

The Message

Note: No sermon is quite the same when you read it. You miss the inflections, the understanding that you gain in the hearing. Nevertheless, the words are shared with you here.

Date: June 20, 2010

Scripture: Phil. 2:1-11

Speaker: Mike Gammill

LEGACY

My favorite part of Vacation Bible School this year was something of my own devising. I thought I would play a little practical joke on Godfrey. Using a flip camera, I filmed the sanctuary filled with children and no adults. I was going to tell Godfrey that all the adult volunteers fled and we had six hundred kids here! So I came into the sanctuary and had all the adults and student volunteers leave. The only ones in attendance were the children—those who ranged in ages from five through ten.

Six hundred kids! I taught them to be quiet, an act which took a little bit of time. No, they were really good. I asked them to bow their heads, and they did so. It was whisper quiet in here! As they sat praying, I ran to the back and video-taped the children while they had their heads bowed. Then, I jumped up on the stage and said, “Good morning, church.” Upon hearing these words, the heads of the children popped up. I then asked them, “Why are you here?” And they responded, “To praise God!”

Next, I asked, “Does anyone want to share his faith?” Caleb King jumped up. I don’t know in what grade Caleb is, but I would guess first or second. Caleb proceeds to share with us the faith that he learned this past week in Vacation Bible School. First, he tells me, “God’s Word is true. God’s Word is comforting. God’s Word is surprising. God’s Word is life-changing.” After that, Caleb added, “Jesus died for my sins. And I will go to heaven forever with all of my friends.”

After Caleb sat down, I asked Josh, our worship leader, to lead us in the “whoop-whoop” song. (The VBS kids sang this song earlier in the service.) For all the bad news we receive about our culture, seeing this testimony was heartwarming. Amazingly, with a little bit of leadership, we were able to have a worship service. It was only three minutes, but it was a genuine worship service.

Another plus for this year’s VBS was our fundraising. Every year we set a goal to raise money for Angel Tree, an organization that sends kids, whose parents are imprisoned, to camp. Our goal was \$5000—a very high goal. We weren’t sure that we could reach it. On Thursday, as I was driving through my neighborhood,

I saw four kids selling lemonade on the sidewalk. I got out and they said, “Hi, you’re Pastor Mike. We’ve raised \$190 for the Foundry.”

Four kids who don’t go to church here, who only came because they were invited—these kids sat out in the sun for four hours selling lemonade so they could send kids, who they’ve never met and don’t know, to camp. VBS raised \$5500 this week. I know the truth is that some kids took the money out of their moms’ purses—even though we told them not to do that. What’s really exciting is that a lot of kids went out and worked for their offering. Kids went home and took money out of their piggy banks. Leadership makes a difference.

If men will stand up and lead their sons and daughters in the ways of God, they will follow. This morning we will speak about the example that Jesus gave us. In Paul’s letter to the Philippians, we find some of the most beautiful language in scripture.

If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.
(Phil. 2:1-4)

Then, Paul gets to the point.

Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus. (5)

God calls us to have the same attitude that Christ Jesus has. When Paul writes “by being like-minded,” he doesn’t mean that my mind should be like your mind and that we should agree on everything. This phrase doesn’t connote a wishy-washy message. The mind we’re supposed to have is the mind of Christ. We’re supposed to get along because we all agree with Jesus. If we all agree with Christ, then we will all agree.

As Pastors Ray and Brandon are preaching in the Journey Service and at our Fry Road campus, we all discussed today’s scripture passage. A word came up that brought about some debate. It’s a word that I don’t like—humility. We don’t say the word and have immediate positive connotations. For instance, when you say the word, you don’t think, “Hey, that’s what I want to be.” How many of you aspire to be humble? Humility is similar to patience; it’s something that someone else is supposed to have.

When I think of humility, the first image is “aw, shucks, I’m not really that good. Why don’t you go first? I’ll give up my way for your way.” Humility is code for “soft, or weak.” To be honest, none of those ideas really approached Paul’s mind. Those definitions are the tip of the iceberg, but it’s the bottom 90 percent that we don’t see that actually make up the substance of what humility really is.

Let me give you an example. There's a story on the internet which I don't know whether it's true or not so please forgive me, but it makes my point. A hero of World War II lives in Virginia. He decides to erect a flagpole in his front yard and fly the American flag. However, the Homeowners Association informs him that such a display is against the rules of the neighborhood. "You're going to have to take that down." His response? "Over my dead body will that flag come down."

That, my friends, is what I call humility. At this point, some of you may have some questions. From the perspective of the Homeowners Association, this man's actions may look arrogant, rude, difficult, and disagreeable; his act is imposing on his neighbors.

Let's look at this situation from a different perspective. I suggest that the WWII veteran is interested in something other than himself. I suggest that he is willing to risk peace with his neighbors for something more important than his neighbors. I suggest that he is willing to lay down peace, security, and his reputation. He is willing to plant a flag in the ground and stand up for something.

We might disagree on the object that he has chosen (actually, I think most of you would agree with the man.) But Jesus asks a different question. He's more interested in where you're going to place your "Christian flag." Where are you going to plant that flag and say "Not in my backyard"? Where are you going to say, "I'm not going to allow this evil to happen anymore"? "I'm going to stand up and willingly give up my rights, my privileges, my comforts, and my convenience to stop this evil." In other words, Jesus is asking us, "Are you going to stand up in humility and be more about God's kingdom and his reign than you are about your own comfort and our own peace?"

Humility is about having the mind of Christ. Let me illustrate with a personal story. On Thursdays, I typically finish work around 5:00, and I'm exhausted. I'm tired. I've been working all week long and all I can think about is what I need. I need a cold drink of water, and I need to put my feet up. Hey, I've worked hard as a man. Right, guys? You come home from work and what you need and deserve is just to rest and relax. Can I hear an "amen"?

Ladies, do you agree? Hey, I'm getting some arms crossed from the ladies and "where-is-this-going" looks. For the sake of argument, let's say that it's my right and privilege to come home and relax for half an hour. In the real world, when I get home at 5:30, I'm tired. My wife is tired, but guess who isn't tired—our two little munchkins.

What I need to do in that hour is not what I usually do; it's what I should do. I should willingly give up my rights and privileges as a hardworking man and spend time with my children. But I have rights as a hardworking man. However, every time I check my kids get a little bit older. So God asks, "At what point are

you going to step up and stop life from happening *to you*? When are you going to take control and make decisions about what you're going to do?"

In the real world, forceful men and forceful women impose their will on the weak-willed. Evil forces its way into our homes. If we just sit back, it will just happen. The mind of Christ says, "Not on our watch." There are things to which we will stand up and say, "No, I'm not letting this into my house. I'm not letting this into my neighborhood—at least, not without a fight."

I realized that I have re-defined humility. I encourage you to think about this new definition. This definition requires discernment because it requires a decision on your part. God has called us in our discernment to determine what is *our* battle. We're not to fight every battle. There are battles that we need to let go. In fact, the battles that are the easiest are the ones we're supposed to let go. For instance, traffic is not a battle that you need to fight. Just let it go. The car in front of you can't move because cars in front of it can't move. There are certain fights in which we don't need to waste our energy.

The question I have for you is this: Are you taking time to listen to God about what he is asking you to stand up for or against? These things are in your home and in your neighborhood and at your work. I can't tell you what they are; only the Holy Spirit can tell you. Are you listening?

We need discernment, but we also need to live in the reality that humility involves judgment. When we stand up for something, we will be judged. People will say, "You're being difficult. You're being ornery. You're doing the wrong thing." And maybe you are doing the wrong thing, but ultimately as Christians, we have to live in the reality that our neighbors are not our judges. Our judge is in heaven and ultimately I will be held accountable for what I have done with what he has given me. I need to be held to the reality that I will be held accountable. God will ask us, "How have you advanced my kingdom?"

Certainly, Christ advanced the kingdom. He saw a problem. And that problem was that we didn't know God. Hence, Jesus laid down his own life so that we could know Him. Ultimately, our question is as follows: How can I lay down my life to advance the kingdom of God where I live? Humility asks that question.

As we read through this passage, we get two guiding principles. First, we must serve others. We must help make others' lives better. "In humility consider others better than yourselves" (Phil. 2:3). In the Greek, consider is an interesting word. For people of no privilege, it means "to think." For people of power and privilege, it means "to lead."

If you're a father, you're a person of authority. God doesn't call us just to think that our children are more important than we are. He calls us to make our children better than we are. Leadership means to create a new path. Whether

we like it or not, our children do follow us. They may not follow us when we want them. However, they certainly follow us when we're not looking. Where are you going that your children are going to follow? Submission to God's will is the second principle. To whatever God calls us will involve service and submission.

There are several practical things that our children can observe in us. First, fathers, our children just need us to be present. As I mentioned earlier, I come home from work tired and just want to relax. Spending time with my children doesn't mean that I have to be a "cruise director." I just need to spend time with them.

We have to listen to our children even if what they say doesn't make sense. Our presence lets them know that we care for them. More than anything else, we must be present.

Humility is our standing up as Christian men saying, "I'm willing to lay down my privileges and rights to lead others to be better than myself." This morning I'm opening the altar to men to come pray for their families, their children, and their fathers.

Let us pray. "We ask your blessing on all those who have been entrusted with fatherhood. May your Holy Spirit constantly inspire them with justice and mercy, wisdom and strength, fidelity and self-giving hope. We ask you to help all men to imitate your fatherly gentleness and mercy toward those who are weak, your humanity, perfect obedience to your will and fearless witness to your truth. May their lives be examples of all the heroic faithfulness to you. In Jesus' name, Amen."