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# Others First – Its Attitude

## Philippians 2:5-11

*Russ Kennedy*

**Introduction** Sometimes we come to the cross for the work that was done there for us. Sometimes we come to the cross for the work that is being done in us. Sometimes we come to the cross for the work that is being shown to us there. And so here: Have Jesus' attitude; think like Him.

Now I have to say something to you. I believe in exposition. I believe that the grace of God flows through the exposition of the Scriptures. And I believe in expository exultation. So, it is my aim to exult in God by the Word. It is also my aim to expose the text to you. And it is my aim to expose you to the text. And sometimes, it is not possible to sufficiently do all three at the same time. And that is my problem this morning.

I want to exult in God here with this text. I want gaze in detailed and delighted wonder by these words at such a Savior and Sovereign, at such a God as this. I want to tremble by truth with holy affections. I want my mind challenged, my heart humbled and my life changed. I want to breathe the fragrant aroma of His sacrifice for me and His supremacy for Himself. I want to be speechless with joy – but it is my task to preach.

I want also to expose this text to you. I want to look down deep into its multifaceted truths and hold up each one for careful inspection. I want to connect them all together with Paul's appeal and God's enabling.

But I sense a great need to expose you to the text. I want to file away the hardness of your heart, the coldness of your affections and the dullness of your minds so that you are raw and open and sensitive to this text. I want to you to so hunger for the joy of putting others first that you will embrace the cross and die to self, just as Christ did, for the joy set before Him.

So, because of our responsibilities in verses 1-4 which were:

**TO BELIEVE THESE TRUTHS.** Believe that there is truly encouragement, comfort, fellowship, affection and sympathy as a result of being in Christ.

**TO DEFLATE YOURSELF.** Stop looking in the mirror of your self-exaggerated esteem. Humble yourself in the Lord's sight and in your own sight. Don't be a pedestal person, up above others.

**TO ESTEEM OTHERS.** Lift up others in your own mind. Put others up above you in your honor and your estimation. Change the point of comparison, the perspective from which you see others and the place in which you position others.

**TO PUT OTHERS INTEREST FIRST.** Move towards others with their best interests in heart and mind. What does your friend, your spouse, your children really need? Do you seek to meet those needs or are you simply taking the easy way out?

Then, you must begin to think and act like Christ...

## The Cross and its Humiliation

(v.5-8)

Then what kind of mentality or attitude or way of thinking is shown us by Christ's cross kind of death? What is the prevailing attitude of Jesus? Humility. How can we have this kind of humility? By constantly reminding ourselves of these two God-delighting truths. For the joy of God and others:

### I am a Servant

(v.6-7a)

If I could summarize this amazing text it is simply this, Jesus gave up His rights and His recognition. His attitude was that even the public affirmation and acceptance and perception of equality with God was not something to be tightly held onto. He gave up His rights, His Divine prerogatives and privileges. This is what the condescension and incarnation of Christ means. It means that in a sovereignly Supreme God there reigns a servant heart. It is just like Him to take on the nature of man and the servanthood that required, the author of Hebrews wrote (Hebrews 2:9-18).

Think how this would change your home. Stop grasping at your rights and prerogatives. Have a mentality that says, "I may have a right here in this thing, but I choose to give it up for the joy of others." How we need this attitude in a day where the world is fighting for human rights, women's rights, children's rights, even animal rights. Jesus clearly shows us how to think. Not that I do not have rights, but I value them for myself so little that I eagerly give them up. Often the pain in the family of our homes and church comes from the tight grip we have on our rights and our recognition.

Do you serve in your home? Now this is not all the Bible has to say about harmony in home and church families. But it is a prevailing attitude to be valued and cultivated. Men are to be servant leaders, women are to be submissive servants, children obedient and parent honoring servants.

Having a servant attitude is the foundation of putting others first. When we see ourselves as here for the sake of others, then we will begin to serve them. This text realizes that having a servant attitude means challenging us in two critical areas. It issues a call for us to serve practically:

#### **In how we stop demanding our rights.**

Jesus left us an example of giving up a right He most certainly had. It was His right to be recognized and worshipped and served as Deity, as God. Yet He was not here to be served, but as one who serves. The Bible is not saying that Christians have no rights – it is calling for us to give up the rights we have for the sake of others.

So will you give up your rights for others? In this day where we put boundaries around our lives by asserting our rights, we must give up our rights so that we can cross the walls to minister and serve others. We hear so much about our rights. Sadly, often these rights are masked by “needs” language. So, rather than saying “I have the right to be heard, or loved,” people will say, “I have a need to be heard or loved.” What is ultimately driving this is that we crave to be loved and heard.

Will you give up your right, or need or craving for love, recognition, comfort, space - whatever, so that you will serve your friend, your spouse, your parent, your brother or sister in church?

### **In how we stop demanding to be recognized...**

Jesus' attitude is also exhibited in His not demanding that He be recognized. He accepts proper recognition when it is offered. But He rarely faces people and demands the recognition He is due. He is here to serve others. His desire to reflect the character of God for the sake of the needy is lived out in selflessness.

But oh how we long and crave to be recognized. We think of it in terms of being affirmed or acknowledged. We loathe moving anonymously among people. We want our contributions, our efforts, even our presence to be recognized and acknowledged by others. If we are not affirmed and acknowledged, we often will become frustrated and upset.

When you are moving through life seeking for others to affirm you (in however that looks or feels to you) you are not putting others first. You are seeing others as circling around your orbit. You are seeing your own significance, not the needs of others. Will you give up your demand to be seen, acknowledged, affirmed, recognized?

Have this attitude of Jesus: I AM A SERVANT.

### **I am a Sacrifice**

**(v.7b-9)**

Look carefully at this sentence. Jesus' humiliation was wrought by an obedience all the way to death, a criminal's kind of death, the cross. Now I want you to see this clearly. There is a kind of sacrifice that is *martyrdom*. It is a death imposed from the outside because of opposition on the part of others and faithfulness on our part. Yes, this kind of death is gloriously great when enabled by grace. And few of us are called on for this largely because we have not the sacrificial attitude necessary to extract from us from our comfort and expel us into the danger of a people group dying and going to hell.

Then there is a kind of sacrifice that is *mortification*. It is a death to self and a death of self for the sake of others. When we come to the cross for the sake of ourselves, we will keep a hidden root of self alive to spring up later. But when we die to self *for the joy of God and the sake of others*, this is true death to self. Where do I get this? From the very nature of Jesus' death. Jesus did not die for Himself. Christ died for God and for His people. Why then do we find it so hard to die to self for the sake of our family at home and at church?

Further, this sacrifice involved *submission*. It involved obedience to the point of death. Do you get this? Putting others first comes when we have the kind of humility that will fight with faith for obedience even if it means death. Now we know precious little about this. I know about myself that my own obedience to Christ and His Word is so little like this.

So sacrificially putting others first requires that we meditate:

**On how we must mortify our old ways of thinking...**

You will need to recognize the beliefs and doubts that stand in the way of giving yourself away. You must see them as a part of the old person you used to be. You must know that those ways of thinking were put to death when you became a new creature in Christ. You are not to think like that any more. You are now to think like Christ as a new person.

You must also mortify these thoughts and beliefs (the old Puritan way of speaking) by putting an end to them and replacing them with Biblical, godly beliefs. Just as Jesus died and was raised, so your thoughts must die (be put off) and raised again (be put on). This is your part, what you are responsible to do. God has made you new; now be new in your thinking.

Listen to the beliefs in your heart that cause you put yourself first and not see the need of others. Do you believe that you will be taken advantage of? Do you believe that you do not have the resources – resources of time, money or ability? Do you believe that you are more needy than others? Do you believe that it is others responsibility, not yours? Do you believe you are more important?

Put to death all these beliefs and begin to think in ways the Bible directs you to and the Spirit enables you to.

**On how we must mortify our old ways of wanting...**

You will also need to recognize and mortify all the old ways of wanting that keep you from putting others first. You will need to recognize all the little ways in which you want to be served and noticed. You must repent of longings and cravings, of heart idolatries and adulteries, masters and enslavements that exhibit you at the center of your universe.

Listen to me. It is much easier to identify our beliefs that are wrong and to replace them with truth –that is, we have faith. But to begin to mortify our desires and wants, to repent of them, submit to the pleasure and providences of God – this is real dying. It is tough work. But at the end, we will be alive to serve others and put them first.

Have this attitude of Jesus: I AM A SACRIFICE.

## **The Crown and its Exaltation (v.9-11)**

What makes this kind of humble serving and sacrificing for the joy of holy harmony worth it? What treasure can I put before children and teens and parents and singles to get your heart to say, "Yes. Yes, I will serve and sacrifice like that."

### **The Supreme Worth in His Exaltation (v.9)**

The supreme value of Jesus' glory and exalted name is a treasure worth selling for joy all we own and value. For this reason, Paul says. Because Jesus has humbled Himself as a servant and a sacrifice, God has exalted Him as supreme and sovereign.

Now it is not that we humble ourselves now with the hope that we will be exalted later. The kind of approach here that says, "See if you will humble yourself just like Jesus humbled Himself then God will exalt you just as He exalted Christ" misses the whole point of Philippians and this text in particular. I will be a servant and a sacrifice for the glad joy of exalting Christ.

#### **Your worth is not tied to your importance...**

We need to learn this lesson. When worth and importance are connected, then you will find humble serving and sacrificial putting of others first difficult. The aim is not a theology of worthlessness. Rather, a theology that does not define who I am by the position, preeminence or place I achieve. When your focus is on the worth of God, then your place and position will not be nearly so important to you. This will free you to put others first.

#### **Your worth is measured by putting others first...**

Jesus is exalted because He has humbled Himself and put us first. His worth is expressed in His willingness to humble Himself. What a great paradox this is. Your worth may well be measured mostly by your willingness to humble yourself and to put others ahead of you.

## **The Submissive Worship by His Creation (v.10-11)**

He was a servant and a sacrifice so that in the end all creation will serve and submit. This text just vibrates and pulses with what we need when serving and sacrificing is painful. Do you not think that just the simple humility that joyfully obeys and promotes others and pursues harmony will reach an amazing climax of gladness when Jesus is crowned and all around Him are perfected reflections of that multifaceted glory?

So I have to ask: will you have Jesus' attitude of serving and sacrificial humility for the sake of putting others first? Will this be becoming so true in our homes that it shapes the unity and harmony of our church life together? Will you believe that this is true in an obeying way?

Or will you go from here this afternoon and tomorrow and this week will be little different? Do we so little treasure the glory of Jesus that we will seek and serve self rather than pursue our joy in Him in others?

Will you magnify Christ by putting others first?

Will you submit to Christ by putting others first?

How you will do all this is the point of our evening services. If you are committed to magnifying and submitting to Christ by putting others first, come back this evening to think this through in relation to our homes as parents, teens and children. **Conclusion**

Thank carefully about these questions, as we move toward a conclusion.

Is my attitude and conduct in my home characterized by self-focused, self-serving promotion of my concerns and interests and complaining when I am not served?

Is my attitude and conduct in my home filled with joyful, sacrificial self-denial?

Is the harmony of my home shaped by the cross, filled with joy, aimed at God's glory and enabled by God's power?

What will I do now, this afternoon, to repent myself and to promote this in my home?

So, brothers and sisters, think and act like Christ:

I am a servant.

I am a sacrifice.

I aim to magnify the worth supremacy of God by putting others first.

