

"PURPOSE!" (The Humility of Christ)
Philippians 2:5-8, 1Peter 5:5-7

Tryon FBC, Feb/15/09

I am so excited that the young adults in our church have developed their own discipleship hour on Sunday nights. Their subject has been about **PURPOSE**, and their material reads like any of the good "Church Training" materials of our former generations!

There is much said about how 'messy' spirituality has become in our day, but the message we proclaim is not a 'fuzzy gospel.' There is nothing farther from the truth. The Savior who delivered it and lived this gospel before us is the most easily known person in the world! Look at the HUMILITY of CHRIST...This was the total acceptance of his call, his complete immersion into his PURPOSE, and what made his life so full, so complete, so compelling. He lived this 'glorious gospel' in every moment of his life. There was no vacillating for Jesus or wavering about this truth. He lived it with complete humility.

Humility like his, the kind we are to continually grow into, must be this 100% brand. There are no substitutes, no halfway attempts, no option B. "Let this mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus." Too much bending will make us easily broken one day.

Why is it so important to have this mind of Christ, this servanthood, this genuine Humility? Because the Christian faith is all about what we have RECEIVED, not about what we have ACHIEVED. That is the essential difference from all other faiths of the world. There places where you and I try too hard to reshape this essential to fit the world's version of Humility. Let's look at what it meant for Jesus and what humility means for us today.

Looking at Jesus we can see Humility meant picking His battles carefully. He seldom argued things with other people. He saved His greatest strength for His biggest battles, his own temptations. Christ's humility became great power in his life, the power to be available to his heavenly Father, to allow God to use him 100%.

Humility is not weakness but is instead the greatest strength we will ever know. It is hard for us to grasp it in our world today. I had a friend who was a sales manager for IBM in South Central New York. He could resist most every sales pitch that came to his door until a group of Brownie Scouts came one day selling their annual cookies.

Since they had no sales pitch, he thought he would subtly try to help them. "*Why do you want to see ME?*" he asked, to which one little one piped up, "*Because you are so handsome!*" There was very little conversation left, and he bought all 3 cases! There were no better sales tools than truth and honesty!

Peter wrote the young church, "*Be clothed with humility, for God resists the proud and gives grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time. And cast all your cares on Him, for He cares for you!*" (1 Peter 5:5-7)

Peter is expressing the same mandate to humility which is everywhere evident in the Bible. Peter tells you **why**, that God can exalt you at the right time, His time! Then he tells you **how** to do it...that it all depends on your faith, a real dependence on God! "*Cast all your cares on Him!*"

Humility is not synonymous with weakness; humility is surrendering ourselves to the power of Christ through whom we receive strength for all things!

II. I believe there are many dimensions of HUMILITY. We can challenge ourselves by asking 3 questions

First, Is God the FOUNDATION of my life, through the years?

The Bible teaches us that God is the one who is unchanging in a topsy-turvy world. He is the one constant in a changing world, the one who is, has always been, and will always be, forever and ever.

Isaiah proclaimed, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God!"

And, "All people are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field...and the grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of the Lord stands forever!" (40:6-8)

In chapter 43 God says, "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by my name, you are mine. When you pass through deep waters, I will be with you.....Since you are precious and honored in my sight, and because I love you, I will give up the nations for you, in exchange for your life.....gather my sons and daughters from afar, all who are called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made.....you are my witnesses," declares the Lord, "and my servant whom I have chosen, so that you may know and believe me and understand that I am He!"

God is the foundation of all of life; God is the foundation of our lives. Genuine Humility comes by accepting His word and His will for us. Psalms 1 says, *"Blessed is the man whose God is the Lord! On His law he doth meditate day and night!"*

2. Second, Does God **CONTROL** my life, today? Or are we people driven by opinion, or our pride, or caught up in a personal need to dominate or take control for selfish reasons? Dr. Bill Self of Atlanta tells of our sometimes silly attempts at doing religion in

order to keep our truce and secure place with God. He claims that in a moment in the air when a huge jumbo jet got into some turbulence, a nervous stewardess who knew he was a minister rushed to him and shrieked, "Do something religious!" To which he said he promptly stood to his feet and took up a collection!

When attending a sales conference with a former deacon friend, several around me were asked by a company head what it was they sold. Turning to me, and assuming I, too, was in sales, he asked what I sold! I thought it was a perfectly legitimate question, so I answered, "*Endless Possibilities!*" And I meant it!

Here is how Dr. Leslie Weatherhead speaks of Christ's control:

*Jesus asks of me everything, yet He gives Himself to me completely.....

*He is the most knowable man who ever lived, but no one has ever explained him.....

*He asserts His authority at every turn, but He withdraws from applauding crowds.....

* He raised a man from the dead, but he deliberately chose death for himself.....

*He had power such as none had ever had before or since, yet He knocks, waits and listens before crossing the threshold of one human life, awaiting a willing heart, a {fully loyal} will, and concerned that no violence to our thinking is ever demanded....

*He died 2 thousand years ago, yet to thousands he is closer than their dearest friend, and without whom there would be no joy in life, no peace, only depressingly lonely and uncertain days.

The Apostle Paul said, "*For me to live is Christ, to die is gain!*"

I chuckle sometimes at these rare glimpses of children when they flood up to the front for their "Children's Time" in worship. Truly

they delight us as much as they did Jesus, with all their unruly little innocence, and their tender little hearts soaking up every word but pretending not to listen. There is method in our madness for having this virtual disruption of our adult reverence and predictability. Jesus said we must be like children if we ever want to enter the Kingdom of Heaven! Imagine that! So we stop our predictability in worship in order to get this moment of character guidance for ourselves!

You see, In Jesus' day, the Greeks had a teaching model, erudire, molding children into respectable citizens, making them truly human. The Hebrew had a term, *jasar*, meaning to instruct, discipline, even flog children as objects of education, shaping them into acceptable, mature adults for Jewish society. Jesus reversed these! The child for Jesus became the teaching model for quarreling adults! "*Unless you become like them..!*" He said. When we give Him CONTROL of our lives, He is stripping away the false pretense and restoring the image of God within.

3. Third Question is about the future: Will God be the **DESTINY** of my life? Sometimes we Christians get so sophisticated that we tend to ignore the riches of God in Christ, especially the ones we just cannot explain.

An old Scottish lady had become so poor that her Presbytery had become concerned enough to pay a call on her. Though her son had come to America and had reportedly become very wealthy, the neighbors had noted that he did not seem attentive enough, and support his mother as they felt he should. "*Oh, he would help me if he knew! He's very thoughtful, a good boy,*" she defended him profusely. "*He writes me letters and sends me pictures every weekbut strange pictures.*"

Reaching for her Bible, "*I keep them in The Good Book.*" Between the pages of her tattered Bible, you can imagine, her visitors

found hundreds and thousands of United States currency, more than enough to keep this aging mother well cared for. She had a treasure but didn't know it! We know enough to be in awe of what God has promised! God is our DESTINY!

"We have this treasure in earthen vessels," said Paul to the Corinthians. "It is God's way," Paul said. "It is God's full intention! God puts this hope, this certainty of Heaven in us, fragile and uncertain as we can be, that we become the proof that the power could only be from God!"

If you have heard of the famous Frank Lloyd Wright, you may have heard many great stories surrounding this colorful man. It is told that he was in a Chicago court testifying under a cross-examination. As he was sworn-in, the attorney asked for his name, "Frank Lloyd Wright," was the answer. "Your occupation, for the court, please." And he straightened up for his answer, "The world's greatest architect!" The attorney stopped and turned to him and demanded, "How can you say that?" "Because I am testifying under oath," came his quick reply!

If our Savior were testifying under oath, the dialogue would follow the same lines. "What is this peace you talk about, that you so confidently show and insist on for us?" "It comes because I know My Father and I know His eternal love." "How can you say that!" "Because I am testifying under oath."

It requires HUMILITY to believe with all our hearts.....

* HUMILITY to trust in every area of life.....

* HUMILITY to follow each day.....

* THIS HUMILITY is no weakness. It is power! It is the power to live for Christ knowing He lives for us.

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