

A number of years ago, there was a man by the name of Christian Herter who was running for reelection as governor of Massachusetts. One day he arrived late at a barbecue. He hadn't had any breakfast or lunch and was very hungry. As he moved down the serving line, he held out his plate and received one piece of chicken. The governor said to the lady who was serving, "Excuse me, do you mind if I get another piece of chicken? I'm very hungry."

She said, "I'm sorry, but I'm only supposed to give one piece to each person." He said once again, "But I'm starved," and once again she said, "Only one to a customer." Mr. Herter was normally a modest man, but he decided this might be the time to use the weight of his office and so he said, "Madam do you know who I am?" He said, "I am the governor of this state. "

She said, "Do you know who I am?" She said, "I'm the lady in charge of the chicken. Move along, mister."

Humility is a tough lesson to learn, but we want to talk a little bit about humility this morning. We're continuing in our study of Paul's letter to the Philippians as we try to learn about and develop some attitudes that lead to joy in our lives. In our last lesson, we took a look at the first chapter of Philippians and saw how circumstances have a tendency to keep us from being happy. We can be happy as long as things are going just fine, but, unfortunately, things don't always go just right. So we looked at Paul and the circumstances that he was in when he wrote this letter and we saw that he was able to maintain his spirit of joy even when things seemed to be just awful.

Abraham Maslow once said, "Without exception, I have found that every person who was sincerely happy, radiantly alive, was living for a purpose or a cause beyond himself." Well, Paul certainly was living for a purpose beyond himself. His life was governed by the principle stated in Philippians 1:21, "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain."

But, as I mentioned in our introductory lesson, it's not just circumstances that take away our joy. People around us can also take away our joy. We saw a little bit of this problem in chapter 1. There were the preachers who were preaching out of envy and strife, hoping to take advantage of Paul while he was in prison.

In chapter two, Paul is going to give us a second principle that will allow us to be filled with joy even when people around us aren't acting the way we think they should.

Philippians 2:1-2

Paul starts the second chapter by saying, "Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind." (Philippians 2:1-2).

This is Paul's way of telling saying, "Hey, you guys, you've got all the ingredients for joy. I just want you to recognize them."

What have we got? We've got consolation or encouragement in Christ. We have the assurance that we've been forgiven by God for all the sins we've committed. And in the end, we'll be resurrected in the same way that Jesus was raised from the dead. That fact alone should produce joy.

We've got God's love and acceptance. We're not his slaves or puppets to be toyed with. We're his beloved children. If you're a Christian, God has your picture in his wallet. He cherishes you and longs for the day when you will be together forever. That's reason enough for joy.

But that's not all. Until the time that we can see the Lord face to face, he's given us his presence. His Spirit dwells within us constantly reminding us of his love, helping us in our prayers, strengthening us.

And if that weren't enough, God has given us each other. God has blessed us with a spiritual family who will be there for us, to strengthen and encourage us when life gets tough.

The church should be like the giant sequoias of California. Maybe you've seen them in person or in photographs. They're huge redwoods that tower hundreds of feet into the sky. One day, a guide was giving a tour of these giant sequoias, and he pointed out that the sequoia tree has roots just barely below the surface. One of the tourists spoke up and said, "That's impossible!" He said, "I'm a country boy, and I know that if the roots don't grow deep into the earth, strong winds will blow the trees over."

The guide said, "Not sequoia trees." He said, "They grow only in groves and their roots intertwine under the surface of the earth. So, when the strong winds come, they hold each other up." That's what the church is supposed to be like.

And Paul says to these Philippian Christians, "If you really want to make me happy, if you really want to fill my life with joy, then you guys need to work at getting along with each other, because that's what would really make me happy."

As you read the Philippian letter, you get the idea that getting along with each other was a bit of a problem in this congregation. In fact, Paul mentions some names later on, in Philippians 4:2, "I implore Euodia and I implore Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord." What those two women were arguing about we don't know, but it was apparently significant enough that it was disrupting the unity of the church.

I want you to realize that the Philippians weren't having relationship problems because they were a weak congregation. No! The Philippian church was a strong church. I want you to think about this -- I believe the stronger a church is, the more attention it needs to give to relationships. Because a strong church has more people serving. And when there are more people who are working, then more differences are bound to arise.

And that's a danger that's faced by any active congregation. When Christians are really in earnest, when they are eager to carry out their plans and ideas, then they are more apt to run into each other. And the greater their enthusiasm, the greater the danger that they're going to collide.

So Paul pleads for harmony and unity. He wants the Philippians to have the ability to be able to work together, to cooperate with one another, to have the same objectives and the same goals.

Harmony produces happiness. If you question that, you've never worked at a place or lived in a home where there's a lot of fussing and fighting. I love that little magnet you can buy to put on your refrigerator – “If Mom’s not happy, then nobody’s happy.” But that’s true whenever there’s any conflict. So we need an attitude that will help us to get along with people which in turn will result in more joy in our lives.

Unfortunately, sometimes people make that difficult. In Romans 12:18, Paul says, “If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.” The reality is, some people are going to make it difficult. There are perhaps some members of this congregation that make it tough for you to have kind of unity that God wants you to have. But there’s one thing you can do that will help.

In Philippians 2:2, Paul says we're to be "like-minded", to be "of one mind". His admonition to Euodias and Syntyche was to be of "the same mind". Obviously, our mind or our attitude has a lot to do with how we get along with people, which in turn affects our level of joy.

What kind of mind do we need? Paul answers that question in verse 3-5:

Philippians 2:3-5

Paul says in Philippians 2:5 to, "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus". The "mind" of Christ means the "attitude" Christ exhibited. In fact, the NIV translates this verse, "Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus." The Philippians were having trouble getting along with each other because they didn't have the right mind; they didn't have the right attitude.

Paul gets very personal here. He doesn't say, “The key to the problem is your husband’s attitude, or your wife’s attitude, or your children’s attitude, or even your preacher’s attitude.” Paul says, “Let this mind be in you.” When I’m having trouble getting along with someone, more often than not, it’s because there’s a problem with my attitude.

And if you look closely at verse 5, it doesn't say our attitude is to be dependent upon who the person is or what the person does. There is always – let me repeat, there is always -- a Christ-like response that is appropriate to every situation. If we have the mind of Christ, then we will respond the way Christ would respond.

A. W. Tozer, in his book, *The Pursuit of God*, tells us how to achieve greater unity. He writes, “Has it ever occurred to you that one hundred pianos all tuned to the same fork are automatically tuned to each other? They are of one accord by being tuned, not to each other, but to another standard to which each one must individually bow. So one hundred worshipers [meeting] together, each one looking....to Christ, are....nearer to each other than they could possibly be, were they [simply]....to strive for closer fellowship.”

Which brings up the question: What does it mean to have the mind of Christ? I want you to think about that for a moment. What is the most Christlike attitude on the face of this earth? What is the one word that best sums up the attitude Christ had as he dealt with people? I think a lot of people would say it would have to be love. And that's understandable, because Jesus certainly demonstrated love to the utmost extent. Others might say patience, or grace. And those are certainly qualities exhibited by Christ in a powerful way.

But, as important as all those traits may be, I think the word that best sums up Christ's attitude is "unselfishness" or "humility". I think that's the most Christlike attitude we can demonstrate, and it's the attitude that Paul wants to convey as he stresses the importance of unity, of getting along with others.

Think about it. When do conflicts develop? When do two people have trouble getting along with each other? It's when both of them want something different from the other, and both of them are determined to get what they want. That's when the conflict develops. I'm not happy because I'm not getting my way and my feelings have been hurt.

Author Peggy Rosenthal, in her book *Words and Values*, says that few words in our vocabulary are used any more than self and its combinations, like self-fulfillment, self-expression, self-actualization. We now have a magazine called *Self*. We are living in a culture in which we are preoccupied with ourselves. Ours is a day of self-promotion, defending our own rights, taking care of ourselves first, winning by intimidation, pushing for first place, and a dozen other self-serving agendas. And having that kind of attitude does more to destroy our joy than any other.

But what would happen if we all took on the attitude of unselfishness? What would happen in the church if we were truly more interested in serving the needs of others than in having our own needs met? What would happen is that suddenly the conflicts would be gone and they would be replaced with harmony and unity and joy.

Leonard Bernstein, the late conductor of the New York Philharmonic orchestra, was once asked to name the most difficult instrument to play. Without hesitation, he replied, "The second fiddle. I can get plenty of first violinists, but to find someone who can play the second fiddle with enthusiasm – that's a problem. And if we have no second fiddle, we have no harmony."

Look at what Paul writes in verse 3: "Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit...." (Philippians 2:3)

Paul warns us about being motivated by selfish ambition or conceit. Ambition can be dangerous but selfish ambition is always deadly in the kingdom of God. Because there is always the danger that Christians will work, not to advance the work, but to advance themselves. In fact, for some people, prestige is an even greater temptation than wealth. To be admired, to be respected, to have one's opinion sought, to be well-known, are for many people desirable things.

And if a man is concerned first and foremost with his own interests, then he is bound to collide with others. Concentration on self inevitably means competition with others; and the object of

life becomes, not to help others up, but to push them down.

So Paul says "Don't do that." But then he tells us what we should do. "...but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others." (Philippians 2:3-4). The key to unity, and to joy, is to focus on the needs and interests of others.

That's not something that comes naturally. In fact, the whole American dream is wrapped up in being better than everyone else, making more money than everyone else, winning more games than everyone else. Beginning to consider others better than ourselves is a step in a whole new direction.

Now there are some times that we see that happen in our society, but unfortunately, so often it's during times of crisis or disaster. For example, think about the World Trade Center disaster. At times like that, what happens? Immediately people pull together and do what they can to help each other. You see on television and read about so many heroes, people who risk their lives to help others, who do whatever they can to meet the needs of others. Everyone just seems to pull together. They're not worried about what they're going to get out of it -- they just want to help others. But why does that attitude have to be demonstrated only in times of crisis? Why can't it be the guiding force in our lives from day to day?

When Christ came into this world, he brought into being a whole new approach to relationships with people. Listen to what he said to his disciples one day when they were arguing among themselves regarding who was to be greatest in his kingdom:

"You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave -- just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many." (Matthew 20:25-28).

Jesus says that in the Gentile world, in the world around us, there's very little humility. People operate basically out of selfish motives. They have little or no interest in helping others to reach their goals -- except when it might benefit themselves. The name of the game is to get power and authority and then to exercise that power and authority.

But that's not how Christians are supposed to act. And Christ did more than just teach us that truth. He lived it out as well. Christ demonstrated the ultimate attitude of humility when he, the Lord of the universe, took on flesh and blood. And that's exactly what Paul uses as our supreme example of how to think and how to act.

Philippians 2:5-6

"Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God." (Philippians 2:5-6).

Paul goes all the way back to the beginning. "Jesus was in form of God." He's simply saying that Jesus Christ was God. That's his very form, his very nature. Paul goes on to say that he was "equal with God". Similar statements can be found in John 1 and Colossians 1.

Certainly as God, Jesus Christ didn't need anything! He had all the glory and praise of heaven. With the Father and the Spirit, he reigned over the universe. But verse 6 states a startling fact. He didn't think it robbery to be equal with God. That is, he didn't consider his equality with God as something to be grasped or clutched. I like how the New Century Version translates this verse. Paul says, "[Christ] did not think that being equal with God was something to be used for his own benefit."

A job counselor once made the statement that, "If you want to find out what a worker is really like, don't give him responsibilities -- give him privileges. Most people can handle responsibilities if you pay them enough, but it takes a real leader to handle privileges. A leader will use his privileges to help others and build the organization; a lesser man will use his privileges to promote himself."

Yes, Jesus was God. And he could have remained in heaven as God. But, he didn't grab hold of his equality with God, as if to hug it jealously to himself and refuse to give it up. Paul tells us that Jesus used his heavenly privileges for the sake of others -- for our sake. What Paul is saying here is that Jesus wasn't at all selfish. He didn't think of himself; he thought of you and me. That's what "the mind of Christ" is -- it's an attitude that says not, "What can you do for me?" But rather, "What can I do for you?"

And quite frankly, I think that's something we have a problem with in the church. "So-and-So didn't come to visit me when I was sick." "So-and-So didn't speak to me Sunday." "So-and-So did something nice for them, but they didn't do anything for me." The whole attitude is, "What can you do for me?"

Paul says you're never going to find joy living that way. You're never going to know what true joy is until you start living with the attitude, "What can I possibly do for others?" "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus."

Philippians 2:7

"...but made himself of no reputation, taking the form of a servant, and coming in the likeness of men." (Philippians 2:7).

It's not enough just to "think" about others -- we've got to get down to the nitty-gritty of true service. Jesus not only thought of others; he became a servant!

Paul traces here the steps in the humiliation of Christ: He made himself of no reputation; or, as some versions have it, he emptied himself. The Greek word there quite literally means "to empty". The glory of divinity -- Jesus gave it up voluntarily and willingly, in order to become

man. He emptied himself of the blessings of deity in order to become a human, in flesh and blood, with all our problems, temptations and difficulties. And then he used that body to be a servant.

Have you ever noticed as you read through the four gospels that it is Jesus who served others, not others who served Jesus? He was at the beck and call of all kinds of people -- fishermen, prostitutes, tax collectors, the sick, the sorrowing. In the upper room, when his disciples apparently refused to play the role of a servant, Jesus got up, laid aside his outer garments, put a towel around him, and washed their feet! (John 13). He wasn't too proud to be a servant.

Philippians 2:8

"And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross." (Philippians 2:8).

There's something significant here. You see, I've found that most people are willing to serve others as long as it doesn't cost them anything. But if there is a price to pay, they suddenly lose interest.

And if we're going to get serious about looking after the interests of others, it's going to cost us something -- maybe our time, our energy or our money. There is no way to serve God or others without having to spend one, two or all three of those things.

Jesus said, "I'm willing whatever needs to be done for others, and I'm willing to do whatever it takes to accomplish that goal -- even if it means dying." And so Jesus "became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."

A person with a attitude of servanthood doesn't avoid sacrifice. Rather, he lives for the glory of God and the good of others, and if paying a price will help others, he is willing to do it.

Conclusion:

As we close, I'd like for you to consider what a difference it would make in your life if you were able to develop the mind of Christ -- if you had the attitude of servitude and humility that Christ demonstrated. How would that change things at your office? In your marriage? In your this congregation? In fact, could it be that some of your relationships with others aren't doing so well because of a lack of that Christ-like attitude in your life?

One of the truly great men from pro football was Tom Landry. He was head coach of the Dallas Cowboys for 29 years and is a member of the NFL Hall of Fame. But even more admirable than his accomplishments as a coach are his character, his integrity and his humility.

Many people were surprised and disappointed at the way a new owner of the Cowboys released Coach Landry from his position. He had ample opportunities to blast the new management by

criticizing their methods and defending himself. Not once, to my knowledge -- not a single time following his forced resignation -- did I hear an ugly remark or a blasting comment cross Tom Landry's lips. In fact, he said on one occasion, "A fellow in my position has to realize it's going to be taken from him whether or not he is ready for it to happen. It's just a matter of being willing to accept that."

Those are the unselfish words of a man who was told rather hurriedly to clean out his desk and be on his way, after giving almost three decades of his life to something he loved. Most others in his place would have held a news conference within hours and blasted the new management unmercifully. I'm convinced Tom Landry's attitude is a greater message to young people than all those years of success and championship seasons.

A lot of people will try to tell you that you'll be taken advantage of if you begin to live for others or if you don't defend your rights. I offer the opposite advice: God will bless our decision to demonstrate an attitude of humility and servitude.

In chapter 1, Paul taught us that Christ must come first -- "For me to live is Christ and to die is gain." And here in chapter 2, he tells us that others need to come next -- "Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others." (Philippians 2:4). And so, after reading Philippians chapters 1 and 2, it would seem that there really is something to that acrostic you may have learned as a child.

You know the one I'm talking about -- JOY is composed of three letters, J, O and Y. The J stands for Jesus, and we've got to put Jesus first. The O stands for others, and we need to put others second. And the Y stands for yourself. Jesus first, others second, yourself last. That really is the key to joy.

This morning, as we close, do you know the joy that comes from having a submissive mind, a mind that is submissive to the will of God as well as to the needs of others?