

- I. My Notes ... WWC message 5/9
- II. Series: Koinonia — The Joy of Living in Unity with Christ
 - Title: The Pattern of Participation – Part 1
 - Text: Philippians 2:5-11
 - Quote: “The church is only the church when it exists for others.” Dietrich Bonhoeffer
- III. Introduction
 - Paul begins Philippians 2 with what I like to call the “four ifs.”
If you have any encouragement in Christ... If any comfort from His love... If any participation in the Spirit... If any affection and sympathy...
 - Paul isn’t questioning these things. He’s assuming them. He’s saying, “Since these things are true — since you really do share life with Christ — then there is a way this shared life should look.”
 - In other words, Paul is moving from identity to responsibility, from union to participation, from what Christ has done for us to what Christ now does through us.
 - And this is where many believers quietly slip. They embrace the encouragement, the comfort, the love — but they stop short of the participation.
They receive grace, but they don’t step into the responsibility that grace creates.
 - Paul is saying, “If you share in Christ, then you share His mindset. If you share His mindset, then you share His mission. And if you share His mission, then your life will take on the same pattern as His.”
 - That’s the hinge. That’s the bridge. That’s the moment where Paul shifts from what we receive to what we become.
 - And that shift — from receiving to participating — reminds me of something my son once told me.
 - When my son became a firefighter, something changed in him. It wasn’t just a job. It wasn’t even just a calling. It was a claim.
He told me once, “Dad, the moment you put on that uniform, you’re not your own anymore. You can be eating dinner, sleeping, or celebrating a birthday — but when the alarm sounds, you move. You don’t think about it. You don’t negotiate with it. You’re under obligation. The oath you took becomes the harness that directs your life.”
He didn’t say it with resentment. He said it with purpose.
The uniform didn’t restrict him — it defined him. It didn’t burden him — it summoned him. It didn’t take away his freedom — it gave his freedom direction.
 - And as he talked, I realized something:
This is what grace is supposed to do in the life of a believer.

Grace isn't a hammock we rest in. Grace is a harness we live in. Grace doesn't loosen our lives — it claims them. Grace doesn't excuse us from responsibility — it pulls us into participation.

- And nowhere is that clearer than in Philippians 2:5–11. Because in this passage, Paul gives us the pattern of participation — the shape of the life we share with Christ. His mindset. His humility. His obedience. His cross. His exaltation.
- This is the pattern we are called into. This is the pattern grace empowers. This is the pattern of koinonia.

IV. The Text

- **Philippians 2:5-11 NASB**

5 Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, 6 who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. 8 Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. 9 For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, 10 so that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

- Let me make this statement first and then we will build into it ... Koinonia starts not with activity, but with alignment — the believer sharing the very mindset of Jesus.
- Paul's first move is not to tell the church what to do, but how to think.
- The Christian life begins in the mind because the mind is the control center of participation.

V. Instruction That Points to Union

- *“Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus...” (Philippians 2:5 NASB)*

- This is not:
“Try harder.” ... “Imitate Jesus from a distance.” ... “Do your best to be humble.”
- Paul uses a verb that means:
adopt this mindset - embrace this way of thinking - let this be the internal posture of your life.
- And then he adds the phrase that changes everything: “...which was also in Christ Jesus.”
Paul is not calling us to imitation alone — he is calling us to participation.
- This is the doctrine of union with Christ. We don't imitate Christ from the outside; we share His life from the inside.
 - “We have the mind of Christ.” (1 Corinthians 2:16)
 - “Christ lives in me.” (Galatians 2:20)

- “Put on the new self... renewed in knowledge after the image of its Creator.” (Colossians 3:10)
- Paul is saying:
“You already share His mind — now live from it.”
- This is the foundation of participation.

VI. Let's Explore

- Before Paul explains to us the manner in which Jesus (showed how HE) participated, he shows us Jesus' thought process. Knowing that the cross was the plan for salvation, didn't alter His focus – it didn't change His mind. Because of His understanding, humility (it wasn't about HIM) never drifted front His thoughts. The mindset that Jesus held resulted in unwavering obedience.
- So, what exactly was the “attitude” of Christ?
- Jesus' mindset was not self-protective or self-promoting. It was a continual choice to give of Himself so that others could find mercy and grace. Remember the words of our Lord ... *“For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” (Mark 10:45 CSB).*
- His inner posture was:
“How can I give?” ... “How can I make a difference?” ... “How can I bring a blessing?” ... “How can I obey the Father for the good of others?”
- This is the opposite of the flesh, which asks:
“How can I be seen?” ... “How can I be honored?” ... “How can I protect my rights?” ... “How can I avoid sacrifice?”
- The mind of Christ is a life that reveals AGAPE (self-giving love).

VII. Agape

- Some people may not like this statement or they may disagree ... but it truly is all about love – God's love for us and His love lived out through us.
- Agapē is not a feeling. It is not sentiment. It is not affection. Agapē is self-giving love — the kind of love that moves toward others at cost to oneself.
- It is the kind of love that God has for humanity, reminding us that no matter our circumstances, His love remains steadfast. In our lives, we reflect this agape by demonstrating love, compassion, and kindness to those around us. It's a call to love without expecting anything in return and to see the value in every individual, just as God sees us. Embracing this love cultivates genuine relationships and enriches our spiritual journey. This love has the power to transform not just us, but also the communities we are part of. Therefore, as we explore the scriptures, let us keep in mind the essence of agape love flowing through them.
- **1 John 3:16 EXB**
This is how we know what real love is: ·Jesus [L he] ·gave [laid down] his life for us [John 15:13]. So we should ·give [lay down] our lives for our brothers and sisters [C fellow believers; John 15:12].

- Paul says Jesus did not regard equality with God as something to be grasped (v. 6).
That is the negative side.
- The positive side is this:
He regarded His divine status as something to be given away.
- Agapē always moves in the direction of:
Surrender ... Sacrifice ... Service ... Self-giving
- This is why John can say:
Before the Passover Festival, Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart from this world to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. (John 13:1 CSB)
- The Greek phrase **eis telos** (translated in the previous passage, “to the end”) means: to the uttermost - to the fullest extent - to the final cost ...
- This is the love that shaped Christ’s attitude.
- The attitude of Christ is rooted in agapē — the self-giving love that moves toward others at cost to oneself. This love is the source of His humility, His obedience, and His cross. And through the Spirit, this same love becomes the mindset we share.

VIII. Moving Forward

- Agapē always moves downward. It always bends low. It always chooses the good of the other over the comfort of the self. And that’s exactly what we see in Jesus. Because He loved with self-giving love, He humbled Himself with self-emptying humility. Agapē didn’t stay inside Him — it took on the form of a servant. Love became lowliness. Self-giving became self-emptying. And this is why Paul moves directly from the love of Christ to the humility of Christ: humility is simply agapē in action.
- Perhaps you have experienced this kind of love and understanding. When I was going through chemotherapy, this love and humility touched my life. During a particularly rough week of chemo sessions, I was ready to quit – to stop all treatment ... I had enough. One of the nurses in the infusion area saw me come in for another treatment and could see that I was struggling. She asked me what was wrong and I told her that I was done, that I was ready to give up, I no longer had the desire to continue this path. Her words touched me deeply ... “Oh Rick, you just need to pray ...” I walked into the room where I was about to have my next chemo infusion, knelt on the cold tile floor, and began to cry out to the Lord. As tears were flowing, some arms wrapped around me. Mary, the nurse, knelt beside me and began to weep and pray with me. This touched me in a way that I could never have dreamed. It brought encouragement and hope. I was a demonstration of love and humility that changed me.

IX. Humility

- Humility is not thinking less of yourself. It is choosing to lower yourself for the sake of others.
- Jesus didn't have to humble Himself. He **chose** to.
- *"Take my yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart..."* (Matthew 11:29)
- Humility wasn't something Jesus did — it was the essence of who He was.
- This is why Paul says: "Have this attitude in yourselves..." He's saying: "Let the humility of Christ become the instinct of your soul."
- Before Jesus emptied Himself (v. 7), before He humbled Himself (v. 8), before He obeyed to the point of death (v. 8),
- Jesus thought a certain way. He understood the path to the cross — He could see it in His mind. So, it was possible for Him to live it. Discipleship begins in this way too. From understanding in your mind to a lifestyle that others can see (and emulate).
- Remember how Paul pointed this out:
 - Romans 12:2
"Be transformed by the renewing of your mind..."
 - Ephesians 4:23
"Be renewed in the spirit of your minds..."
 - Colossians 3:2
"Set your minds on things above..."
- The pattern is unmistakable: Transformation begins with thinking like Jesus.
- This is why many believers never move into participation: They want the comfort of Christ without the mindset of Christ. They want the blessings of union without the responsibilities of union. They want grace as pardon but not grace as power.
- Participation begins when we surrender our mindset and embrace His.
- They receive grace, but they don't step into the responsibility that grace creates.
- We have been talking about this ... Koinonia is not sentimental fellowship. It is shared life, shared mission, shared obedience, shared sacrifice. And that shared life begins with a shared mind.
- We touched on this last week ... "having the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose." (Philippians 2:2 CSB)
- Paul is not calling the church to uniformity.
- He is calling us to Christlikeness, to be the reflection of Christ. This takes place as we allow ourselves to be shaped by the mind of Christ.
- This is why Paul places verse 5 as the hinge.
 - The mind of Christ leads to the humility of Christ.
 - The humility of Christ leads to the obedience of Christ.
 - The obedience of Christ leads to the cross of Christ.
 - The cross of Christ leads to the exaltation of Christ.
- And Paul says: "This is your pattern. This is your participation."

X. Bringing This Moment Together

- When we talk about the mind of Christ — His agapē, His humility, His willingness to bend low — it can feel almost unreachable. We admire it. We honor it. But we quietly wonder, “Can anyone really live this way?”
- There was a man named Rees Howells who wrestled with that same question. He loved Jesus deeply, but he realized something was missing. He believed in Christ, but he wasn’t yet participating in the life of Christ.
- And then the Holy Spirit confronted him with a simple truth:
 - Grace doesn’t just comfort you — it claims you.
 - Grace doesn’t just forgive you — it forms you.
 - Grace doesn’t just save you — it summons you.
- Rees described it as a harness being placed on his life. Not a burden. Not a restriction. A direction. A claim.
- He said the Spirit began bending him low — into places of surrender, obedience, intercession, and service he never would have chosen on his own. But he also said this:
- “Every time I went lower, Christ went deeper.” And that’s the pattern Paul gives us in Philippians 2.
- The mind of Christ leads to the humility of Christ.
- The humility of Christ leads to the obedience of Christ.
- The obedience of Christ leads to the cross of Christ.
- And the cross of Christ leads to the exaltation of Christ.
- Rees didn’t live this perfectly. But he lived it honestly. And that’s all Christ asks of us.
- Not perfection. Participation. Not striving. Surrender. Not imitation from a distance. Union from within.
- So today, the invitation is simple:
 - Let the mind of Christ shape your mind.
 - Let the love of Christ bend your life low.
 - Let the humility of Christ become your posture.
 - Let the obedience of Christ become your joy.
- This is koinonia. This is shared life. This is the pattern of participation.
- And it begins — right here — in the mind.
- Let’s Pray
- Grace First, Grace Always