

HIS PART . . . AND OURS

Lessons from the Humility of Jesus

Introduction:

1. Our theme this week is on the life of Jesus. Our plan is to take a serious look at how Jesus lived among men. What people around Him noticed as they rubbed shoulders with Him every day. How He was in His relationships with other people.

2. As we look at the example of Jesus, what is the most beautiful and powerful part of His life/character? What do the NT writers say? His humility. See Phil.2:5-11; Matt.11:29; cf. II Cor.10:1. In His humility, He reflected the glory of God the Father – OUR GOD IS HUMBLE. What an amazing truth! Much to be contemplated in this fact. See Isaiah 57:15.

3. My goals in this session: a) To behold the beauty and loveliness of the most exalted yet the most humble Man who ever walked this earth – leading to worship; b) to see the way He would have us follow Him and serve Him. See 1 Peter 2:21. N.B. NOT speaking as one who has any right to speak on this subject as I know how much I still wrestle with the pride of my own heart. Let's pray for one another right now!

4. Understand the basic terms/words:
 - a) "Humble" (tapeino), "humility", "lowliness of mind". It is an attitude of mind bursting or springing forth into lowly acts. The word "humble" primarily signifies "low-lying" (Vine's Expository Dictionary).

 - i) Humility is the attitude of mind of one who has consciously practised humbling himself/herself. Humility is not just a passive state of mind or being

but what we choose to do – and through that what we become, ie a person with a humble spirit/attitude and a humble character.

ii) We also need to recognise what humility is NOT. It is also NOT changing the fundamental nature of the person God has made us to be. It is NOT denying that we have certain gifts in some sort of act of false humility (cf. Rom.12:3). It is acknowledging who gave us such gifts and then using them for His glory, not to build up our ego in front of others. It is also NOT drawing attention to ourselves in any unnatural way by putting ourselves down before others talking about being “a nobody”. It is being the kind of people God has made us to be.

b) The opposite is "proud", "pride". Syn. haughty, conceited (Rom.12:16), arrogant, boastful, lofty, self-opinionated.

5. A clear Biblical teaching emerges, viz. that God hates & despises pride, the proud -- but loves the humble and gives them grace. See Luke 18:14; James 4:5-7; I Peter 5:5-7.

6. On this basis, God calls to His people: Humble yourselves as Christ did. That is YOUR PART. Then I will be able to exalt you in due time. That is HIS PART.

7. Outline:

- A. BEHOLDING THE HUMILITY OF JESUS
- B. FOLLOWING IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF JESUS
- C. TASTING THE FRUIT AND BLESSINGS

We will then finish off with a challenge & a simple prayer.

A. BEHOLD THE HUMILITY OF JESUS

1. When we think of Jesus' humility, in what situations or incidents come to mind that clearly show His humility?

- a) Write down several different incidents in His life.
- b) Share thoughts/responses together. Write on whiteboard.

2. From the outset, we can see very vividly that Jesus' humility cannot be made identical with WEAKNESS. Being humble did NOT mean that He would allow Himself to be trampled down by the Jewish leaders and be quiet and dumb.

3. Jesus' humility was ACTIVE. That means: He humbled Himself. We see His humility because He Himself acted to humble Himself:

- a) He humbled Himself and came down from His position of glory and honour to live among sinful men in order that He might save them. See Phil.2:6-8; Heb.2:9; John 5:19ff; 14:10; Heb.5:8.
- b) He pointed away from Himself to His Father. His deepest desire was to exalt and bring honour to His Father. See Mark 2:12; John 17:4.
- c) He associated with and served all kinds of people: His disciples, sinners, women, children, outcasts -- none were too despised, lowly or poor. He didn't just hob-nob with the religious elite of His day or only with "the important people". He accepted all people. See Rom.15:1-3. Example: Zaccheus -- Luke 19:1ff.

- d) He both ministered to people but also allowed people to minister to Him. Compare: John 13:1-17; 12:1-3.
- e) He allowed Himself to be taken by wicked men and humiliated, to be mistreated -- without seeking to vindicate Himself. See I Peter 2:21-24.
- f) He willingly and joyfully submitted to the Father's will, obeying His will in every detail even though it meant incredible suffering, pain and then death. See Luke 22:39-44; Heb.5:8. He was able to do this because He trusted in His heavenly Father to keep Him and save Him from the grave. See Psalm 16:9-11.
- g) He often referred to His relationship with His Father, how He could do nothing by Himself. See John 5:19, 30, 41; 6:38; 7:16, 28; 8:28, 42, 50; 14:10, 24.

4. Let us spend a few moments in WORSHIP & ADORATION. What a glorious, attractive sight -- our exalted, yet humble, lowly Saviour.

5. What does all this mean to you and me personally -- today and in the coming weeks & months? What lessons can we learn?

B. FOLLOW IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF THE HUMBLE JESUS

1. Jesus was sinless. His nature was in no way infected by PRIDE or self-centredness. He showed humility in how He related to His Father and also to those around Him.

2. Although we were created in the image of God, our sinful nature is most clearly shown in our constant proneness towards pride. We are born in sin, with a proud nature wanting to exalt ourselves to become like gods – to take over God's position as "king" (cf. Gen.3). Therefore, God

calls us to repent of our pride, i.e. to turn from it continually. This means in essence that we (= our EGO) are to step down from off the throne of our hearts and enthrone Jesus.

3. God's command for all God's people -- anywhere, anytime -- is direct and clear: "Humble yourselves!" (Note this command is in the active verb form, not with a stress upon the noun "humility".) See Luke 18:14; James 4:5-7,10; I Peter 5:5-6; Eph.4:2; Phil.2:3; Col.3:12; Titus 3:2; I Peter 3:8.

cf. God's attitude towards the proud: Prov.6:16-17; 16:5,18. He opposes the proud -- I Peter 5:5.

4. What is God's will for us, His sent-out ones? To follow in the footsteps of Christ (1 John 2:6), just as Paul the great missionary did (see Acts 20:19 -- "with all humility" = with lowliness of mind). It is one of the most important characteristics or quality traits that we are to have in our ministry: BOTH as individuals AND as a mission. There isn't anything that is a greater stench in the nostrils of those around us than our pride. Christian workers (pastors, evangelists, missionaries, teachers etc.) who are proud of their calling, position, gifts, achievements, successes etc. are a great hindrance to God's work. Likewise a Christian organisation made up of leaders and people who speak proudly about their mission's greatness, successes, name etc. also bring themselves down as God will abase those who exalt themselves. N.B. Isaiah 66:2b; Matt.20:25-28.

5. Consider the following ways we are called to actively humble ourselves in the footsteps of JESUS:

a) Firstly, by taking action AGAINST OUR PRIDE:

i) To die to our "selves" (i.e. to actively put to death/crucify the self-centred desires and ambitions of our sinful natures riddled with pride and the desire to be exalted, someone of import) -- to our pride in all its subtle and ugly manifestations -- including the desire for a name, to exalt ourselves above

others, to be first, to get our own way, to do our own thing, to achieve our own goals, to win the praise of men, to attain to positions of importance and notoriety (cf. Matt.23:2ff).

N.B. Personal testimony -- how God used rejection and suffering for His glory in my own life at Hornsby. No gain without pain!

- ii) To put/throw away all prideful boasting in our own achievements, in who we are, in what we can and will do, in what we know -- i.e. in anything that would give others an inkling that we deem ourselves to be superior to them. Cf. Gal.6:14.

N.B. Moses' experience -- Numbers 20:1-13.

- iii) To admit with all honesty and sincerity: "I am in myself a person with a heart and that is so full of my own self-importance. Lord, save me. I cannot save myself. Save me from my pride and all its dreadful consequences. I cannot do anything of lasting and eternal significance for You if left to my own resources and strength. Cleanse me, Father, and break me of all my pride. At any cost, for Your name's sake, set me increasingly free from the wretched pride of my heart, so that I can become like Jesus -- always exalting His Father and drawing men to praise Him."
- iv) To resist any form of boasting in who I am as if any gifts, abilities and experiences are the fruit of my own labour or because I am a better person than others.

- v) To put off any form of false humility admitting what it really is: inverted pride -- seeking to draw attention to what a lowly or spiritual person I am!. See Col.2:18,23.

- b) Secondly, by taking action IN DOING ACTS OF HUMILITY, i.e. showing humility in very simple, practical, everyday ways among your fellow-missionaries and also among the nationals.
 - i) To humble ourselves by submitting to God and to those that God places over us; i.e. to obey our mission leaders in humility, without seeking to put ourselves above them or to make ourselves equal with them. See Heb.13:17. In simple terms, do what they ask us to do humbly -- without putting up a fight.

 - ii) To humble ourselves and put behind us any thoughts of our own superiority as a person or a nation (spiritual pride, racial or national pride, intellectual pride etc.) -- and to come down to the level of the people, showing them that they are people of equal worth in God's sight, eg. by learning their language well, learning to love their customs & ways etc.

 - iii) To open ourselves up to our leaders and fellow-workers to be given counsel, to correct or rebuke us at any time -- without defending ourselves.

 - iv) To seek and listen to the guidance and advice of others, including fellow-workers, national believers, high & lowly people etc.

- v) To admit freely any sins and mistakes, not thinking about my own reputation or what people will think of me or how much I will lose face in front of other people.
- vi) To defer to a national believer or worker rather than trying to compete for ministry roles.
- vii) To affirm other people in their ministries, seeking opportunities to encourage them and help them develop in their ministries.
- viii) To serve others in simple, lowly ways -- not just in those tasks assigned to me, but also looking for opportunities to serve others. Including my team members. Cf. Matt.23:11-12. Never with any fanfare -- "Look at me!"
- ix) To humble ourselves and let other people serve us -- to give them the privilege and joy of serving Christ by serving His servants.
- x) To suffer for Christ's sake with a humble, submissive spirit (incl. rejection, ridicule, being misunderstood, hated etc.), allowing God to work His work through us regardless of the cost if only our Lord Jesus may be glorified. See Phil.3:10; Rom.12:19-21; 5:3-4; I Peter 2:23. cf. John 12:23-28. Above all, to count it all joy that God has given us the great honour to suffer for His name -- Phil. 1:29.

6. How does God motivate us to obey His command to be humble?

- a) By warning us that we will be debased if we exalt ourselves in this world. If we refuse to humble ourselves, then He will humble us -- using other people and situations to bring us low. But that moment can also be our salvation, if we repent.

N.B. How God humbled His people in the OT by using the other nations and all the pain of their captivity.

- b) By encouraging us with the eternal fruit that we will enjoy if we humble ourselves.

C. TASTE THE FRUIT OF JESUS' HUMILITY IN YOUR LIFE AND RELATIONSHIPS

1. God wants to bless us richly. And those who obey God's command to humble themselves receive God's special blessings. This also means that we don't taste much of those negative fruits of pride, eg people being repelled rather than people being drawn to us and our Lord.

2. God will give us wisdom. See James 4:13,17.

3. God will work His work through us and draw others to Himself -- know, love and praise Him. cf. Jesus who exalted the Father -- and as a result people were drawn to praise Him. For very few believers this means that they become well-known among men and do a large and great ministry with many results (measured quantitatively). But ALL who are willing to be emptied of themselves will be filled with the power of the Spirit and will accomplish all that God has for them to do, above all, to point many to the Saviour and to draw the saints into a deeper love for their Master.

4. God will increasingly release through our lives the beautiful fragrance of the character of Christ. There is something so glorious, beautiful and magnetic about the life of the humble man or woman. People are attracted or drawn to them. As we obey these Biblical injunctions, God will

draw other people to the living presence of Christ within through the fragrance of Jesus flowing through our talk and our walk.

5. God will exalt us in due time just as He has promised -- if we continually put off pride and humble ourselves in His sight. See I Peter 5:6. That will be on the great and glorious day of His return. A blessing to be enjoyed for all eternity.

N.B. How God glorified & exalted Jesus before all the heavenly hosts -- and will honour Him at the last day. See Phil.2:9-11; Matt.25:30.

Conclusion:

1. Here is God's Word for us. It is God's call so that we can become like Jesus. To take seriously our responsibility to put on the mind of Christ (see Phil.2:3-5). To humble ourselves in order to show our true love for God and for our Lord Jesus (cf. John 14:21). It is also the way to equip ourselves to be effective instruments for God's glory wherever He places us. If we do our part, we can be sure He will be faithful to do His part.

2. It is also A LIFE-LONG & DAILY PROCESS, not just an event that takes place. In fact, the more we grow closer to God, the more we realise just how proud our hearts are, NOT how humble we are. We see more and more of the wretchedness of pride that continues to lurk in the hidden corners of our minds and hearts.

3. Cultivate the garden of your heart so that it produces the beautiful fruits of the humility of Christ. Pull out the weeds of arrogance, pride and self-centredness -- as often as the Spirit of God reveals them to us -- and that will probably be very often. And then plant in their place the seeds of the humility of Christ -- actively and continually. Ask God always for His Spirit to help you as this is NOT a work that you can do or even want to do in your own strength or by your own will-power.

4. Above all, like our Lord Jesus who worked to reveal the glory of His Father, let us live and minister with the ONE SUPREME PURPOSE: TO EXALT, LIFT HIGH THE LORD JESUS CHRIST. As we deliberately draw people's attention away from ourselves and on to Christ, so we will accomplish our goal.

5. Task: What is one area of your life where God is calling you to humble yourself? Write down two clear action steps. Pray.

Verses in Gospels “Humble”; “humility”.

(Mat 11:29 NIV) 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.

(Mat 18:4 NIV) Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

(Mat 23:12 NIV) For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.

(Luke 1:48 NIV) for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant. From now on all generations will call me blessed,

(Luke 1:52 NIV) He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble.

(Luke 14:11 NIV) For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

(Luke 18:14 NIV) "I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

(John 8:15 NIV) You judge by human standards; I pass judgment on no one.

Verses from Acts – Revelation: “Humility”

(Acts 20:19 NIV) I served the Lord with great humility and with tears, although I was severely tested by the plots of the Jews.

(Phil 2:3 NIV) Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves.

(Col 2:18 NIV) Do not let anyone who delights in false humility and the worship of angels disqualify you for the prize. Such a person goes into great detail about what he has seen, and his unspiritual mind puffs him up with idle notions.

(Col 2:23 NIV) Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence.

(Col 3:12 NIV) Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.

(Titus 3:2 NIV) to slander no one, to be peaceable and considerate, and to show true humility toward all men.

(James 3:13 NIV) Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show it by his good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom.

(1 Pet 5:5 NIV) Young men, in the same way be submissive to those who are older. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."

Verses from Acts – Revelation: “Humble”

(2 Cor 12:21 NIV) I am afraid that when I come again my God will humble me before you, and I will be grieved over many who have sinned earlier and have not repented of the impurity, sexual sin and debauchery in which they have indulged.

(Eph 4:2 NIV) Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.

(Phil 2:8 NIV) And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death-- even death on a cross!

(James 1:9 NIV) The brother in humble circumstances ought to take pride in his high position.

(James 1:21 NIV) Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you.

(James 4:6 NIV) But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."

(James 4:10 NIV) Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.

(1 Pet 3:8 NIV) Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble.

(1 Pet 5:5 NIV) Young men, in the same way be submissive to those who are older. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."

(1 Pet 5:6 NIV) Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time.