

Getting to Know Jesus, the Christ

Aug 24, 2014

What It Means to be Saved – Be Humble

**Ps 138 and Ephesians 4:1-3
(13, 480, 481, 440)**

Humility is not a word that most of my intimate friends would apply to me.

In that ongoing gift of salvation
that God is working on to shape our lives
into the blessings that he intends us to become,
humility is still very much a work in progress.
I'm much better than I used to be,
but there is still work to do.

Come to think about it,
that is probably an important trait of *humility* –
recognizing that there is still room for improvement,
still things to listen for and learn
in the process of becoming more loving.

We live in a culture that does not really prize *humility*.
I can't think of a single video game,
not that I am an expert in such matters,
that has *humility* as its primary plot line.
I can't think of a single TV series
that revolves around a *humility* plot.
Most box-office and download successes at the movies
ignore the virtue of *humility*.

This core value in the life of Jesus Christ
and for the Commonwealth of God
is simply not highly prized in contemporary Western culture.

A big part of that, I believe, is that we live in a culture of threat and fear.
The most valued response to fear is violence –
eliminate the cause of the threat and fear.
That response, common as it is today,
simply creates an endless cycle of arrogance and aggression.

We're seeing this a work in conflicts around the world.
It's being highlighted recently in police-related deaths in the US.
We experience it in our own lives when someone threatens us.

The letter to the Ephesians, from which our Memorize & Ponder text is taken,
was written for a Christian community
that was struggling with how to live differently
from the culture around them.

Ephesus was a major trading centre and port.
It was a centre of imperial Roman sea power.
It was a 'melting pot' of cultures and ways of life
from around the known world at that time.

To be Christian – to be 'faithful in Christ' as Paul puts it –
was to be different.

To live consciously and ever more consistently
in the salvation that was God's gift in Christ
meant that you were different from those around you.

It meant, as our text this morning emphasizes,
being humble, gentle, patient, loving, and unified in the peace of Christ.

Recognizing that quality of community,
that way of being together,
that strength that we have been given in Christ,
is precisely what we do every Sunday morning
when we begin our worship with the sharing of this peace,
this gift of well-being we are given with every breath by Jesus, the Christ.

We greet each other, warmly and humbly,
with the peace of our Lord, Jesus Christ,
praying in our welcoming gestures and comments
that this different way of being
will be with and strengthen us all in the unity Christ brings.

There is a real *humility* in this greeting.

It is for everyone,
no matter how long they have been part of this community.
It flows from the blessing that God has given each of us in Christ,
but binds us together in that blessing so we can listen, learn and love
as disciples of Jesus, the Christ.

In my own Christian journey,
my journey into a greater understanding and practice
of Christ's grace in my life,
those three qualities I just mentioned have been crucial.

I have been guided by the Holy Spirit,
in a wide variety of ways,
to realize that listening, learning, and loving
are the key components of Christian humility.

It won't come as a surprise to most of you
that I talk a lot.
I used to talk even more.
The problem with that
is that as long as you are talking, no one else can,
at least not without interrupting, probably loudly.
When you are talking, you take up all the space.
There is no verbal room for anyone else to be with you.

When I was doing my professional coach training
at Royal Roads University 12 years ago,
one of our profs introduced us to an acronym for WAIT –
Why Am I Talking?
It was designed to help loquacious people like me
shut up and listen.
Listening has to do with respect for other persons.
It happens when you are humble enough
to be interested in what they have to say,
in their perspective on the matter being talked about.

That's the key way to learn – listen for the views of others.
Learning, at its best, is a conversation that opens up new possibilities.
It's not one person insisting on their way.
It's a community in conversation about what matters most.

And that, for people living in Christ, is love.
Paul was clear with the Christians in Corinth,
another community living in a cosmopolitan and confusing city.
The keys to following Jesus are faith, hope, and love,
but the greatest of these is love.

This kind of *humility* – listening, learning, and loving –
is not easy in our culture and our city.
It takes discipline. It takes courage. It takes support.
But that is precisely what flows from our unity in Christ in this congregation.
It's how we greet each other, week after week, when we share the peace of Christ.
It's what we take out with us into the world for the week ahead,
as we listen, learn, and love for Jesus sake and with Jesus by our side.