

***A Loving Community Part 1: A Humble Love***, Sam Ferguson, October 25, 2020

**Series Goal** | May our love for Christ, and Christ's love for us, foster a togetherness that bears witness to the Gospel of Hope, which we hold out to a weary and divided world.

**Key Scripture** | Eph. 4:1-7; Phil. 2:5-11

**Sermon Outline & Questions**

*Opening thoughts—*

What holds a nation, city, or diverse group of people together?

The phrase, "The final argument of the King," was inscribed on all of King Louis XIV's artillery. He held his empire together by force.

Cicero, a Roman statesman, wrote that "people are united...by a common sense of right." In other words, he argued that people are united by a common agreement of law and justice.

While force and law are necessary (they help keep fallen people from fracturing), they don't make compelling communities. At their best, they unite people around a shared respect. At their worst, they unite people around fear.

In *City of God*, Augustine studies the fall of the Roman Empire and, in doing so, compares the nature of Christian community with man's community. What holds things together?

"Ideally, a people is united by a common agreement on the objects of their love. The love with which a man loves God as God ought to be loved and loves his neighbor as himself." -Augustine

What ultimately makes the most compelling community is something deeper than justice and greater than fear. It is love. ([Jhn. 13:35](#), [Phil. 2:2](#), [Eph. 4:2](#).)

We are facing a divisive moment in world around, so we must be eager to maintain peace ([Eph. 4:3](#)).

If love unites, then we need to do serious 'heart work.' In Eph. 4:3, the goal of the "worthy walking" (i.e., mature Christian) is unity. In Eph. 4:2, the attitude Paul exhorts is one of humility, gentleness, patience.

These three "heart qualities" make it possible to exhibit love that "bears one another."

What are the deepest communities you're a part of? What holds them together?

Who's the humblest person you know? What's it like to be in community with them?

**Sermon Focus | Humility**

The Christian community has the potential to hold together in a uniquely compelling way when it is united by humble love. Humility is the mark of Christian love.

Humility is a virtue today, but it was not a virtue in Paul's time. The Greek word means "low disposition." The Latin word means "low to the ground." It conveyed weakness, timidity, fear of men, subservience, etc. In an honor/shame culture, there was no virtue in subservience.

So, Paul takes a pathetic term and makes it a sterling virtue.

True humility exists only in the Christian perspective. Understanding humility is touching a nerve of what's central to Christianity. To serve is to lead.

*How do you treat humility in yourself, or the humility you encounter in others? Do you treat it as a sterling virtue? Or something pathetic? Or somewhere in between?*

*3 observations about Christian humility—*

1. Humility grows in the shadow of the Almighty

Humility is not about having a low view of self but rather a high view of God.

Sometimes we mistake things for humility (e.g., insecurity, timidity). These things *seem* humble but are about self-protection. Christian humility is about self-sacrifice.

Nor is Christian humility a form of self-abasement (i.e., feeling bad about oneself). Humility doesn't begin by looking within but rather by looking *away*. We look to God and get a right view of the self.

Before his greatness ([Rev. 4:10-11](#)). The elders kneel before God. Their humility is not borne of self-loathing but from recognizing the worth and magnitude of their Creator.

Christian humility is true because it begins with a great vision of God's greatness.

Beneath his grace (Isa. 6). Before God, not only is a person "right sized" but also exposed to his holiness, thus becoming very aware of his or her own sinfulness. Isaiah is exposed as a sinner before God, and God sends burning coals to clean Isaiah.

Humility originates in the shadow of the Almighty because only there is a creature right sized by the greatness of God and softened beneath the grace of God. To be a recipient of grace means to admit to being part of the problem.

A British newspaper once sent an inquiry to famous authors asking, "What's wrong with the world today?" and GK Chesterton sent back, "Dear sirs, I am."

To have humility is to be open to the need to be touched by grace.

*Consider what it means to be postured before God's greatness and beneath his grace.*

2. Humility is inspired by the example of the Son

Paul is not setting an ethic for the Romans, but for Christians, who are to be a witness to the rest of the world.

If you're too proud to show humility, then you don't understand Christ. ([Phil. 2:5-11](#).)

The humble heart is transformed in its reorientation toward others through Christ's example. Humility takes the form of a radical servant's heart, which is not an easy or natural thing to do. We need to sit before Scripture and ask Jesus for help.

What form does your heart typically take? Is it one that competes, takes, or judges?

Sam knew a woman who would say, “When you walk into a room, are you a ‘Here I am’ person, or a ‘There you are!’ person?” Which are you? Somewhere in between?

3. It is cultivated by sharing Christ’s heart

We cultivate humility by sharing the heart of the Son.

It’s not doing work by yourself; rather, it’s participation with the Spirit of God in uniting your heart with the heart of Christ.

The best way to change your feeling for someone is to feel how *someone else* feels for them.

Sam had a ministry partner he didn’t like very much. Sam envied him with a cold heart. It wasn’t until Sam met the guy’s father, and learned about the man’s difficult life, that Sam saw his heart change.

To cultivate a humble heart, we need to feel and share God’s heart for fellow believers in the church.

Have you seen God change your heart toward someone? Has God ever softened your heart to love someone you otherwise had a cold heart toward?

*Application—*

We must *see* others through Christ’s eyes. Jesus sees people as the objects of God’s radical love (and he was willing to be crucified for them).

We must *think* about them like Christ does. What do you think about? (Ongoing issues in the world? The people who frustrate you the most?) Ask God to help you think about people in the church (Jesus is thinking glorious thoughts about them).

We will begin to *love* others as Christ does. This means you begin to pray for others, asking for them the very things you want in your own life. At first, you won’t feel like doing this, but the affections will follow. Start praying for them and God will soften your heart.

If you prayed for others what you want in your own life, what would those things be? How does Scripture guide these prayers?

*Concluding thoughts—*

Humility is grounded in having a right view of God and a Christ-like passion for others. It is a uniquely Christian virtue. *God himself is humble!*

“To Jesus...I desire you to submit yourself with unreserved piety, and I wish you to prepare for yourself no other way of seizing and holding the truth than that which had been prepared by him who as God saw the weakness of our goings, in that way, the first part is humility, the second humility, the third humility. And this I would continue to repeat as often as you might ask for directions.” -*Augustine to a pupil.*

What is one thing that stood out to you in this sermon?

What might Christ be saying to you? What truth can you apply to your daily life?