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BIBLE STUDY AND SERMON OUTLINE

Introduction:

The southern Pilipino island region of Mindanao has a storied history of political and religious unrest and has been witness to some of the most devastating civil armed conflict in Southern Asia in recent history¹. Even the past few months has yielded reports of kidnappings, executions, and bombings as Islamic extremist militia groups strike out against the government in efforts to establish an independent Islamic Mindanao state.

In the midst of this unrest and religious animosity the Church continues to flourish, and as a part of that body there is a faithful and vibrant Salvation Army presence which is active in communities throughout Mindanao. In February of 2016 I had the privilege to spend time with these Salvationists as a part of a short term mission trip based in the Iligan City Corps. This experience was educational and transforming in many ways but the political and social climate of Mindanao left me with two profound reminders.

Firstly, I have travelled about as much as the next average Canadian, I would suspect, and my experience has always been the same. Prior to my visit to Mindanao everywhere I visited was somehow geared towards the tourism industry, with attractions, vendors, opportunists, tours, and the like. A plethora of options for me, the visitor, to partake in as an effort to enjoy my stay; wherever it may be. But upon my arrival, and during my stay, in Mindanao I was struck by the utter lack of the expected tourist fare. Due to the risk of violence and the uneasy peace between religious and political factions, Mindanao is simply not a place western tourists are frequenting. The result was that I and the rest of our team were simply immersed in the regular day to day culture and operation of society. I came away with a deep sense of experiencing regular life in Mindanao, really feeling like I had gained, however temporarily, an idea of how the people I had met lived, worshipped, and served. In reflection I found the importance of incarnational ministry playing over and over again in my mind. I had gained such a deeper experience by not visiting as a tourist or being treated as one by locals;² it reminded me that the Church can only be truly effective in mission as we seek to dwell within the communities we are called to minister to.

The second reminder was played out in real life human drama that unfolded around me during each day of my time there. The Philippines is the largest Christian country in East Asia, but Mindanao region is majority Muslim and the strife and tension between these two religions is tangible and evident even to someone who is 'just visiting.' The threat of violence against the Christian minority is very real in the large portions of Mindanao and I heard stories of Salvation Army Officers serving in these communities daily concerned for their personal safety but yet committed to their calling. In other areas the threat of violence is less pronounced, but at the same time very real. The struggle is one of a social dance of cultures and religions who are actively and progressively trying to occupy the same space with little breathing room. In the midst of these circumstances what I heard from the local Christian community and the local Salvationists was that, while there is an element of fear, they are committed to prayer for their Muslim neighbours and are actively seeking to evangelize, and to live in

¹ The conflict of the 1970's is estimated to have cost over 100,000 lives.

² During our entire stay we encounter about 5 other western individuals, none of which were tourists.

such a way that their daily lives testify to Christ's love. In the face of immense pressure, the people of God are seeking to live in unity and love so that by their actions their Muslim neighbours may come to know Christ. In many ways the western church can learn a lesson from our brothers and sisters. For them unity and humility is not a quaint spiritual ideal it is a mission essential that, at the risk of being accused of sensationalism, teeters on the reality of life and death both physically and spiritually. You and I would be amiss if we didn't see the same gravity to our own Biblical mandate to unity and humility within the church. The world is watching; what kind of Christ are we showing them?

The following study and sermon outline journeys through Philippians 2 which speaks to both of these lessons I have recounted. This iconic passage detailing Christ's incarnational mindset, and our appropriate response to such a sacrifice on our behalf, can speak powerfully to our mindset and actions as the Church. Whether in South Asia or the Great White North the call is the same, the Church must live and serve together, being Christ to the lost, dwelling in the midst of the darkness we are called is dispel.

BIBLE STUDY OUTLINE

The Example of Christ – Philippians 2:1-11

The word 'therefore' at the beginning of this passage reminds us that what is about to be said is built upon or is in reference to the preceding verses in chapter 1. In those verses we see that Christ's example of humility, as outlined in chapter 2, is necessary so that we can conduct ourselves in a way that is worthy of the Gospel in the sight of the world (1:27-28). Paul is saying that our unity is necessary to witness the sharing of the Gospel to the world. Christ is to be our example.

Building upon the final verses of chapter 1 we see the following paradigm laid out in chapter 2:

WITNESS needs **UNITY** needs **HUMILITY** needs **CHRIST**

Vs. 1-2 – Paul appeals to our relationship with Christ and says, if you belong to Christ and take benefit from that relationship (i.e. comfort, love, community, care, compassion, etc.), then live in humble unity so that the love of Christ may reach others.

Vs. 3-4 – Now Paul moves to outline what unity should look like. Late in verse 2 he says we should have the same love and be of one spirit (desire) and mind (goal) (c.f. the 'one Spirit' 1:27). So unity requires us to long for the same things, to dream the same dreams, and while we will all have different interests and longings what Paul is asking for us is to share a desire for the mind and heart of God.

Next he says that unity requires self-denial. As followers of Christ, Paul calls on us to deny ourselves and put others first. This is the foundational element of unity; there cannot be unity as long as I am more concerned about myself than others.

Vs. 5-8 – Paul then characterizes this humility and self-denial in Christ Himself. We are to treat each other as Christ treated us in His redemptive work. Christ gave up all His rights and privileges as God to become like us who had no hope and were condemned to death, to die to set us free from that death. God did not have to come, God did not have to die, but God chose to deny Himself for our sake (c.f. Romans 5:8). The self-denial Paul is calling for is typified in Christ.

So, it is that we are called to deny ourselves for the sake of others and the gospel. (c.f. Mt. 16:24, Mk. 8:34, Lk. 9:23)

Questions:

Are we willing deny ourselves for the sake of others?

This may seem easy at first, but what if that involves letting go of the fact that someone has wronged you, or letting go of a grudge you hold against a fellow Christian because they have been chosen over you or have received something you feel should have come to you?

Vs. 9-11 – In these verses we see that God has honored and blessed Christ for his sacrifice. What we see is the possibility of a humble surrendered life. Not that we are to obtain the glory of Christ Himself but the product of Christ's humility and ours can be the same, that being that God is exalted and humanity is caused to bow in acknowledgement of His glory. Our humility, unity, and sacrifice will

cause others to see and acknowledge the glory of God, which brings us back to Paul's original point for the call to unity found in the latter verses of chapter 1.

Co-operation in Salvation– Philipians 2:12-18

Vs. 12-13 – Here again we get the word 'therefore' noting that the next part of the teaching is building upon the previous point Paul has established. We are called on to obey what Paul is calling for in this passage and through that exhorted to continue to work out our salvation.

This does not imply that salvation is something that we must work to earn but the work of salvation here signifies our complete salvation, which moves beyond the forgiveness of our sins to the continued work of sanctification and becoming like Christ. The call here is to use the opportunity and means afforded by Christ's redemptive work to become more like Christ (c.f. John 10:10). This is a work that relies on the power of Christ in our lives but also requires our desire and agreement to allow the Holy Spirit to change things in our lives (c.f. John 16:13). Though we do no 'heavy lifting' in this process it can be a very difficult work for sure. Again we are pointed back to self-denial. Can we deny ourselves that Christ may make us more like Him? The second part of that line mentions 'fear and trembling,' this refers not to panic and alarm but instead awe and reverence, a respect for God and His power.

Verse 13 is a confirmation of what we have just said. God wills in our lives to perform the act of transforming our lives for the glory of His purposes. He is actively seeking to make us more like Him to sanctify us, but there must be agreement on our part. Paul is saying that considering Christ's self-denying example shows respect and thankfulness to God by allowing Him to continue to transform you into His likeness.

Questions:

How does it make you feel to think that God wants us to partner with Him in our own transformation, opposed to forcing Himself on us?

How is our sanctification related to unity in the church?

How is it related to mission?

What part does humility play?

To be effective as the people of God we must see how our personal and corporate sanctification ungirds and empowers all other aspects of our Christian existence and practice.

Vs. 14-18 – Again Paul reminds us to live in unity so that we might shine as lights in the darkness of the world, to serve as witnesses of the Gospel and love of Christ. Our actions both within and without the church is intrinsically connected to the effectiveness of our witness. We need to learn to hold firmly to the word of life (word = logos = Jesus) instead of holding fast to our rights, injuries, and preferences.

The Example of Others – Philippians 2:19-30

Vs. 19-30 – Here we have Paul references two faithful servants of the Gospel. Timothy was a co-worker with Paul whom we see referenced throughout the New Testament and the recipient of the letters 1 and 2 Timothy. Epaphroditus was evidently a member of the Philippian church who had come to Paul on their behalf to attend to his needs.

If you look closely you see that Paul describes both these men as examples of the Christian living he has been calling for in the previous verses. Timothy is characterized as one who looks to the interests of Christ opposed to being like others who '[look] out for their own interests' only. At the same time Epaphroditus is recorded as nearly having died for the sake of the Gospel and one who was more concerned with the welfare of the church family than his own.

Questions:

*Can we take the example of the people we meet in the scriptures and ultimately Christ Himself to live in humble unity for the sake of our brothers and sisters in Christ and the lost?
When is the last time you remember actively living for others instead of yourself?*

SA Doctrine Connection ...

Look for these doctrines in this lesson.

We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ has by His suffering and death made atonement for the whole world so that whosoever will may be saved.

We believe that we are justified by grace through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ and that he that believeth hath the witness in himself.

We believe that continuance in a state of salvation depends upon continued obedient faith in Christ.

We believe that it is the privilege of all believers to be wholly sanctified, and that their whole spirit and soul and body may be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Source Material:

The Bible Exposition Commentary – Warren W. Wiersbe

The Letters to Philippians Colossians Thessalonians – William Barclay

www.Biblegateway.com

www.BlueletterBible.com

SERMON OUTLINE

The Impact of Humility

MAIN IDEA - Our humility sets us apart and causes us to live differently than the world around us.

It is our humility that allows his purposes to be displayed in the world (Phil. 2:13).

WHAT IS HUMILITY?

1. Humility Exemplified. (Vs. 1-4)

- '...consider others better than yourselves...' (Phil 2:3-4)
- Radical obedience means being motivated by the needs of God's kingdom and creation instead of our own.
 - Matthew 19:16-21 – The Rich Young Ruler.

2. Humility is about surrender. (Vs. 5-8)

- Forego our rights and privileges (Phil 2:6-8).
- Be obedient to the point of death to self.
 - John 3:3 – You must be born again...
 - An obedient Christian is a healthy Christian, one that doesn't need to be 'propped up' by the world.

3. Humility is about God's Glory. (Vs. 9-11)

- Seek God's glory and His only
- Every action must glorify God.
 - Colossians 3:23 – Whatever you do, work as if unto the Lord...

WHAT IS THE IMPACT OF HUMILITY?

1. Humility leads to God's Power. (Vs. 12-13)

- God chooses to work through our wilful surrender and obedience.
 - Galatians 2:20 – It is no longer I that live but Christ that lives in me...
- Our humility is a conduit to releasing God's power in creation.
 - 2 Cor. 4:7-11 - But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us... We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body...

2. Humility leads to holiness. (Vs. 14-16a)

- Vs. 12 references working out our salvation in fear and trembling. This is a direct link to the process of sanctification in our lives.
- Be humble so that you may become blameless (vs. 14-15).
- We will shine in this dark world and hold out to the lost the Word of Life through humility.

3. Humility leads to contentment. (Vs. 16b-18)

- Humility allows us to be content no matter our circumstance or situation.
- Humility brings fulfillment that overrules the discontenting desires of this world.
- Phil. 4:11-13 - I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do all this through him who gives me strength.

Conclusion:

Christ-like humility is necessary for effective Kingdom living!

- Is your life positioned in such a way that you can hear God's voice speaking into your life?
- Do you have a spirit of humility that seeks to serve?
- Do you consistently surrender your own will and desires so that God's plan and purpose can be fulfilled in your life and the lives of those around you?
- Do you seek to glorify God with every word, thought and deed?