

Natalie Bell
September 20, 2026

Just Like Jesus
Philippians 2:1-11

Last week we hear from Philippians 1, today I invite you to **listen** to this letter from Paul, Philippians 2:1-11:

If then there is any encouragement in Christ, any consolation from love, any sharing in the Spirit, any compassion and sympathy,
2 *make my joy complete: be 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 regard others as better than yourselves.*
4 *Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others.*
5 *Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus,*
6 *who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited,*
7 *but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form,*
8 *he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death— even death on a cross.*
9 *Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name,*
10 *so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,*
11 *and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

These are some POWERFUL WORDS

about what we are called to do as Christians, and as the church.

5 Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ

I wonder, what does that **mean to YOU?**

To be like Christ?

Could that even be the whole reason we are here? ***To be like Christ?***

**Ghandi once said,
that we should *BE THE CHANGE WE WANT TO SEE* in the world.**

Could that be what Paul is saying?

We are called to ***be like Christ***,
because Jesus is who we want to see around us?

***So, if we want to see Jesus even more,
We can seek to IMITATE HIM-what he said, what he did.***

We actually see Jesus teach this in the Gospels,

When he said things like---

those who want to follow me must take up their cross...

We see this over and over again in Paul's writings,

He never says we just 'join' a church, or just 'believe' the right things,

He says we are called to ***BE*** Christ to one another!

It's not enough to think it...we have to live it!

So, how are we BEING CHRIST, as INDIVIDUALS?

And how are we being Christ, as a ***CHURCH***?

***When you think about how Jesus lived, being like Christ,
Is actually very COUNTER-CULTURAL, isn't it?***

Today we actually have leaders who say that people of faith

Should do the exact ***OPPOSITE*** of what Jesus taught!

Like being last, turning the other cheek, putting others first.

So many people come to church,

looking for a place ***where they can BE ANONYMOUS!***

(good luck with that here!),

or ***be*** a spectator, instead of a player on the team called church.

In fact, much of the time, we wonder--

What can Jesus do FOR ME?

Aren't we here to let ***him help US?***

I think the answer is yes...and no!

Being like Jesus is NOT just something else to ***DO***,
 On an already long to *do list*!
 It's about a ***way of living—an attitude—that leads to action***,
 And new life!

If you asked 50 Christians ***HOW TO BE LIKE CHRIST***,
 you'd probably get ***50 different answers***
(or 75, if those Christians are Presbyterians!)
 Some might say follow God's ***rules***,
 Others might say ***look and act*** your best—
 Others might say ***be holy***, and avoid everything and everyone who is not.

But what does GOD SAY about being like Jesus?
Philippians 2 might hold the best answer.
 Here Paul says to ***be like Christ means LIFE!***

Paul writes: ***Let the SAME MIND be in you that was in Christ Jesus.***
 What is the ***mind of Christ?***
 How could we sum it up?
 What about ***HUMILITY?***

Which is SOOO hard for us, isn't it?
 Humility is ***complicated***, right?
 It's ***elusive***, you don't just think it, and voila!
 And just when you ***think you're humble***, you're probably not!

Paul describes humility in a very interesting way:
 He says it's an ***EMPTYING, a giving up, a surrender and a sacrifice.***

So, having the mind of Christ—the humility of Christ—
means GIVING UP OUR SELF-CENTEREDNESS.
 And if we're honest, this is us—***ALL of us***, right?
We tend to focus on ourselves first, don't we?
 Our world encourages this attitude—
 By saying: *you deserve this, you need this, you are made for this!*
You are #1.

So how do we empty ourselves of that DESIRE TO BE #1?

And ***let go*** of what WE want, when we want it?

(which for most of us is RIGHT NOW!)

What is the way out of pride and arrogance?

How do we actually put others first?

Remember WWJD? What would Jesus do?

He didn't just focus on others.

He actually ***first turned to God***,

Then, he was able to turn to others.

He went away to pray, he spent time alone,

He took breaks from his ministry.

But all of that, gave him the power to serve others, right?

Does this mean we GIVE UP THINKING OF OURSELVES?

Do we allow others to dictate who we are, and what we do?

No, I don't think humility means being a ***doormat***.

Jesus WAS NOT a doormat.

He had his ***priorities straight***.

The question is, ***do WE?***

In Romans 12:3 Paul says

*“Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather **think of yourself with sober judgment**, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you.”*

In other words, humility is ***knowing WHO you are, and who you ARE NOT***.

It reminds me of the great saying:

*Humility does not mean thinking less of yourself,
but **thinking OF YOURSELF LESS**.*

THINKING OF YOURSELF LESS.

What if we could do that—with God's help?

What if that is the path of self-emptying, just like Jesus?

HUMILITY IS POWERFUL in so many ways, isn't it?

It helps restore ***relationships***, when it's not all about us.

It helps bring reconciliation, when we forgive.
 It leads to a **better attitude** about life.
 And can create greater **community**.

Just imagine if we BUILT A WORLD AROUND HUMILITY—

putting God first, then others?
 What would this **church** be like?
 What would the **world** be like?

What would happen if every human being was treated like

A CHILD OF GOD, made in the image of God?

And ***we didn't need*** to have our ***own way***?

Or always be ***right***?

What would it look like if we ***wanted to live FOR each other***,
 just like Christ lived for us?

Wouldn't there be so much more ENCOURAGEMENT?

And ***hope***?

So much ***more peace***?

and respect?

There would be more ***forgiveness and grace***,

And definitely more ***gratitude***, right?

I love Eugene Peterson's ***The Message Bible*** translation of these verses:

If you've gotten anything at all out of following Christ, if his love has made any difference in your life, if being in a community of the Spirit means anything to you, if you have a heart, if you care -

2 then do me a favor:

Agree with each other, love each other, be deep-spirited friends.

3 Don't push your way to the front; don't sweet-talk your way to the top. Put yourself aside, and help others get ahead.

4 Don't be obsessed with getting your own advantage.

Forget yourselves long enough to lend a helping hand.

5 Think of yourselves the way Christ Jesus thought of himself.

6 He had equal status with God but didn't think so much of himself that he had to cling to the advantages of that...

he set aside the privileges and took on the status of a slave, became human!

*8 Having become human, he stayed human.
It was an incredibly **humbling** process. He didn't claim special privileges.
Instead, he lived a selfless, obedient life and then died a selfless, obedient death...*

How often do we think about that?
How **Jesus gave up the privileges** of being God!
Can you even imagine **famous people** today,
giving up their special privileges?
WHAT IF WE GAVE UP **OURS**?

Humility is about COMING DOWN from a high place,
To be on the same level as others—all out of love,
the way a parent comes down to a child's level, out of love.

IN 2017, **POPE FRANCIS GAVE A SPEECH,**
about how we **need** one another,
how we are **connected**.
And how the '**other**', is a person, with a face, and a story.

He spoke about **humility with a beautiful image—**
of a **PARENT TALKING TO A LITTLE CHILD,**
with that sweet sing song voice we often use,
to come down to their level, all out of love.

No one YELLS “WELCOME TO THE WORLD” to a new baby,
you talk to them in a sweet little voice, right?
Because that, they can hear and understand the love.
Similarly, **God came down to our level in Jesus.**
Showing us how humility **is a part of love.**
Pope Francis quoted **Mother Teresa**, who said:
“One cannot love unless it is at their OWN EXPENSE”.

Pope Francis said we have a RESPONSIBILITY to be HUMBLE,
“the more your actions will have an impact on people, the more responsible
you are to act humbly. If you don't, your power will ruin you...

*you will end up hurting yourself and those around you, if you don't connect your power with **humility and tenderness**. Through **humility and love**, on the other hand, power – the highest, the strongest one – becomes a service, a **FORCE FOR GOOD**.*”Pope Francis, ["Why The Only Future Worth Building Includes Everyone,"](#) TED (April 2017)

Humility means giving up, EMPTYING, coming down.

It's also means **obedience to God**,
just like Jesus obeyed all the way to the cross.

The question is, how far are WE WILLING TO GO?

Jesus made the ultimate **sacrifice**—
what sacrifices are **WE** willing to make?
Sometimes just **worship** is a sacrifice,
because we could be doing so many other things on a Sunday morning—
(well maybe you guys could)

HUMILITY IS NOT OFTEN SEEN, because it doesn't have a broad appeal!

It's about **giving up and emptying** ourselves...

So, where is the reward?

If we give up so much, what do we **keep**?

What do we gain?

Great question.

The answer is **WE GET ABUNDANT LIFE as Jesus called it, in John 10.**

We get a growing **faith**,

We get the joy of **truly loving** one another!

Kind of like when we **GIVE generously**,

And we experience God's gifts, in unexpected and amazing ways!

Of course, **Jesus SUFFERED in his self-emptying** life and ministry.

And we have to remember that.

We are not going to always have it easy—even trying to follow in his footsteps.

Sometimes it's painful.

We will have trials and tribulations.

We **can't change** that.

But we CAN CHANGE OUR RESPONSE to those hard times.

We can change our ***attitude***.

And our ***mind***.

By ***seeking the mind*** of Christ,

who saw even in his pain, the love and hope of God.

When ***Jesus emptied*** himself, he was resurrected!

And WE gained new and eternal life!

When we ***empty ourselves***, we gain new life—abundant life!

And as the Pope said, ***we become a force for good!***

Being like Jesus DOESN'T COME NATURALLY to us,

It's often challenging,

But we have the power of the Holy Spirit inside, to help us.

Think about it this way---when ***someone acts like Jesus*** to us,

we ***want to know them***, and how they got like that, right?

When ***we act like Jesus*** to someone else,

they want to know us, and the God we serve!

St. Teresa of Avila wrote a favorite poem of mine:

Christ has no body but yours, no hands, no feet on earth but yours.

Yours are the eyes with which he looks, compassion on this world.

Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good.

Yours are the hands with which he blesses all the world.

Yours are the hands, yours are the feet,

Yours are the eyes, You are his body...

By the power of the Holy Spirit in us,

May we ***seek to be like Jesus***, for one another, and our world.

That is our ***Good News of the Gospel!***

And all God's people said together, Amen.