

“Know and Follow Jesus”

(Phil. 2:5-11)

Introduction: January 1 – New Year’s Resolutions

- Did you make any New Year’s Resolutions yet? **44% of Americans do.**
- According to one recent study referenced in the WSJ and elsewhere, of those that made resolutions:
 - **52% were confident they would achieve their goals, but only 12 % did.**
 - **88% of all resolutions end in failure!**
- **Top 10 List:**
 - 1- Spend More Time with Family & Friends
 - 2- Get Physically Fit
 - 3- Lose Weight
 - 4- Quit Smoking
 - 5- Enjoy Life More
 - 6- Quit Drinking
 - 7- Get Out of Debt
 - 8- Learn Something New
 - 9- Help Others
 - 10- Get Organized
- All resolutions have two elements:
 1. **Displeasure or dissatisfaction with who we are, an inherent knowledge that we are not who we ought to be:**
 - **what we do and say**
 - **how we live our lives**
 - **what we look like**
 - **even what we think and feel.**
 2. **Desire to improve: to eliminate a bad habit or develop a good one, to improve the way we look and behave, live our lives, even think and feel.**
- We desire to be a better Me, so we make resolutions. Me New and Improved. Me 2012. Have you seen the new model of Me? You ought to pick one up...it’s much better than the old one. I can’t believe I was satisfied with that old Me. Slow and clunky. And too big and heavy. Smaller, thinner and faster is always better. That Me didn’t have 4G speed and 8MP camera. What a piece of junk. I don’t just want the iMe, I want the new iMe 2. And next year it will be the iMe 3.
- If I could just improve Me, I would be happier. I would be fulfilled. Others would appreciate, accept and love Me more. I would love Me more.

- Now, resolutions are often good...admirable and beneficial goals to strive for. But what's the ultimate goal? **A Better Me for Me.** Or maybe a better Me for someone else – but even that is ultimately for you too.
- If end goal of your self-improvement, of your resolutions is **A Better Me for Me**, then you are your own idol and pride is your motivator. If your resolutions are for Me and not for the glory of God, they are for your own purposes, not God's.
- If, on the other hand, you resolve to improve yourself by knowing and becoming more like Christ you desire a good thing. In fact you desire a Godly thing.
- Resolutions aren't bad, they are often good and consistent with Scripture. **The question is: who are you trying to become? What is your standard? A better Me or Jesus?**
- So friends, based on this passage we'll study today, I want to ask you to make one resolution this year: **Know and Follow Jesus. Be Transformed by the Gospel**

Passage Overview:

1. This passage is often referred to as the 'hymn of Christ.' As you read it, notice the rhythmic, poetic nature of Paul's words, not unlike the creeds that arose in the early church and which we often say here at Imago Dei – particularly the Apostles and Nicene Creeds.
2. ***ESV Study Bible: "Paul depicts Christ's example of service in a stirring poem that traces his preexistence, incarnation, death, resurrection, and ascension to the right hand of God. Paul wrote this magnificent theology to encourage the Philippians to consider other people's interests first."***
3. As you read this passage don't lose sight of the rich and beautiful theology. This is perhaps the strongest example of Christology in the NT. **In these few verses, we have**
 - a. **Jesus existing as eternal God**
 - b. **Jesus taking on flesh in the incarnation**
 - c. **Jesus suffering and dying on a cross, and**
 - d. **Jesus being raised and exalted in glory to the presence to God the Father.**
4. **This is the gospel!**
5. So as you read this passage, don't simply think of how to apply it (though that's important), but what it means and why Paul, inspired by the Holy Spirit, wrote it. **What is the gospel and how should it impact those that are in Christ Jesus?**

Big Idea: As followers of the Lord Jesus, we should know and imitate Jesus—especially his attitude—through humble service and sacrifice.

Exposition:

1. **WHAT:** As followers of the Lord Jesus, we should demonstrate his attitude of humble service and sacrifice (2:5).

5 Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus,

a. Explanation:

- i. Paul is providing an answer to the question of "How?" raised in vv. 1-4.

1 So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, 2 complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. 3 Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. 4 Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.

- ii. V. 5 is a bridge between what's come before (1-4) and what is to follow (6-11).
 1. **(1-4 & 5) What?** Paul implores us to serve one another and live in humble unity.
 2. **(6-8) How?** Paul explains how Jesus lived and what his attitude was. He gives us the example.
 3. **(9-11) Why?** The result – Christ was magnified and glorified.
- iii. **Why does he do this?** Why does he explain the gospel again? Why does he keep pounding the gospel home? **The same reasons we do it here at Imago Dei...**
 1. **So that you may believe and have eternal life in Christ (John 20:30-31) and**
 2. **So that you will be conformed to the image of Christ (Romans 8:29).**

SO THAT YOU WILL BE TRANSFORMED BY THE GOSPEL!

So that you can not only receive salvation and forgiveness through the life and work of Jesus, but also so that you can follow his example and have his attitude.

JUSTIFICATION and SANCTIFICATION

- iv. How are we to love and serve one another and foster unity in the body? **Have the attitude of Jesus.**
 - 1. How do you love those who are hard to love?
 - 2. How do you serve those who hard to serve?
 - 3. How do you get along with those that are ‘impossible’ to get along with?
 - 4. How can you be unified with those that often don’t think and act like you?
 - 5. How do you forgive those who are hard to forgive, who have hurt you in a deep and profound way? And those who aren’t genuinely repentant?
 - 6. How do you endure suffering and disappointment and persevere with joy?
 - v. Have you been justified through faith alone in Christ alone by his grace alone? Have you been justified through the sacrificial work of Christ? If you have, are you allowing the gospel to transform you? To sanctify you? Do you have the attitude of Christ?
 - vi. Note the verb here: “**Have this attitude/mind (*phroneo*)” is an imperative – a command. Paul is saying you must have this attitude. It’s not optional as a follower of Christ.**
 - vii. What attitude? Jesus’ attitude! This isn’t a simple positive or negative attitude we would think of today. Paul is directing the Philippians, and us, to have the mind of Christ. This is how they will foster the unity in faith and humble service Paul talks about earlier in Chapter 2 and elsewhere. And this is how we are to do the same thing. **How are we to love one another and serve the church? Have the attitude of Jesus. We must do this.**
- b. So we’ve talked about the What, now what about the How? How are we to do this?

2. 1st HOW: By sacrificing our rights and privileges (2:6)

6 who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped,

a. Explanation:

- i. Jesus was God (he was always God) but he temporarily and willingly gave up his rights and privileges as God to become man. This does not mean Jesus gave up being God, but rather that he gave up his rights and privileges as God when he took on flesh.
- ii. Note: the word translated as “nature” or “form” in vv. 6 and 7 is morphe in the original Greek. It does not mean the physical shape of something. It means the true and exact nature of something, that which possesses all the characteristics of that something. **It is essence expressed.**
- iii. **Before he became man, before he took on flesh, Jesus was God. He was always God and He will always be God. In his preexistence he possessed the divine essence of deity and his becoming man did not change that.** The verb here that’s translated as “was” would be better translated as “was being.” So before Jesus become man, he “was being” God and that “being” hasn’t stopped. **He “was being” God before, during and after his time on earth. Jesus is always “being” God.**
- iv. **But He did not count his rights and privileges as God as something to be grasped, or held on to. What the word “grasped” literally means is to hold onto to something as a prize. Jesus temporarily released his rightful grasp on the prize, the glory of divinity, to become man.**
- v. **This is the “mind” or “attitude” of Christ: “I cannot keep my privileges for myself...I must use them for others...and to do this, I will gladly lay them aside and pay whatever price is necessary.”**

b. **Illustration:** President – giving up rights and privileges (White House, Oval Office, motorcades, Secret Service, etc, etc)

c. Application:

- i. Are you willing to do this? Are you willing to lay down your rights and privileges for the sake of others? Are you willing to lay down, set aside, give up, sell, give away your prizes, your “goodies” for the sake of others and the church?
- ii. Or maybe the question is better asked...what are you not willing to give up? What are the idols that lay claim to your heart in such a way and to such an extent that you believe you cannot give them up, that you can’t lose them? Maybe it’s something you have, or maybe it’s something you desire, a dream you don’t want to give up on.

- iii. Maybe it's a 'wish dream' (Bonhoeffer) of community and relationships that has become an idol and because you can't have it you are unable to live in loving community serving one another as Christ served you. This is the paradox of having a 'wish dream' – you can't experience the very thing you desire because the reality never matches your dream.
- iv. Christ didn't have that attitude and neither should we! He lived in community with people that were ignorant and unfaithful and he loved and served them anyway...despite their inadequacy. He gave them much, much more than they deserved. He gave grace. He gave up his rights and privileges as God to save and serve the lost. We should do likewise!

3. 2nd HOW: By lowering ourselves and being servants to others (2:7)

7 but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.

a. Explanation:

- i. Some of your translations (NASB, HCSB) have “**emptied himself**” but I believe ESV and others have it a little closer...saying “**made himself nothing.**” Jesus did not empty himself of being God. That's not what this verb means. As we discussed in v. 6 he is always being God.
- ii. **What he emptied himself of, what he gave up was the prize, the glory, the rights and privileges of being God.** And not only did he do that, **he made himself nothing by becoming a man.** By being born to a peasant girl in rural Galilee. By becoming poor and very low in status. By becoming nothing in the eyes of man. You can't read the Christmas narrative and not realize how humble the incarnation really was.
- iii. But as we know, that's not all he did. He became a servant, literally a bond-servant. **He willingly submitted himself to the limitations and temptations of being a man. He willingly committed himself to serving humanity, and he demonstrated that in his life and death.**
- iv. ***As one commentator put it: “He was setting aside His legitimate and natural desires and prerogatives as Deity. The basic, natural desire and prerogative of Deity is that of being glorified. But when Deity sets these aside, it sets its desires aside, and setting its desires aside, it sets Self aside.”***

- b. **Illustration:**
 - i. **John 13:1-17 (Jesus' washing of the disciples' feet)**
 - ii. **Changing diapers (especially men, and of a newborn baby)**
- c. **Application:** Whose feet are you washing? Whose diaper are you changing? Are you willing to set yourself aside to serve others? To serve God? Why not?

4. **3rd HOW: By humbly obeying God and giving our lives to Him in service and sacrifice (2:8)**

8 And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

a. **Explanation: (2 POINTS)**

i. **1st - Jesus sacrificed.**

1. And finally, here we have the most humbling, sacrificial act of all: **Jesus gave his very life and suffered the humiliating death of crucifixion. There' is nothing more humiliating than this:**
 - a. Executed as a criminal
 - b. Beaten, whipped, mocked and spat upon
 - c. Nailed to a tree and hung up to die
 - d. To die of asphyxiation – he essentially choked to death
 - e. And if that wasn't enough, to have a spear thrust through your chest to make sure you're dead.

It just doesn't get any worse than that. This form of capital punishment was limited to non-Romans and the worst criminals.

2. **There is simply no better example of gracious suffering than that of Christ. And Paul is telling us to have the same attitude. That's a high standard...the highest standard.**

ii. **2nd - Jesus was obedient.**

1. Our Lord Jesus was obedient to the Father to the point of death. **There is no obedience more costly than that.**
2. **So how do you know if it's humble service? If it costs you something.** Many people are willing to serve others if it doesn't cost them anything, if they receive the glory and don't have to suffer. But if there's a price to pay or a cost to bear....

b. Illustration:

- i. Dr. J.H. Jowett: “Ministry that costs nothing accomplishes nothing.”*
- ii. A missionary in Brazil: at a religious festival, going from booth to booth, saw a sign above one booth: “Cheap Crosses.” He thought to himself, “That’s what many Christians are looking for these days—cheap crosses. My Lord’s cross was not cheap. Why should mine be?”*
- iii. Bonhoeffer, The Cost of Discipleship: “Cheap grace is the grace we bestow on ourselves. Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline, Communion without confession, absolution without personal confession. Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate...Costly grace is the gospel which must be sought again and again and again, the gift which must be asked for, the door at which a man must knock. Such grace is costly because it calls us to follow, and it is grace because it calls us to follow Jesus Christ. It is costly because it costs a man his life, and it is grace because it gives a man the only true life. It is costly because it condemns sin, and grace because it justifies the sinner. Above all, it is costly because it cost God the life of his Son: ‘Ye were bought at a price’, and what has cost God much cannot be cheap for us. Above all, it is grace because God did not reckon his Son too dear a price to pay for our life, but delivered him up for us. Costly grace is the Incarnation of God.”*

- c. **Application:** Do you want cheap grace or costly grace? Do you really want to be like Jesus? Are you willing to follow in his footsteps and pick up your cross and carry it? Are you willing to demonstrate your love for others and God even if it costs you something? What if it costs you everything?

Romans 12:1-2: I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

5. WHY, WHAT WILL RESULT, THE REAL PRIZE: And, like Jesus, we may be raised to be in the presence of and glorify God forever (2:9-11).

9 Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, 10 so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

a. Explanation

- i. “Exaltation” refers to Jesus’ resurrection, ascension and glorification at the Father’s right hand.
 - ii. We all will confess Jesus as Lord. But like the candy, the question is will you do it now or later? It’s not a question of if; it’s a question of when.
 - iii. If you have a submissive mind and heart, if you strive for the attitude of Jesus, you should expect and welcome sacrifice and service. But be assured, be encouraged. The day is coming when you will be raised to be in the presence of God...forever!
 - iv. “We may not see this glory today, but we shall see it when Jesus comes and rewards his faithful servants.”
- b. Illustration: 1 Pet. 5:6: Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you.
- c. Application: Do you desire the eternal rewards that only Christ can give you? In Ch. 3, Paul says...

3:7-10: 7 But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ 9 and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith— 10 that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, 11 that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

3:20-4:1: 20 But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, 21 who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself. 4 Therefore, my brothers, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm thus in the Lord, my beloved.

Conclusion:

- **One New Year's Resolution: Be Transformed by the Gospel...Know and Follow Jesus**
- As followers of the Lord Jesus, we should demonstrate his attitude of humble service and sacrifice.
 1. Be willing to sacrifice your rights and privileges in service to others, especially your brothers and sisters in Christ.
 2. Be willing to lower yourself and be a servant.
 3. Humbly obey God and give your entire life to Him – even if it will cost you dearly.
- **And what will follow?**
 - One day, you will be raised to be in the presence of Jesus forever. Your ultimate reward is not here, it's in eternity with Jesus. Know and Follow Him now.
- **Bonhoeffer: *"Who stands fast? Only the man whose final standard is not his reason, his principles, his conscience, his freedom, or his virtue, but who is ready to sacrifice all this when he is called to obedient and responsible action in faith and in exclusive allegiance to God—the responsible man, who tries to make his whole life an answer to the question and call of God."***