

SERMON – PASTOR GREG  
10.04.2022

HUMILITY. Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Every human relationship has its difficulties. All of us struggle- with family members, with friends, with work colleagues – in fact- to keep any of our relationships strong, secure and rewarding is very hard work. And despite our best intentions many relationships fail. Why are our relationships so prone to anger, bitterness and failure? The answer of God is that we are selfish- turned in ourselves- focussed on what we want and what we will do to get it. Another word for it is sin. And Christians are not exempt- as we know all too well.

Two thousand years ago a small and rather new Christian congregation in Philippi had many good things going for it. But at the same time there was increasing division within this Christian community. So the apostle Paul wrote a letter to them- thanking them for their support of him but at the same time challenging them to put their divisions aside. And the basis of his challenge? He writes:

*Since you have encouragement with/in Christ.*

*Since you have the comfort of (God's) love.*

*Since you have the fellowship of the (Holy) Spirit.*

*Since you have sympathy and compassion.*

*Fulfil my joy by:*

*Having the same love and the same mind since you have been united in your very souls (through Baptism into Jesus Christ).*

*So do nothing out of self-interest nor of arrogant pride.*

*But with humility consider the needs of others instead of solely focussing on your own wants and desires.*

In our church, in our family, amongst our friends this is what we are called to do. Because of who we are- followers of Jesus Christ and because of what he has given us- encouragement, comfort, fellowship, sympathy, compassion, faith, love and joy- we are to seek the good of others before we strive for our own needs. It is not easy! It is nearly impossible. In fact, it is impossible if we rely on our own strength and attitudes. But we are not alone. Christ comes to us by his Spirit through the word of God. But even with God's help it remains hard. Paul knows this so as to encourage us he asks us to look to Jesus Christ and follow his example:

*Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus. The One who came not to be served but to serve and give his life as a ransom for many.*

*Who, although being in his very nature, equal with God, did not consider this equality something to be held on at all costs. This is the profound confession of the Church- that Jesus Christ is the Only Begotten Son of the Father, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, of one essence with the Father and the Holy Spirit. One God*

but Three persons. And this One- the Eternal Son of God- gave up his position at the right hand of the Father and put aside his divinity and became one of us.

*Instead he emptied himself of his divinity and power. He took on the very nature of a slave, being made in human likeness. Becoming a human being.*

*He humbled himself and became obedient to death- even death on a Cross. To pay the price demanded by the Righteousness of God. To take our place and to overcome death and the devil. So that we might become like him- living with God for ever and ever. The Son of God died so that we might live forever.*

*Therefore, God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name. That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth. And every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

The only religious name you will ever hear abused in terrible and crude ways is the name of Jesus. Yet this is the ONLY name under heaven by which any person can be saved (Acts 4:12). The Day will come when every single human person who has ever lived will see Jesus Christ as the Victorious Lord of all. And every single person will fall down on their knees and confess him as Lord of all. Those of us who have received his love and grace today will be raised up to live with him forever in heaven. Those who reject him will be raised up and sent to hell. Whatever hell is- it is where God's wrath and not His love rules. Don't go there.

And the only way to avoid hell is to receive God's love for you through His Son Jesus Christ.

And it is this love- the love of God that He has for you through His Son that enables us to have humble and not arrogant hearts. It is His love that enables us to forgive those who have hurt us. It is His love that makes it possible for former strangers to live together as husband and wife for 40/50/60 or even 70 years.

We will continue to have struggles in all of our relationships. We will fail. But we do not give up. Again and again we say sorry, we confess, we repent and we ask for forgiveness. From each other and from God. And God is always ready to forgive us. Because- John 3:16. Amen.