't say, "It must be this way or else!" They can stand firm on their convictions but do so in love and understanding to those who disagree. It is important to first understand than to be understood. They get more satisfaction in seeing a team victory even if they didn't get the credit. Humble people glow!

We all want to be around humble people, and I think we would like people to think of us as humble...How does that happen? Notice, Paul does not just say, "Stop being selfish and fighting,

be humble and get along. Now let's move on." That's not enough to change our natural inclinations toward self-centeredness. And that will never fill the God-shaped void. What did Paul appeal to as the means by which we become humble?

The Power To Change

In these verses we have the most concise and descriptive revelation of the Incarnation of Jesus Christ. This is a Doctrinal T-Bone Steak. **But v.5** tells us that Paul's not just saying let me throw down some theology on you, so you can be wowed. He's saying let me throw down some theology so that you can be changed by it. Good theology should lead to life change as we let it sink into our hearts and out to our hands. There is far more here than we can cover but let me try to summarize what we learn about Jesus.

His Nature

⁶ Who, being in very nature God,

"Very nature" Word- Morphe- Form- but we think outside, shape of something, but in the Greek really means the nature of something, that which makes something the very quality that it is. His very substance and character is God. The deity of Christ cannot be any clearer here. You might notice this section 5-11 is set in your Bibles a little different than the rest of the verses? The reason is that the most trusted scholars believe that this passage has all the characteristics in the original language and grammar of a hymn. They believe Paul was quoting the lyrics knowing that the Philippians would be used to singing this hymn when they gathered. This is helpful to know because there are critics who say that the doctrine of the deity of Jesus was something that developed centuries after Jesus by his followers. But, a hymn like this, circulated throughout the Middle East and Europe within a decade or two of Jesus' life means that from the beginning the deity of Christ was part of the foundation of the Christian faith.

#2 His humble humanity

⁶ Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; ⁷ rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.

Greek word for the phrase "Made himself nothing" is "empty". What did Jesus empty himself of? You can't say of deity. He didn't stop being God when he became human. He is the God-Man, perpetually for eternity. The answer is he emptied himself of his divine privileges. He didn't hold tightly to his divine privilege of glory and authority. He took on the form of a slave. See Jesus could have become human by coming as a king, a part of the upper-class, the privileged. He came as a slave, he humbled himself to the extreme.

⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!

Jesus voluntarily emptied himself of his glory and privilege to the point of death, the most humiliating death you can experience in 1st century Palestine.

#3 His High Exaltation

⁹ Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

The path of highest exaltation came through the lowest humility. Jesus got his identity as King of Kings and Lord of Lords by becoming a humble slave for us. This is the gospel. OK, how does this have the power to increasingly make us less self-centered and more humble? How does it make a fighting couple or a fighting church into a more united couple or united church? Oh the gospel is so practical.

1) The Gospel fills the God-Shaped Void in Us. The glory-hunger, the desire to be accepted, validated, respected is filled by the only one that can fill it. What is more encouraging, comforting and fills in our heart than knowing that in Christ, we are loved and accepted and validated unconditionally. If God has filled your heart, we can rest in that, like a secure friendship...to the degree that you really believe that it will show up in your interpersonal relationships. You won't have to always be right if you are right with God. You won't have to constantly prove yourself, and chase and demand validation from others if Christ has validated you already. You won't be easily wounded, and you will be quick to forgive and offer forgiveness, because you weren't trying to use that person to fulfill your deepest longings, and be you know you have wounded Jesus and he forgave you.

2) The Gospel Motivates Humility in Us. Ready Player One. There is this epic race scene to win a magical key. They will do whatever it takes, even at the expense of the other racers to be the winner. The problem is that despite all their selfish-ambition, no one ever was able to get to the finish line without being destroyed by either one another or some other obstacle. It wasn't until Parzival, the main character, realized that the only way forward was to go backward. When the race starts, he hits reverse and while it looked like he was in last place, he actually was the only one who would win the key. The way of the world is self-exaltation, any means necessary. We want to be kings. Jesus shows us only way to go forward is to go backward. The only way to exaltation is through humility. Twice in the New Testament, once in the book of James, once in the book of Peter- **God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble.** No one can enter heaven without humility. We have to admit that we aren't kings, we are rebels against God. We are incapable of being good enough. Jesus won the race for us. We cannot help but to look at Jesus' example and have it melt our proud, self-seeking, self-exalting hearts. If he was willing to leave his privilege, glory, preferences and comforts for me, how can I not be willing to lay aside my privilege, preferences and comforts for the sake of others?

How will our community see Jesus and believe? By our doctrine? By our strategy? By our building? What does Jesus say? **John 17:23**

I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.

Who needs to see your humility?