



**Greater Joy**  
**Part 3 – The Humility of Christ**  
Scott McElvain

Good morning, Woodland Hills. How are we doing this morning? I'd like to welcome you all here in the Castle, and the Chapel, and in the courtyard. I hear it's warming up out there and going to be a beautiful day for us. I'm excited today. I'm excited to bring to you Philippians 2 and study that today.

Here at Woodland Hills, we take an offering, so we're always grateful and thankful for your cheerful giving. We have multiple ways in which you can offer and give. Unfortunately, we're still not passing boxes right now, but there are three other ways in which, if you'd like to give, we can direct you: through the Church Center App, online at [woodhills.org](http://woodhills.org), as well as our new way you can text the amounts to 84321. We appreciate that as you help financially with the ministries and missions of Woodland Hills.

I love the passage that we get to study today. As you know, we have, in the last two weeks, been in Philippians. Ted has done a great job. Today we'll be jumping into Philippians 2: 1-11. So, if you have your bibles, I encourage you to open those and follow along. I think it's always imperative that we ourselves are studying God's Word, looking over the text and studying it ourselves. My hope and prayer today for us as a church, as a body is something I heard from Dr. Dell Tackett quite a long time ago. It was very impactful for me, and it has stayed that because I remember it.

He once said, "When we look upon the face of God, we cannot help but be transformed." When we stare and see truly who the Lord is, we are transformed. My hope this morning is that as we study through this passage, we are confronted with the true nature, the picture, and reality of who Jesus is and what he has done and continues to do for us.

Now, in a general sermon structure, it is common for many pastors and sermons to look very similar with a three-point sermon in which those three points are presenting an idea, a thought, a way we should think, a behavior, and then end with the application in our lives, what we should do. What therefore should be do?

In Philippians 2, I think Paul flips that around for us as he starts with what I consider the principles. He is encouraging those at the church that he's writing this letter to, those in Philippi. Now, remember, Paul is in jail. He's written this letter back to one of his early church plants, a group of people that have come to know Jesus and are spreading the gospel in Philippi that he loves quite dearly. So, he begins with the principle and move us to the picture. So, I want you to keep that in the back of your mind.

Verses 1-4 are the principles Paul is calling us to, the way we should act, what we should do. And he ends with a picture of why we should be doing that. Quite different than often we have. So, going with the text, we will do the same for us this morning. So, jumping right in, we're going to start off in Verses 1-4.

***Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, 2 then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. 3 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, 4 not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.***

I don't know about you, but when I read that, I realize very quickly this is a tall task that Paul is calling us to. In my opinion, his overarching idea and concept is that of unity. He loves these people, he is encouraging them to be unified. And when I look at the four different things, when I boil all that down, just simply pulling from the text, I believe he's saying, "Hey, be of the same mind. Have the same love. Humble yourself and think of others more than yourself." All these things lead to unity.

I feel as though I would be wasting my breath this morning to contend to you that unity is something easily grasped in today's culture, in our workplaces, and even in our relationships. We all inherently recognize the friction that occurs from different opinions, beliefs, what we should be doing, what's going on. We all recognize that there is a lack of unity in many, many areas. I do believe it begs the question, why is this so hard? What makes unity so difficult? Why is this so hard?

To illustrate this, I want to pick up the idea of thinking about sports teams, the athletic world. I think it presents a picture that we easily understand and can apply back to the way in which we live or lives. You see, sports teams are a group of individuals coming together that don a jersey, that should have a similar goal, that are striving to compete and win. When we see a team working well, it is a thing of beauty. When I walk into a gym and I see five players playing for one another, when I see five players playing their role, it is a thing of beauty.

However, more often than not, when I walk into a gym, I see players who are looking out for their own glory, they are going after their own name, then want more shots, they want a bigger role on the team. They're disgruntled because their voice is not being heard. They are unhappy with the coaches direction of the team and think they have better ideas. It does not take us long to even take into account the actual realms of football and basketball right now to think how many disgruntled players there are. "I want out of this situation." "My contract is garbage." "I am the deal." "Give me the spotlight." "I want the limelight." "It is about me."

We are not different, are we? We often are pursuing the very same things at which we seethe so easily in athletes. Another way to put it is I believe it comes down to a sense of entitlement. Yes, it's sin, but that sin name is a sense of entitlement. "I deserve." "You owe me." "And I'm entitled to this." It is a self-centered pride that keeps us from unity. It is the pride that says "I'm better than all of you." "I deserve this." "I should get this." "Don't you know who I am?" "My thoughts, my opinions."

This self-centered, “everything is about me, everything that’s going on is processed through how that affects me, what that means to me, and what’s going on in my world.” It is an absolute destroyer of unity.

A constant conversation in our house with our children goes something like this. “Young child, may I remind you that the world does not revolve around you.”

Had a soccer party the other day. Walking into Cold Stone with the oldest son’s party. He walks to the front of the line. The coach is paying for the ice cream. Great, love that. The other two children and I are at the back of the line. The oldest gets his ice cream. We’re talking, we get to the front of the line, we get our ice cream, we pay for it, we turn around and my oldest looks at me and goes, “Dad, I’m done with my ice cream, can we go?”

I looked at him and said, “Son, do you see that we just got our ice cream? My daughter has yet to spill, okay? We’ve not even started. This does not revolve around you. You, son, are in the midst of a family here. This unit here, there are things that you have to think outside of what is good for you. Yes, you ate your ice cream. Yes, you’re excited to go home and play, but think about us for a second.” Children are very good at demonstrating this principal, aren’t they? It is because they have not learned the ways that we have learned to disguise. We often still think in terms that we are the center of the world. But we have chosen clever ways to say that and mask that, but ultimately, we still recognize this self-centeredness.

I believe Abraham Lincoln put it best when he said, “What kills the skunk is the publicity it gives itself.” We are very much the same way as we often pursue what is best of us. Me first, self-centered sense of entitlement.

I believe Paul is setting all of this up and I believe that Paul has provided us the principles in which he is encouraging those in Christ to treat one another to be unified. How does he encourage us to do such? We recognize this is difficult, this is hard, how do we change and live this out? One of our favorite shows in the McElvain house is American’s Funniest Home Videos. We are big fans; we love it. There’s nothing better than everybody in the family all laughing together at everybody else’s mistakes. One of our favorites was a video of a three-year-old. I think he’s three. He’s in a family room and he’s trying really hard, gripping and gritting his teeth with this very focused face. The sister who is recording says, “Timmy, what are you doing?” He’s like, “I’m trying to turn four.”

I feel as though sometimes when we come on these kinds of principles, we have the tendency to do the same thing. That it is our power, that it is our will, that it is our grit, that it is me doing the work to be humble. Just listen to that sentence in itself, right? We grit our teeth and move forward. However, Paul does not give that to us. Paul does not present a three-step process in which we are to live these principles out. He does something very different. Now if you recall, athletes have a goal, right? The goal is to win the trophy of the championship. As believers in Christ, our goals are different. We have a different reason we are doing this. Our focus is on Jesus.

Matthew 16: 24 says, **24 Then Jesus said to his disciples, "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me."** If you have given your life over to the Lord, we are following Christ. We look upon who he is and imitate. Paul, the author of Philippians, is a very person who elsewhere in scripture says, "Imitate me as I imitate Christ." We see who Christ is and we follow him. We are doing the same here. Jesus is who we are following. He is the ultimate picture of humility. He is the perfect display of humility and love. It doesn't tell us to try these steps. Paul shows us a picture of Jesus in Verses 6-11.

My main point today is this: **The humility of Christ is the perfect picture we imitate to bring about the improbably act of unity.**

I believe that sometimes we get it backwards. The pursuit of unity is difficult. In my coaching days alone... I wish it was as easy as sometimes I believed it to be where I recognize disfunction on my team. I kept going, "Hey, fellas, come on. Be a team. Let's go. What are we doing here?" It never worked. My record showed that. And ultimately, I recognized that in my own life, it doesn't work that way. I'm like, *Hey, come on. What are we doing? Let's get this together. Let's be unified. What are we doing?* It's very difficult because we have our own views, we have our own ideas of what's good. Paul shows us the picture of Christ.

Augustine, one of the great thinkers of the Christian faith, having given much to us once, replied this when asked, "What are the essential principles of the Christian life?" He replied, "Number one is humility, number 2 is humility, and number three is humility."

So, as we jump into Philippians 2: 5-6, let us pause and let us take a deep account of the humility that Jesus has displayed.

**5 In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: 6 Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage...** This concept of being in the form of God means just this. Jesus has eternally always been God. Paul starts off his picture of Jesus by making it clear who he is.

John 1: 1 says this, **1 In the beginning was the Word (Jesus), and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.** Jesus existed before he came to this earth. He is eternal. He is divine. He is a part of the Trinity. To say therefore that Christ existed in the form of God is to say that apart from his human nature, Christ possessed all the characteristics and qualities belonging to God because he is in fact God. Jesus – fully God/fully man.

One commentator put it like this" *"Though Christ has all the rights, privileges and honors of deity, which he was worthy of and could never be disqualified from, his attitude was to not cling to those things or his position and to be willing to give them up for a season."*

Jesus is the only person ever to be able to have the right of being equal with God, and yet he humbles himself. What a picture we have already in our Lord and Savior. True humility.

I don't know about you, but I also recognize there is false humility. I always have that picture of false humility... Like I've ever made a dip in my life, but when you go to somebody else's house and make a dish. They're like, "Oh, that dip was so amazing." And the other person is like, "Oh, stop it. Oh stop." You know kind of like they're putting up the stop, but they are also saying "Keep it coming." The stop and go there. This true humility Christ displays, unlike at times, the false humility that we often have. We live in a culture right now where building one's brand, strengthening one's status, building one's resume is ramped. And a temptation that we all, at times, face with the titles and position that we find ourselves in. But Paul is clearly laying out who Christ is.

I remember one day we opened up the school I work at, about eight years, and there was a big name there to help us do that, to Christendom the dedication of this school. I had received a new position in administration, and I was really nervous, just trying to live into that and live up to that, that responsibility. This was a big deal for me. I was really nervous. I wanted the building to be perfect. I wanted everything to just be perfect. It so happened that I when I went to walk back to the bathroom, I met this individual in the hallway. I got a little nervous. He's walking my way and his eyes got big. He gives the non-verbals that he wants to approach. He sticks his hand out and says, "Young man, I have not gotten the chance to meet you yet." I was taken aback. This is the big name, the big speaker. Why if he's acting as if he's done wrong by not introducing himself or knowing my name yet. I shake his hand and say, "Sir, my name is Scott McElvain." Then I had that pause. I know who he is; do I ask him what his name is? I just kind of froze. He was kind and gracious to continue the conversation in very encouraging ways complementary to the school and what we had going on. I remember walking away just thinking of how this is a small picture of what ultimately is infinitely found in Jesus. A big name, a big status, coming to somebody who he knows nothing about and extending his hand to ask me who I am. It's a great picture of humility that I often recognize that is not a part of my own interactions.

**7 rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.** Jesus did not empty himself of his divinity. He was always divine. Instead, it was a self-renunciation. What did he renunciate himself from? First of all, his heavenly glory. Being in heaven with the Father, Jesus left to come to earth. I always think of the Apostle's Creed. "Seated at the right hand of the father." He left the heavenly glory to come down to earth. He gave and renounced himself of his independent authority. He submitted himself to the will of the Father, which we'll see here in a second, as well. He also set aside his voluntary display of his divine attributes and submitted himself to the spirit's direction. Jesus, taking the form of a servant... The audacity of that, the very person who had every right and all the privileges, essentially takes the form of a servant.

John 13 is always a picture I get of Jesus washing the disciples' feet. The God of the universe, fully man, fully God, grabs a basin of water and kneels down to wash the dirty feet of his disciples. What a servant, what a picture of humility Jesus is.

**8 And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!** Jesus was found in human form. He looked like everybody else. He could have chosen to look a very different way. He could have been a show-stopper, but he chose to be found in a normal way. Jesus appeared to be a man and nothing more. He could have chosen to come looking very differently, but he did not. His obedience to the Father was on display.

His obedience was not to death, it was to the Father that ultimately led him to the cross. He did not go to the cross asking what's in it for me? He did not go to the cross saying look at me dying the worst death conceivable in that time. He did it thinking of us, thinking of the love that he has for us.

John Piper writes this: *"You are owed hell and you got heaven at the cost of the Son of God."* We were owed hell from our sins, our transgressions, and we got heaven at the cost of the Son of God who loved us and humbled himself enough to leave the heavenly glory, come on this earth, live a perfect life to sacrifice on the cross for us to be, upon acceptance of the free gift of salvation, made right with the Father.

We are humbled as we look at the picture of Christ and what he did for us in his work, his love, his humility, that leads us to humble ourselves. Unity is not the root, it is the fruit. The fruit is unity, the root humility. Unity happens through humility. Christ is the picture of that.

I have to be transparent with you for a second to tell you that the last two weeks in the McElvain house has been a whirlwind. We have had things stacked on top of each other. We've started house projects and house projects always go tough. They are difficult. We've had much work. We've had a lot of things going the last two weeks. I have been short. I have had poor communication, poor scheduling, and that has ultimately led to Nicole and me to not being on the same page.

One night, we got into a discussion, as somebody pointed out in the first service, about the direction of a house project... otherwise known as an argument. I had a different view of what our schedule would look like and how I would be spending my time that night. Things needed to be done for the time we had the scaffolding and when it needed to be back. Ultimately, I left saying, "I just gotta go. Listen, I've got to prep for the sermon on the humility of Christ. Okay? You deal with this."

You already see where this is going here. I'm in my office and I'm having that internal conversation that we have all the time with ourselves. Things like, *She should know better. I deserve this time to prep.* Here was the big one for me. *I'm not apologizing. She's going to be the first one to take the step and apologize. This was her deal.* I'm saying these things, sitting in my office chair, looking out the window, fuming and both literally and figuratively I say to myself. "I just gotta push that to the side and I gotta turn my chair and start studying and learning about the humility of Christ." Not generally the way you want to go into prepping for a sermon.

Well, in preparation, the Lord held up a mirror to me that night. And I saw myself and the pride and the self-centered ways in which I had been in my marriage with my beautiful and loving wife. God has given me a great gift in her and I'm honored by her in more ways than I can count. The sermon I was reading absolutely spoke to everything I was thinking and feeling that night. It brilliantly brought about the application of what humility looks like for marriages, to the point, so specifically, about this idea of waiting for her to apologize. I broke down for I had seen the heart.

I went home and we had a discussion and a conversation in which we asked for forgiveness from one another. We said we were sorry. And the humility of both of us, ultimately led to unity. You see, it's kind of like one of the things we say to each other is "We're the best." The McElvains, we are the best.

We want our marriage to be healthy and good and we want to have the best. We're very competitive, as you can tell. And it is but a great picture in which when humility occurs and we humble ourselves, when we think of others, when we focus on the gospel and we align our affections, our love, when we think the way God thinks, unity can occur.

I pray that for us. I pray that as you leave or maybe as you've been sitting here, the spirit has been working in you to reveal ways in which you recognize unity is not a part of some relationships, friendships, that instead of gritting our teeth and trying harder that we would continue to focus our eyes upon Jesus with the ultimate picture of humility as we imitate him towards the improbably act of unity.

Father, we come before you today and we are grateful for your Word. We are grateful for the mirror that it is to show us the nature of our hearts and to reveal the character of your Son, Jesus Christ. Lord, may we not lose sight of that picture, the humility of Jesus, who left the heavens deserving all rights, all stature, all titles, was born in a manger and we led to the cross because he was obedient to you Father, and that you and your Son loved us enough. So, Lord, may we see the ways in which we may humble ourselves that we may seek unity in the body of Christ. We love you, we thank you, we praise you.

It's in your name we pray. And all God's people said... Amen.