



THE COMPASS

RED HILL LUTHERAN CHURCH

Sermon Series: "Surrender: Serving the Savior"

(Pentecost, 2026)

"Unity." Text(s): *Philippians 2.1-4 (5-13)*

☐ **Day #1—Monday, September 28th. Read: Philippians 2.1-3; Proverbs 13.10.—Encounter: God's Word and your life—What do you Hear and/or See?**

C.S. Lewis defined humility as, "Not thinking less of yourself; it is thinking of yourself less" Humility is a Biblical virtue that reflects the very nature and character of Jesus Himself. For the Christian, our hope, peace, and comfort is found in relationship with Jesus Christ, whom God exalted to the highest honor, making his name greater than every other name on earth and in heaven. Yet, Jesus, in humility, emptied Himself to enter into our humanity in order to bring us peace; peace with God and peace with one another. In our relationships as believers, we quickly learn that humility creates harmony, joy and peace, while selfish ambition and vain conceit creates conflict. The Bible lays out a humble path to relational peace. We can reduce conflicts with others if we are willing to...

- ...Never let my pride be my guide!
- ...Remember...If I am not humble, I will likely stumble!
- ...Learn the lost art of paying attention!
- ...Ask what would Jesus do if he were me?

These are attitudes that flow from humility. The commitment and practice of humility leads us to...

- ...Not demand what I think I deserve
- ...I look for ways that I can serve
- ...I do what is right even when it is difficult and even painful.

What are the four different kinds of harmony identified in *Philippians 2.2*? Consider which of these you find easy to embrace in your relationships and how you feel about them.

Which ones do you have a more difficult time with? Can you get some ideas from someone you trust on how you could more easily develop these?

Pray/Consider/Reflect: It is important to understand that the habits that lead to peace...peace in our relationships and peace in our hearts...are often not the habits we have developed over the years. We need to remember and learn that humility leads to harmony and harmony leads to peace, and Jesus modeled both! Pray today: "Heavenly Father, I thank you for showing me how to live in harmony and humility so that I can avoid conflict in my relationships with others. Help me to identify where I can be more humble, think of myself less, and pay more attention to others so that I can be more like Jesus by taking on the nature of a servant. Amen."

☐ **Day #2—Tuesday, September 29th. Read: Philippians 2.1-4.—Examine: The Text and its Message.**

In our text, Paul focuses on the personal characteristics and attitudes of Christians who desire to have *peaceful relationships*. In Philippians 1.27, Paul called the Philippians towards greater unity, and here he continues this thought.

The passage unfolds in three parts: the basis of Paul's appeal to unity (2:1); the essence of unity (2:2a); and the expression of unity (2:3-4). In actuality, these three are part of another long sentence in the Greek text, and there is one basic command: "Make my joy complete" Four statements form the basis of Paul's appeal to the Philippians. The statements are introduced by "if" in both Greek and English. Although the word "if" brings doubt to mind, these clauses express little hesitancy. They should be translated "assuming...then make my joy complete."¹

1 R.R. Melick. *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1991).

Paul describes three characteristics that express the unity of the church. These characteristics are goals that we *strive for*—we always need to *grow* in and *deepen* these characteristics; they are also ways we can check ourselves to see if we are maturing in our faith.

The first characteristic is a *unity in outlook*. Perhaps today we would call it having the same *worldview*. For Christians, the Biblical worldview emphasizes the love of God for us and for all people, how believers should love others as Jesus loves them, and valuing the truth of God's Word. When the church is unified on those essentials, we are *one in spirit, love, and purpose*.

The second characteristic, and really, the overall theme in this text, is *humility*. R.R. Melick notes:

Paul expressed this both negatively and positively. Negatively, the Philippians were to avoid “selfish ambition” and “vain conceit.” Selfish ambition motivated the preachers Paul described in 1:17. Perhaps that was fresh in his mind. It led him to think about conceit, a seeking of glory which is, in reality, empty because it focuses on the individual rather than on the Lord. The positive side corrects improper attitudes. They were to act in humility. Before the New Testament era, the word “humility” had a negative connotation. The adjective related to it was frequently employed, and especially so, to describe the mentality of a slave. It conveyed the ideas of being base, unfit, shabby, mean, of no account. Hence “humility” could not have been regarded by the pagan as a virtue to be sought after. Nonetheless, “humility” introduces a key theme of the passage.²

The third characteristic is *consideration*. Disciples are to “look out” for others’ interests as well as their own. Some Greek texts insert the word “also” in this sentence so that it reads “also the things of others.” Christian unity, a unity that brings peace, is built upon a common outlook (worldview), humility, and consideration for others. All of these characteristics are empowered by and works of, the Holy Spirit in our hearts and minds. God will work in and through us when our minds and hearts are turned toward Jesus and the love He has given to us!

Consider/Reflect: Read Philippians 2:3b above again and think about what is meant by “count others more significant than yourselves.” If you went through a full day with this as the “theme of your day,” would you do anything different? Would your interactions with others be different? When someone shows that they value you, how do you respond to them?

□ **Day #3—Wednesday, September 30th. Read: Philippians 2.5-7.—Explore: The background to this text(s).**

How are we to develop the characteristics we examined yesterday? The Bible says we must have the same attitude—selfless humility—that Jesus did! Jesus demonstrated this humility through *humiliation* and *condescension*. In v. 2 we examined that Christians are to have the same outlook, to be “like-minded.” This is the same Greek word translated here in v.5 as “attitude.” Our thinking must reflect Jesus’ thinking. Jesus loves us even though we do not deserve it. He pursues us even when we run away. Moreover, to pursue us, Jesus meets us where we are—not where we think we should be!

The word translated nature (*morphe*) in verses 6 and 7 is a crucial term in this passage. This word (trans. “form” in the KJV and NASB) stresses the inner essence or reality of that with which it is associated (cf. Mark 16:12). Christ Jesus, Paul said, is of the very essence (*morphe*) of God, and in His incarnation He embraced perfect humanity. His complete and absolute deity is here carefully stressed by the apostle. The Savior’s claim to deity infuriated the Jewish leaders (John 5:18) and caused them to accuse Him of blasphemy (John 10:33). Though possessing full deity (John 1:14; Col. 2:9)... Christ did not hesitate to set aside His self-willed use of deity when He became a man. As God He had all the rights of deity, and yet during His incarnate state He surrendered His right to manifest Himself visibly as the God of all splendor and glory.³

What Paul outlined above means that the eternal God became a servant to His creatures. Think about it this way: Jesus made Himself subject to the very people He created! In v.7, the word for “emptying” is the Greek word *kenoō*, which means to empty something, or to *pour out*. While Jesus “emptied” (*kenoō*) Himself, He did *cease* to be God. What *kenoō* describes is the action of Jesus in...

...divesting of His self-interests, but not of His deity. The very nature of a servant certainly points to His lowly and humble position, His willingness to obey the Father, and serve others. He became a man, a true human being. “Likeness” suggests similarity but difference. Though His humanity was genuine, He was different from all other humans in that He was sinless (Heb. 4:15)⁴

2 Ibid.

3 J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck, Eds. *The Bible Knowledge Commentary* (Wheaton, Illinois: Victor Books, 1985).

4 Ibid.

Jesus, the second member of the divine Trinity, in humble love, became the recipient of His own judgment against sin and modeled the way for this divine love to continue through His people. As God, Jesus came to us in the only way we would truly understand and identify with: *personal humanity*. Jesus lived the life we do not live; He died the death we should die. That is the heart of the Gospel, and our hope for living that will bring peace and not conflict in all of our relationships.

Consider/Reflect: How has God the Father exalted Jesus according to Philippians 2.9-11 above? What effect does your full realization that Jesus lefts the glory of heaven for you, and is now in heaven praying for you, have on your beliefs and actions today?

□ **Day #4--Thursday, October 1st. Read: Philippians 2.8.—Explore: The background to this text(s).**

Jesus emptied Himself to the point of dying on a cross. Being God means that He had no beginning and no end—the very definition of God is an *eternal being*. Yet, when God took upon Himself human flesh, He had a beginning, a birth, and went all the way to and through death—human death. Again, not just any death, a shameful, painful, social stigma that would cast doubt on all Jesus said and did during His life. Jesus, for you...

...stooped lower still *and became obedient to death*. He lived a life of utter obedience (*cf.* Rom. 5:19; Heb. 5:8–9; 10:5–14), ‘even to the extent of dying’...That death, moreover, was *death on a cross*, a death of unimaginable pain and utter shame, a curse in the eyes of the Jews because of what the law said in Dt. 21:23 (see Gal. 3:13). What crucifixion meant to Romans is expressed in Cicero’s words, ‘Far be the very name of the cross, not only from the body, but even from the thought, the eyes, the ears of Roman citizens.’⁵

...Jesus put all of His thoughts, words, and actions under the direction of His Father’s will...(Jesus)...death on a cross...(was)...The most despised and cursed death. According to OT Law, being hung on a tree meant you were cut off from God. You were left there all day as an example to others (*cf.* Dt 21:22–23). The Romans crucified criminals by the main entry roads into a city in order to humiliate them and to warn those who entered not to make the same mistake.⁶

In His human body, Jesus bore all the shame and pain that are the consequences of human sin. In *u*8, we have the summary account of Jesus’ incarnation and Jesus’ commitment to us to go all the way for us. We see here in the life of Jesus the ultimate illustration of humility; God the Son willingly surrendered the prerogatives of deity to die as a human being for our sins. This verse also reveals to us that the life of a disciple is *down rather than up!* To follow Jesus is to follow the path of humility.

Consider/Reflect: What do you think it was like for Jesus to leave heaven and become human? That Jesus experienced ALL that human beings (you and I) experience due to the brokenness of sin and death?

□ **Day #5— Friday, October 2nd. Read: Philippians 2.9-11.—Explore: The background to this text(s).**

Jesus’ obedient life and death secured for us our salvation. In response to our being saved by Jesus, Jesus commands us to live in a manner that reflects His life: humility, service, and striving for unity. As R. Ellsworth writes, “We are saved by virtue of his willingness to humble himself and put our interests above his own comfort. We cannot receive the benefits of his sacrifice and then refuse to follow his example.”⁷

Our text for this week is concluded by the description of the “third stage” of Christ’s experience, namely, His exaltation after emptying Himself, coming to this world, and dying a shameful death. Again, Ellsworth:

Having completed the work of redemption on the cross and having risen from the dead, the Lord Jesus ascended to the Father in heaven (Acts 1:1–11), where he now reigns in exaltation. The Father has given him ‘the name which is above every name’ (v. 9). Debate swirls around this name, but this is beyond debate: every knee is going to bow in submission before the exalted Christ and every tongue is going to confess that he is Lord of all.⁸

In ancient times, people were given names to describe them. The name of Jesus describes the essence of who He is: “salvation is of the Lord.” There is no other savior or means of salvation. “After His resurrection, He entirely laid aside the form of a servant, but not the human nature, and was established in the full use, manifestation, and

5 D.A. Carson, R.T. France, J.A. Motyer, and G.J. Wenham (Eds.). *New Bible Commentary* (Downers Grove, Illinois: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994).
6 *The Lutheran Study Bible* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2009).
7 R. Ellsworth, *Opening up Philippians* (Leominster: Day One Publications, 2004).
8 Ibid.

declaration of the divine majesty. In this way He entered into His glory.” (*Formula of Concord Epitome VIII 16*).⁹

One day, Jesus will be revealed to all as the true King of Kings and Lord of Lords! Every creature will worship Jesus. The focus here on every creature in the universe acknowledges Jesus as the Lord of the created order, and points toward the divine nature of Jesus who was present when the entire created order was established. Likewise, the devil and his demons, as well as all those who opposed Jesus and His church, will bow down in worship (See also Isaiah 45:23–24). However, as one scholar notes:

These verses do not mean that all will confess him as Savior, for the Bible offers no second chances after death (Heb. 9:27). This is the combination of worship from those who believe in him and acknowledgment of his power and authority by those he has defeated...The honored place the Savior now occupies and the universal acknowledgment of his lordship in the future are all to the glory of God the Father.¹⁰

The plan of God for this world, revealed in Scripture from Genesis to Revelation, will be fulfilled! We can live in this hope and expectation as humble servants of Jesus! When we do this, it will bring us peace!

Consider/Reflect: Pray this prayer today: “You have made us, O God, for deep, satisfying relationships because you are a relational God. Help me to bring joy into every context through humble attitudes and actions of love. Forgive me for being, at times, self-centered, looking out for only myself. Enable me to think of others first and to show your love toward them. In your loving name. Amen.”¹¹

□ **Day #6-Saturday, October 3rd. Read: Isaiah 14.13-14. —Embrace: God and His guiding you through His Word.**

Many Biblical commentators suggest that this text reflects the fall of Satan and describes Satan’s boast and claims of being as “high and mighty” as God. As we witness throughout the Bible, the sin of pride leads to alienation and fear. Satan and his demonic hosts fell from heaven’s glory because of pride and a lack of humility. Now, they fear the ultimate judgment that awaits them upon Jesus’ return to bring in the new heavens and the new earth! Adam and Even fell from paradise because of a lack of humility and pride—they thought they knew better than God! This led to fear and shame, hiding from God and blaming each other!

Conversely, Jesus displays utter humility revealing what God desires from His people...dependence and trust in God’s love, power, provision, and peace. Pride and a lack of humility will always lead to downfall and an absence of peace. When we are in a right relationship with God, we know we do not have to be more than we are or less than we are! We are God’s children who are free to serve and reach out to others...just like our Lord!

Finding happiness requires us to be humble and focused on others, counter to our culture and Satan’s prideful boasting as shown in the verses above from Isaiah. This is not a new cultural problem. Can you think of any small things in your life that mirror the sentiments in this verse? Does it surprise you? How do you feel about it? Jesus modeled harmony and humility. Consider how you will model these in your life.

Consider/Reflect: “Philippians reveals Paul’s intense love for and joy in this congregation. The warmth he shows toward them is unique among his Letters, since the congregation seems to need less discipline than others. He describes the Christian life in all its blessings and goodness, which come from the Lord’s work in us. As you study Philippians, the Lord will work in your life, transforming your mind to be like Christ’s. Pray that you may receive the fullness of His joy in all circumstances and live worthy of His Gospel. For your righteousness is through faith in Christ alone. Knowing Him has “surpassing worth” (3:8).¹²

Pray and Prepare for Worship Tomorrow...
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Scripture Texts:

Isaiah 5.1-7

Philippians 3.4b-14

Matthew 21.33-46

9 Quoted in, *The Lutheran Study Bible*.

10 M. Anders. *Galatians-Colossians* (Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999).

11 Ibid.

12 *The Lutheran Study Bible*