

Philippians 2:5-11

“Me or God”

Would y'all sing a song with me? It's a song I am pretty sure everyone will now so let's give it a try.

Lord, I want to be to be like Jesus in my heart, in my heart;

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In my heart, In my heart,

Lord, I want to be to be like Jesus in my heart.

When I was in high school my Dad hit me with this piece of wisdom. “Do you know how people know they have morals? (pause) They act on them.” Do you think that's true? (pause) Do you think that's true of our Christian faith as well? (pause) If we really believe Jesus Christ is our Lord and Savior then we should act like it, right? (pause) Alright church. Y'all can answer me back. I promised I won't bite. (pause) If we really believe Jesus Christ is our Lord and Savior then we should act like it, right? (*Right*)

I think the Apostle Paul is making this same point when he writes to the Philippians,

“Have this mind among yourselves which you have in Christ Jesus, who though he was in the form of God did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men” (Philippians 2:5-7).

Today we celebrate Palm Sunday. Palm Sunday we talk about how Jesus entered Jerusalem just before the Passover. Jesus is the Son of God – more than that Jesus is God. Jesus absolutely deserves to be worshipped. Jesus is God. There should be parades and celebrating everywhere. Jesus should enter the city with pomp and circumstance, riding on a powerful horse of war. There should be banners and an army of angels riding behind Him. Since Jesus is fully human and fully God Jesus may have been tempted to look for the mighty war horse. (pause) But Scripture does not say that. (pause) Instead, Jesus humbled Himself in order to be obedient to God the Father. Jesus did not stop at talking and teaching about God. (pause) Jesus acted. Jesus was obedient to God the Father. Jesus lives His life so God will be glorified.

So here's a question. If Jesus' plan was to humble Himself, and to be born, grow up, work and live as a human being, why did Jesus bother to let people know Jesus is the Christ? (pause) If Jesus' plan was to die as a human all along why did Jesus tell people He is the Son of God? Jesus does not let people figure out Jesus is the Christ so people will glorify Jesus. Jesus affirms Jesus is the Christ to give greater honor, glory and praise to God the Father. Jesus is setting the example of obedience to God over and above every temptation on earth.

Jesus was willing to be obedient and to go to Jerusalem for the Passover even when He knew he would be betrayed, arrested, mocked, beaten, handed over to the Romans, beaten again, caned, scourged, publicly exposed and crucified until dead. Jesus was buried. Jesus knew He would go through all of this, and Jesus still chose to be obedient to God. Jesus chose to complete the task set before Him. According to Paul Jesus was obedient in order to give glory to God. In return God exalted Jesus and bestowed on Him the name that is above all names. Every knee shall bow and every tongue will confess Jesus Christ is Lord.

We, as the church are also called to be obedient to God. We are called to put God first. The greatest commandment says, “you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might” (Deut 6:5). The second greatest commandment says, “You shall not take

vengeance or bear any grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD" (Lev 19:18). These are the commandments Jesus said were the most important. (pause) My! Aren't they pretty words?! (pause) Aren't they pretty words? Sisters and brothers what makes a church a church? (pause) What makes a church a United Methodist Church? (pause) How are we supposed to live, act and behave in order to be recognized as a United Methodist Church? (pause) Have y'all heard this old joke? What is the difference between a Baptist and a Methodist? The Baptist believe where two or more are gathered they pass the collection plate. The Methodists believe where two or more are gathered they pass the casserole dish. (pause for a bit) Is that the extent of being God's church? (pause) Is that the extent of being a United Methodist?

I think my Dad might have been right. There is a difference between talking about having morals and being a moral person. It probably holds true of Christians too. There is probably a difference between talking about God and being a Christian. I believe Christians want to be more like Jesus in their heart. I believe God the Son, Jesus Christ was obedient to God the Father even unto death because Jesus was not about to go only half way. Jesus was not willing to stop at words. Jesus lives out faith. Jesus sets this example for us, "though he was in the form of God did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men" (Philippians 2:5). Jesus did not just talk about faith. Jesus lives it. (pause) Jesus lives it. (pause) do we?

It has come to my attention there are some who misunderstood last week's sermon. Some have thought all I preached about last week was having more people sitting in our pews. That was not my intent. That is not the message I believe God asked me to convey. The message I was trying to convey was this. God loves you. God has called us to Holy Work. The work of being Christ's hands and feet in our church and in the world until Christ returns. This is the kind of work that cannot just be talked about. This is the kind of work that must be carried out. This is the kind of work by which we will be recognized as United Methodists. (pause) This is the work by which we must be recognized as United Methodists. (pause) There are base lines and standards which can be measured, and by which we must be held accountable if we are to be recognized as God's church in the United Methodist tradition. We must;

- Preach the word faithfully
- Celebrate the Sacraments regularly
- Actively lead people to accept and profess Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior
- Build up believers to become faithful disciples of Jesus Christ
- Minister to the needs of people in our community through our members
- Cooperate with other churches and organizations to meet the needs of our neighbors

Sisters and brothers this is the work of every United Methodist Church. So I am asking you this morning, will we stop at talk? Will we fall short of Christ's example by stopping with talk? Or will the church rise up with broken wings? Will we rise up with broken hearts? Will dust off the rusted swords and broken shields of our faith to stand again on the promises of God? Will we follow Christ's example? We must decide for ourselves, and we must decide for today when Christ rose from the ground on that bright Easter Sunday was Christ a fool for His sacrifice? (pause) And are we fools enough to get up off of our pews and follow Him?

In the name of Jesus Christ – Amen.