

March 20, 2005
Palm Sunday - Confirmation
Philippians 2:5-11
Pastor Ott

Have the Attitude of Christ!

How many of you here this morning as you got ready for church had to deal with a bad attitude? You had to kind of get your foot up near someone's backside to get them going a little bit so you could get over here on time, so you could get in the car on time, or so you get dressed on time, or more importantly so you had the coffee made on time so you could drink it on the way here.

Do you ever find yourself dealing with bad attitudes? (Speaking to the confirmation class)...I know you guys do, I have you in class. Do you ever wonder why we struggle so often with bad attitudes? Think of how often on a day of the week when the sun is not shining you get a bad attitude. If the sun is shining then maybe you feel a little better. Just think of how often, as you go through your daily life, you have a bad attitude. Sometimes we act as though the grave stayed full, Jesus stayed in it, and we are all going to hell. We don't always connect the dots through our daily lives of who Jesus is and what Jesus did for us.

When Paul wrote to the Philippians, they were having some bad attitude problems. They were having some problems between people thinking of themselves more often and more highly than they should. So Paul writes to them and connects the dots for them between their daily attitude and who Jesus is and what Jesus did for them.

Now this morning, as we gather together and as you guys stand in front of God's altar and make a vow to him to remain faithful to him even in the face of death, I don't think you have a bad attitude this morning. So it's in the future that you need this reminder. The reminder that Paul gave the Philippians and that he gives to all Christians throughout all ages, he also gives it to you specifically this morning. Have the attitude of Christ.

So when you consider who Christ is and what Christ has done, it changes us. It changes our attitude, it changes our purpose for life, and it gives us a joy that is not based on outward circumstances. It's a joy that is not based on getting to open cards and gifts. It's a joy that is based on who God is and what he has done. When we consider how he humbled himself for us, that then has an effect on us. So we humble ourselves and put ourselves under him to live for him—not just one day a week or not just on one special event, but each and every day of our lives.

It's an interesting section. You should really look at the Bible at Philippians right before this because he lays out exactly what he means ahead of time when he says to have the attitude of Christ. He says to put the interest of others ahead of your own. Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought. When he tells us to do that, then he also points us to the example when he says to have the attitude of Christ Jesus. Look at who Jesus was and who Jesus is. He says, "*Who, being in very nature God*". That

before there was this world, there was Jesus. Through all eternity he has been true God. And yet in time Jesus became also true man. True God became true man. He did this so that he could live under the law in our place, because you and I are sinners. He did this because you and I are born separated from God. And even when we come to this world, think of all the stupid, foolish things we do that gives everyone around us the proof that we are sinners and separated from God. Think of how selfish we can be at times.

We can be selfish in little petty things—like fighting over the remote control at home. We can also be petty and selfish over much bigger things—wanting others to meet our needs, to take care of us. If you're not meeting my needs, then there is something wrong with you. Look at Jesus. We don't put his needs first. We put our needs first. He left heaven—to be true God through all eternity with all the power and all the glory that was his as true God—and spent nine months in his mother's womb. Not real God-like, right? And then after he was born in that stable, he lived under the law. He is the one that gave the law, and yet he willingly placed himself under it because you and I can't keep it, and God demands that we be holy. And we are not. It's not hard to see. So Jesus does it perfectly in our place. He humbles himself so far that he is willing to continue riding that donkey into Jerusalem and continue walking the path that is going to lead him to Calvary where he is going to be nailed to the cross because you and I are sinners—where he is going to be taking the weight of the world's sins on his shoulder so that, like we heard last Wednesday, he cries out, *"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me"*. He takes all of this so that you and I will never have to cry out, "My God, why have you forsaken me". If you and I ever ask that question, we should know the answer is that he hasn't. Here is the proof. He was willing to live in our place and die in our place. He humbled himself for us. He will never forsake us. He will never leave us. This is how he humbled himself. He did it all for us.

Then we are told that God exalted him—brought him to the right hand of God, the position of power and authority as you guys have learned to say, right? He exalted him so that we all would know that his life and his death paid for our sins. So that we would know for certain that we are now one with God—that he has done it all to take away our sins so that we can live in the newness of life and the confidence that our God loves us no matter what happens in this world. His life and his death and his willingness to humble himself assures us and the fact that God exalted him tells us our sins have been paid for. Jesus did this for each and every one of us individually.

This morning the confirmation class can maybe remember what we have been talking about for a few years now—that he did this also for you. That he took away your sins and now what difference does that make in your life. What God tells us today is to humble yourself and live for him.

Now it's a little different with us, right? Jesus was true God for all eternity and yet he humbled himself—that's very humbling. We are not God-like, are we? Look at all the things that we do, especially around confirmation time. The devil might tempt us to think more of ourselves than we ought. We are sitting here in these nice white gowns to cover up the fact that we are sinners, right? We put flowers on you. We give you gifts. Then we tell you that it's not graduation. It's not the end of your study but we do

everything in our power almost to make it look like it is graduation. So God provided you with ways to humble yourself. Don't think of yourself more highly than you are. You did wonderfully well last week. I told you that. I knew you would. I told you that ahead of time also, didn't I? And you didn't believe me and you still worried and you still fretted and you still got nervous and you still probably put a big stain under the armpits as you sat there and waited for the first question, right?

You and I can have the confidence to humble ourselves to live for God because God keeps all of his promises to help us through those things. Just like he helped you last week, he will help you through the rest of your lives. Humble yourself. Recognize that he doesn't owe it to you. You don't deserve anything he has to give to you because you answered your questions well or you professed your faith well. He did it all out of grace. And remember he does it not because he owes it to us—he loves us—that moves us to want to live for him like we have been talking about. We want to do this because of what he did for us. We want to humble ourselves.

You guys have gifts and abilities. We talked about that—you aren't the church of tomorrow. You are the church of today. Use your gifts and abilities today. Use them to serve God. Use them in humility. Set an example for those kids over there on the other side who are looking up to you as believers. Set an example for them in using your gifts in humility and putting the interest of others ahead of your own interests. Live for God and serve him and use your gifts. Use them in humility not thinking, "Why can't others be like me". But thinking, "God I thank you that you have given me this chance to serve you and thank you and show my love for you."

Humbling ourselves does not come easy. Our sinful nature doesn't want to humble itself. Our sinful nature doesn't want us to put ourselves in and under Christ's authority and rule. It shows up in our congregational life all the time, doesn't it? When things don't go the way we want, we shuffle our feet, we mumble, we moan, we complain and we forget all about humbling ourselves as God humbled himself for us. You are going to do that. Don't kid yourselves. There are going to be times when you are not going to humble yourself before the Lord. You are going to say, "God I know better" and you are going to do things that, as you look back, you are going to know that you have sinned—you've done wrong to the Lord. At some of those times, Satan is going to come into your life as he comes into our lives and tries to tell us, "Now God doesn't love you anymore because you have turned your back on him and done something so foolish he can't possibly forgive you". When those days come, and they will, remember that Jesus humbled himself for you.

He doesn't just take away the little sins that we aren't that concerned about, he takes away all of our sins. And then when you have stumbled and you have done something foolish and Satan is telling you that God doesn't love you, come right back to the cross of Christ and then see your sins forgiven and know that he has forgiven you and know that he loves you. Then be moved all the more to want to live for him and to serve him in humility—in awe that your God loves you that much that he has taken away your sins.

This is what Christianity is all about. It's not about being perfect. It's about being forgiven. It's about Christ's life and death that's applied to those times that we screw

up. Then it's about the joy in knowing that you are forgiven and the joy in telling others that they are forgiven also. You may have to remind each other of that in the coming years. You may have to remind your parents of that or your little brothers or sisters. You may have to remind other people. God has given you the wisdom to speak it. And your words will be listened to as you are living the life that backs up those words that you are speaking.

So as you leave today, maybe you got up with a bad attitude—maybe you got up with a great attitude. Maybe you go downstairs and they are out of coffee before you get there and now you are back to a bad attitude. Don't let your attitude be dependent upon outward circumstances. Let your attitude be dependent upon what Jesus Christ has done for you—then God's spirit enables you to always have the attitude of Jesus Christ.