

## Ready for Christmas 3 - A Humble Christmas

As we get older, our perception of time changes. We often refer to how it seems to move faster. This thought is wasted on the very young who have the impression that everything takes forever. I mention it now so that we can be more thoughtful about how God might speak to us today. Thanksgiving comes so quickly and then there is hardly enough time to decorate before Christmas is upon us. The hustle and bustle might ordinarily present a little strain, but perhaps it is just what is needed to bring the darkening days to light for us. It is in this spirit that it is good for us to take time to reflect on Thanksgiving, Christmas, and then New Years. This short series of sermons could just as easily be title *Reflections* as we pause to contemplate the seasons.

Thanksgiving and Christmas can be thought of as complimentary celebrations. In Thanksgiving, we reflect on God's goodness to us and give Him thanks. This could also be said of Christmas, but with an added component. In Thanksgiving we celebrate receiving God's goodness; in Christmas we celebrate *sharing* God's goodness. For all the excitement of celebrating Christmas, there is also something very humble about it. In sharing God's goodness, we naturally gravitate towards those who are less fortunate. We might give a gift as an expression of love for those who are better off than we are. But, there must be something very special in the Christmas season about those in need because people are very receptive and responsive to so many Christmas Charities. When you think of the stories of generosity in the classic movies of the season you quickly think of the conversion of Scrooge and Tiny Tim or George Baily in *It's a Wonderful Life*. This should evoke images of stooping down to be in touch with those whom Jesus loves. All of this should be a reflection on how God stooped down to touch us. Earlier, we looked at the incarnation of Christ with

us in order to reflect on how He stooped down to become a man so He could become our sacrifice and save us. Today, we should look at how He stooped down to minister to us and *also* to inspire us to ministry.

## 1. Jesus emptied Himself from heaven

In Philippians, Paul addresses the unity that should be amongst believers. When we get to chapter 2, we are challenged to humble ourselves in loving deference to each other, but Paul speaks of the example of Christ as the reason why.

Phil 2:1-8 If *there be* therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies,

2Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, *being* of one accord, of one mind.

3Let nothing *be done* through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.

4Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.

5Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:

6Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:

7But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:

8And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

Notice the teaching of the humility of Christ in vs. 6-8.

First of all, Paul explains that Jesus had every reason to *not* stoop in humility. Jesus existed in the form of God. In His fundamental nature, He was and is God.

The word *robbery* carries the idea of *seizing* something. He was not stealing any glory from the Father since He and the Father are one. They shared in that glorious nature. We see this as Jesus prayed before going to the cross:

John 17:5 And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.

Phil 2:6 Describes how Jesus did not think twice about holding on to that glory. In vs. 7, Paul described how Jesus made Himself of no reputation, which is significant in a couple of ways. First, since the Greek word for *reputation* means to empty, Jesus emptied Himself out of heaven. It is difficult to think of this since God is omnipresent in His creation while transcending His creation. However we think of it, stepping into humanity by taking on the likeness, or form, of man is the picture of humility. But secondly, everything about Jesus on earth spoke of His humility.

In David's house amongst his descendants, the glory of his reign was something in their memory. Jesus was born into the care of Mary, a humble maiden, and Joseph, a rough carpenter. He was born in a stable, not a palace. He arrived in the world as a babe, not an invading emperor. Although angels heralded His birth, it was to humble shepherds laying in their fields, who were the first visitors to see the Christ. It was not till later that the kings of the East came. He knew political persecution from His infancy. In His ministry, though foxes had their holes and the birds of the air had their nest, He didn't own ranch house in a suburb; He had nowhere to lay His head. He knew weariness, thirst, sorrow, hunger, and temptation. When He *did* present Himself as King, he fulfilled the prophecy of His humble presentation in Zech 9:9

Zech 9:9 Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he *is*

just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass.

Isaiah capture His humility in Isa 53:

Isa 53:6-11 All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.

7He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.

8He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken.

9And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither *was any* deceit in his mouth.

10Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put *him* to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see *his* seed, he shall prolong *his* days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.

11He shall see of the travail of his soul, *and* shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities.

In Phil 2:8, Paul described His ultimate humiliation:

8And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

2. Jesus inspired us to be humble and bless

As Jesus stooped down to man, He not only set the example for us, but gave

us a heart of humility also. Going back to Phil 2 we are told, to let that same mind be in us which was also in Christ Jesus and to:

2Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, *being* of one accord, of one mind.

3*Let* nothing *be done* through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.

4Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.

We are to exercise a kind of lowliness, esteeming others as better than ourselves.

Rom 12:16 *Be* of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits.

Christmas should cause a sense of humility and fight pride.

Prov 8:13 The fear of the LORD *is* to hate evil: pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the froward mouth, do I hate.

The Puritan minister, John Flavel said, "They that know God will be humble, and they that know themselves cannot be proud."  
— quoted in MBI's Today In The Word,

Prov 16:18 Pride *goeth* before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.

Winston Churchill was once asked, "Doesn't it thrill you to know that every time you make a speech, the hall is packed to overflowing?" "It's quite flattering," replied Sir Winston. "But whenever I feel that way, I always remember that if instead

of making a political speech I was being hanged, the crowd would be twice as big."

– Norman McGowan, *My Years With Winston Churchill*, Souvenir Press, London.

When you see that odd person on the street, maybe because the way they dress, act, or think...do we shrug them off with barely a nod, or do we feel compelled to reach out to them? When we see a child, do we have compassion on them especially knowing that their parents don't care enough about their soul to bring them to the nurture and admonition of the Lord? Do we see the Moslem, the Hindu, the Catholic, the Mormon, the Jehovah's Witness as deceived and needing Christ, or they beneath us and not worthy of our concern? We might be baffled about the Caste System in India but do our hearts break for those who are facing a Christless eternity around us?

John 13:12-17 So after he had washed their feet, and had taken his garments, and was set down again, he said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you?

13Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for *so* I am.

14If I then, *your* Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet.

15For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.

16Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him.

17If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.

Remember, Judas Iscariot was one whose feet Jesus washed, also.

Matt 25:35-40 For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in:

36Naked, and ye clothed me: I

was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.

37Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed *thee*? or thirsty, and gave *thee* drink?

38When saw we thee a stranger, and took *thee* in? or naked, and clothed *thee*?

39Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?

40And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done *it* unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done *it* unto me.

A truly humble man is hard to find, yet God delights to honor such selfless people. Booker T. Washington, the renowned black educator, was an outstanding example of this truth. Shortly after he took over the presidency of Tuskegee Institute in Alabama, he was walking in an exclusive section of town when he was stopped by a wealthy white woman. Not knowing the famous Mr. Washington by sight, she asked if he would like to earn a few dollars by chopping wood for her. Because he had no pressing business at the moment, Professor Washington smiled, rolled up his sleeves, and proceeded to do the humble chore she had requested. When he was finished, he carried the logs into the house and stacked them by the fireplace. A little girl recognized him and later revealed his identity to the lady.

The next morning the embarrassed woman went to see Mr. Washington in his office at the Institute and apologized profusely. "It's perfectly all right, Madam," he replied. "Occasionally I enjoy a little manual labor. Besides, it's always a delight to do something for a

friend." She shook his hand warmly and assured him that his meek and gracious attitude had endeared him and his work to her heart. Not long afterward she showed her admiration by persuading some wealthy acquaintances to join her in donating thousands of dollars to the Tuskegee Institute.

— Our Daily Bread.

As we reflect on the humility of Christ, remember that it was in His humility that He came to serve.

Matt 20:28 Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.

It's a nice friendly thought to say "Tis the season to be jolly." Deep joy is in the giving to and humbly serving others. "Tis the season to humbly reach out in love."

1. Jesus emptied Himself from heaven Phil 2:1-8, John 17:5, Zech 9:9, Isa 53:6-11
2. Jesus inspired us to be humble and bless Rom 12:16, Prov 8:13, 16:18, John 13:12-17, Matt 25:35-40, 20:28