

SERMON NOTES

h u m b l e k i n g

ROYALTY MEETS HUMILITY IN CHRISTMAS

**Oh kneel me down again
Here at Your feet
Show me how much You love humility
Oh Spirit be the star that leads me to
The humble heart of love I see in You**

**You are the God of the broken
Friend of the weak;
You wash the feet of the weary
Embrace the ones in need
I want to be like you Jesus
To have this heart in me**

**You are the God of the humble,
You are the humble King.**

**Here in the dusty ground
I bow with kings
Where wise men laid before their offerings
I lay no golden crown here at your feet
Just this my broken life, I offer thee**

Lyrics from *Humble King*

Written by Brenton Brown | © 1999 Vineyard Songs (UK/Eire)

Humble King

Royalty Meets Humility In Christmas

SERMON NOTES

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Intro Week (Pre-Advent)

The song *Humble King*, in the second line, says “... Show me how much You love humility...” Diving deep into Philippians 2, we see the image of the Humble King.

Scripture

In Phil. 2:1-11, we read these powerful words:

“Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind.

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:

Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage, rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.

And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death — even death on a cross!

Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

1. Why Humility Matters

Role models are hard to come by. Sometimes we stumble upon our role models – like the day we realize that a parent, or a grandparent, or a co-worker is far more remarkable than we had previously realized.

And one of the character traits that most often strikes us about that person? It is usually that they approach what we perceive to be their greatness with some astounding level of *humility*.

And by humility, we mean that they seem to be keenly aware that they didn’t become who they are without failure. They seem to have an awareness they weren’t the only ones responsible for their successes, or they understate their own talents in order to make us more aware of our own. Our heroes are often *humble*.

2. Why Humility Leads

Why did the God of the Heavens and the Earth decide it would be best to present Himself to humanity as *humble*?

The word *humility* comes from the root word, “humus,” or *earth*. It literally speaks of being “on the ground,” or even “of the ground.” Words like *lowly*, *modest*, *small*, *meeek* all enhance the meaning of the word.

God could have led – like the types of leaders who really get ahead on social, online, or business platforms of our time – with *power* and *largeness of presence*. But instead, He led with *humility*. A baby, rather than an angry mob, is the beginning of a revolution. A hard-working carpenter, rather than an upper-class CEO, is the founder of a dynasty of love.

In fact, today if there is any elevation of the character trait of humility in public leadership – a trait which transforms the celebrated leadership virtues of courage, wisdom, and truthfulness – the ideal comes to us from a man who chose the most powerful leadership stance of all when He washed his disciples’ feet.

It seems that God wanted to communicate something very clearly about the kind of role model He intended for the human race to find. And for those who make Jesus their role model, humility is a prerequisite to greatness.

3. Why Humility Transforms

What happens inside of us when humility comes into our lives?

Actor George Clooney once said, “I watch *Batman And Robin* from time to time. It’s the worst movie I ever made, so it’s a good lesson in humility.” For most of us, lessons in humility usually come at a cost. We are embarrassed when how

impressed we are with ourselves makes us look silly in front of others. Or when we suffer a great failure though we had absolutely convinced ourselves – and others – we had only sunshine and rainbows ahead of us. Or when we find ourselves confronted by a revelation that the success or freedom we are currently experiencing was built on the backs of others’ blood, sweat, tears, and unspeakable sacrifice.

However humility comes to us, it always seems to transform the way we see the world. Arrogance gives way to a humble confidence, and pride gives way to a quiet trust in Grace, rather than in our own abilities and talents, to carry us forward. Humility is a correct understanding of ourselves – neither too high nor too low – and we are lifted by humility. Humility has a way of telling the poor they are accepted and loved. Humility has a way of keeping us as aware of our great frailty as we are of our great strength.

And through all of our transforming lessons, we somehow learn to elevate others above ourselves, to serve others with our gifts, and to truly see others as the immeasurably magnificent treasures they really are.

Conclusion

Humble King will focus us in reflection on the God who comes to us in weakness every Christmas, through the passage of Philipians 2.

Humility is the only soil in which the graces root. The lack of humility is the sufficient explanation of every defect and failure.

(Andrew Murray)

The Humble King Of Hope

FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Our Advent Story

In God's Kingdom, humility paves the way to real, lasting Hope. Weakness leads to strength.

Scripture

Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage... (Phil. 2:6).

You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end" (Luke 1:31-33).

Message

Hope is a virtue. Like courage, trust, restraint, perseverance, faith, and justice, hope is a muscle we work until it is developed for impact. And yet the ability to have hope, and to experience the virtue of hope in our own lives, depends on humility. But how are the two connected?

1. Pointing To Our Source Of Hope

If anyone could have been impressed with their Christmas business card, it would have been Jesus.

The Old Testament put the words, "Mighty God" and "Prince of Peace" on His resume, and the New Testament provided titles like "King of Kings" and "Lord of Lords" to round it out.

It's clear, looking over Jesus' titles, that He was equal to God. The terms that are used to refer to Him are overwhelmingly divine in nature.

But the Scriptures seem to communicate that Jesus' hopeful vision of who He was, who you and I are, and who the people around Him were, was not predicated on *His view of Himself*.

Rather, at every turn, we see Jesus point us toward putting our hope in the *Father* – the Father who made us, loves us, cares for us like the birds of the air, and adorns us like the flowers of the field (Matt. 6:26-28).

2. Embracing Our Future Hope

Jesus knew who He was and each title that was His to claim from the Hebrew Scriptures. But that doesn't seem to be the lens through which Jesus saw the unfolding future hope to which He called us.

No. We see Jesus, in humility, being “of the ground” – of the *humus* – as He taught and demonstrated the Kingdom of God. And all along the way, *He gave glory to the Father above Himself.*

And this seemed to enable Jesus to not only see God's future hope held in trust by His loving Father, but this humble love seemed to then empower Him to have hope for every person that ever crossed His dusty, earthy, well-worn human path.

3. Raising Our Level Of Hope

Take a few moments, right now as you read, and close your eyes for two minutes.

For the first minute, think about the ways you have depended on yourself as of late – your own decision-making abilities, your own feelings, your own reason, your own impulses, your own desires, your own experience, practice, or skills.

Then, for the second minute, take the first few seconds to offer up every one of those self-dependencies to God and ask Him to ruthlessly root out pride in your own capacities.

Then turn your attention to reflect on what God has done, and is

doing, in your life right now. Let this awareness of God's activity in your current circumstances – be it in your heart, mind, or character – overwhelm you and move you.

Now, open your eyes. How high is the hope level in your heart? When you were first focused on your own capabilities, did it make you feel hopeful and like good could not help but come from your work?

Let an awareness of
what God is doing
overwhelm you.

Compare that feeling of hope to what emerged as you reflected on the Father's love for you, what He is doing in your life right now, and how detailed His care is in the fine strokes of your days and nights.

If you felt *hope* rise in you – the expectation of good and a sense of connection to a future you cannot fully see – then you are experiencing the same hope Jesus had as He moved through the crowds preaching the life-upending message of the hope of the Kingdom of God.

Conclusion

Take a few moments to write down, in a journal, preferably, what you believe God has been doing, and is doing, in your life right now.

Humility is attentive patience.

(Simone Weil)

The Humble King Of Peace

SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Our Advent Story

The Peace of God is poured into the world through an infant; peace often comes in small packages.

Scripture

...Rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness (Phil. 2:7).

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace (Is. 9:6).

Message

For peace to come onto a scene where turbulence and disruption are ruling, there is always some power that must be confronted. Why does God choose the sledgehammer of humility to defeat foes that power and might cannot?

Philippians 2:7 tells us that Jesus “made himself *nothing*.” In other words, Jesus made Himself so small – so *not* the center of attention – that He virtually disappeared. But

like a grain of sand forming a pearl in an oyster, often the smallest things bring about the most beautiful results.

1. Little Things Mean A Lot

Small is one of the hardest things that many of us will ever do.

Our culture virtually shames us if we don’t think big, work to become known, make a splash, or leave our mark. Some famous personalities have made it their singular goal to become memorable, talked about, and present on the lips of everyone in a household.

But Jesus modeled another way to greatness. Thérèse of Lisieux (Little Thérèse) was a Carmelite nun who died at the age of 24 (1897) after modeling what she called “the little way” of loving and following Jesus.

“What matters in life,” she said, “is not great deeds, but great love.” For Thérèse, it was through doing small things, motivated by great love, that the world would be changed for good. Her singular life’s goal was that her death would begin the fulfillment of her mission to “make God loved” by His little ones.

And her little mission took root. In the early 1900s, a young Albanian nun named Anjezë Gonxhe Bojaxhiu chose to take the name of Little Thérèse as she followed this same little way of love. In doing so, she ministered peace and reconciliation to tens of thousands of the world's poor. We call her "Mother Teresa."

The sledgehammer of humility can defeat powerful foes.

2. Little Things Change A Story

If you are a lover of books, you'll know that one little plot twist can bring about an ending you would never have seen coming.

Choose Your Own Adventure was a series of children's game books popular in the 1980s and 1990s in the US. What made the books so popular is that the reader could choose which direction the story would take. The protagonist would have 2-3 options available at one point in the book, which the young reader would choose for the character. That choice led to more choices, and in some cases, to more than 40 possible endings!

Small changes – like a choice to lay down our self-reliance and to surrender ourselves to Christ-reliance – can shift a life trajectory from being on a path to greater turbulence to

being on a path to greater peace.

Jesus was a plot twist in the Jewish story and in the human story. And peace follows in the wake of the new plot line that Jesus is writing in your life and mine.

3. Little Things Move Big Things

In the story of *The Hobbit*, the little, humble hero Frodo is spoken of before a counsel of great leaders: *"This is the hour of the Shire-folk, when they arise from their quiet fields to shake the towers and counsels of the Great. Who of all the Wise could have foreseen it?"*

The story goes on to form a metaphor for how a person who has "made himself nothing" (Phil. 2:7) can end up saving the many.

At Christmas, we celebrate that humility can bring peace – even when facing mighty enemies – where power, might, and stature cannot. The Christmas story is the story of the humble King, who made Himself nothing, becoming the Peacemaker for us all.

Conclusion

What small acts by another have changed your entire life for good? Consider writing or calling that person with a word of thanks.

A man who [goes] to sleep in humility, thankfulness and temperance, is, by Christian standards, in an infinitely higher state than one who is listening to Bach or

The Humble King Of Joy

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Our Advent Story

Mary, Elizabeth, the Shepherds, and the prophetess Anna – for them, Christmas means joy!

Scripture

And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death – even death on a cross (Phil. 2:8).

When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:41).

Message

Joy is in short supply in many of our lives. We have bursts and blips of happiness – often initiated by the perfect state of our health, the spending of money, the taking of vacations, or the satisfaction a relationship can bring.

But according to the Gospel, the greatest joy any one of us will ever experience is the direct result of our experiencing the indwelling, ongoing presence of the God who is, Himself, Joy.

1. The Kingdom Comes With Joy

Joy is the common experience of virtually every person we come upon in the birth narrative of Jesus.

Unless you were Herod, Mary’s gossiping neighbors, or the angel of death, joy was an overwhelming part of God’s entry into the world at Christmas!

2. The Kingdom Comes With Laughter

Have you ever seen a mother when her baby abruptly moves within her womb? Often one of the mother’s first physical expressions of the event (after an initial look of shock) is a *smile*.

And what often accompanies that smile? A short burst of laughter.

Joy cannot be bottled up for long.

Life growing, bouncing, and moving underneath the surface of our lives is the primary indicator that God’s Kingdom activity is stirring within.

Many people who come to faith in Jesus have a story that includes the word “joy.” Joy is a sustained sense of well-being, dictated not by circumstance, but rather by relationship.

That joy has enabled them to smile before their enemies, and even to laugh when the world as they knew it was falling to pieces around them (ask the Apostle Paul about that).

The smile that has donned the face of countless millions who have had an experience with the Spirit of Jesus must be not unlike the smile that we can guess Elizabeth wore when she and her unborn son met face to face (and womb to womb) with Mary and Jesus!

3. The Kingdom Comes With Singing

Angels sang at Christ's birth; why is singing such a key to a joy-filled Church?

Singing, unless you are one of the world's great vocalists, is often an act of humility. The proud rarely sing in public; they are too busy caring for their image, courting the crowd, or considering how important it is to hide uncontrolled emotion and portray impervious strength.

But the humble? The humble sing. And when they sing, they do it with *gusto*.

Mary sang the Magnificat when Elizabeth came to visit her. Paul and Barnabas sang in prison, despite their obviously problematic state of affairs.

And every week, Christians sing in church – not because they have amazing voices or are eager for those around them to hear their bellows –

but because they are filled with *joy*.

And even when Christians are not filled with joy, singing is a powerful gateway to joy being renewed – by the Spirit – within us.

When we sing things that are true, we come to believe them more. And when we sing, the joy of the Kingdom can invade not only our own hearts,

The proud rarely
sing – but the humble
can't sing enough.

but also the hearts of those who are listening.

Conclusion

Find some of the songs you most love to sing at this time of the year, and take an hour to get them on your phone, music device, or playlist.

Then, as you listen through the holidays, sing.

Find spaces to sing loudly (like in your car or your home if no one is around, or in church), and let your singing renew your Christmas joy once again.

Holy humility confounds pride and all the men of this world and all things that are in the world. (Francis of Assisi)

The Humble King Of Love

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Our Advent Story

Moved by “the same love” as Jesus, we can truly become one in spirit and in mind – despite our differences.

Scripture

Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind (Phil. 2:1-2).

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life (John 3:16).

Message

The hummingbird is a fascinating creature. It is small, agile, and fueled by the sweet nectar it finds in flowers.

With the wing speeds of the smallest hummingbirds hovering around 80 beats per second, and

some species diving as fast as 49 miles per hour, the hummingbird looks like grace in motion as it hovers in front of a flower waiting to draw out what is sweet.

But behind all that grace is a hard-working machine – hustling just like the rest of us to stay in the air.

1. Can We Learn To Love?

Jesus asks many things of us in the Scriptures – why is learning to love others so hard to do?

The hummingbird is a metaphor for what someone who has learned to love can look like – *grace in motion*. Love is hard work; it takes difficult choices in the unseen moments when no one is around to applaud.

We have to consider someone who is not like us as being more important than ourselves. We have to restrain our tongues from unleashing fury in anger, and learn to control our tongues so that they can become instruments of healing and wholeness.

In other words, the hummingbird is working very, very hard to do what it does – even when it appears to be doing it with ease on the surface.

Grace expressed in love takes individual, single beats of small wings that, by practice, enable us to hover in front of difficult situations and to draw sweetness from them.

We can learn, by humility and by practice, to draw sweetness from any situation.

2. Can We Learn To Love Deeply?

The gift of God in Christ is that, indeed, our need for love has been met. In fact, your lifetime and mine will be spent learning to receive the great and grace-infused love that meets us every moment in Jesus.

But learning to love others, deeply and from the heart (1 Pet. 1:22), requires that we humble ourselves enough to be “like-minded,” “having the same love, being one in spirit and one in mind.”

The task of becoming like-minded and like-hearted is an arduous one. What Paul is not saying here, as he writes from his jail cell (some scholars agree this is the probable location of his writing), is that we’re all to think the *same thoughts*.

That is neither healthy nor natural for a group.

Rather, being like-minded means

we have the *same goal* – the goal of receiving love and giving love in Jesus’ name.

Some of the most unyielding postures of hate between people and people groups have been softened and turned into embraces by coming to be “one in spirit” as we choose to be loved by Jesus and to love in Jesus’ name – together.

3. Can We Learn To Love Completely?

We can learn to love deeply, to draw out the sweetness in any situation, relationship, or even cultural challenge. But it will take small acts of practice, and practicing love always requires that we humble ourselves in some way. For the one who wants to change a nation, we must start by accepting someone who is not like us ethnically, socially, spiritually, or even politically.

Soon the hurried beating of our wings will look like grace as we hover across lines of preference and prejudice to love others in Jesus’ name.

Conclusion

This week, find someone who is very different from you and ask them to coffee. Ask them their story, and begin to build a friendship around your shared love for Jesus.

Through humility, some have even possessed the gates of their enemies. For which of the virtues is so mighty to subdue the pride of demons and the tyranny of men? (Charles Spurgeon)

The Humble King Of Heaven

CHRISTMAS DAY

Our Christmas Story

The paradox of the Humble King falls with power on our lives. Humility and Power co-exist in the same person, Christ Jesus the Lord.

Scripture

And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death – even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Phil. 2:8-11).

Message

As was noted in the introduction, the word *humility* comes from the word *humus*, which means *of the ground*. Why would God choose to reveal Himself in such a grounded, humble, vulnerable, earthy – and indisputably *normal* – way?

1. Heaven Is A Place For The Humble

Christmas morning, if it is anything, is the celebration that Heaven and Earth intersected at a time, in a place.

And at this intersection, a baby was born – the flesh-and-blood nexus between the place that God dwells, *Heaven*, and the place that we dwell, *Earth*.

For believers then and today, the uniqueness of this one-of-a-kind child goes far beyond hair color, facial features, or genetics. This child – Jesus – embodied the essential character of God and the essential design of the human being. He was God-and-Man, all wrapped up in one.

And this brings us to the most powerful Christmas truth of all. God comes to us in the humble, in the small, in the meek, in the invisible, in the virtually nothing and the mostly nowhere to show us how greatness, love, success, family, community, healing, hope, and a meaningful life actually works.

2. Heaven Is A Place For The Weak

One cannot read the Christmas story without realizing how very weak and vulnerable God's great gift to the world actually is.

Kings – mighty leaders who hold military power, control of the masses, and economic purse strings – will be after this baby's soft, pudgy frame.

His mother and father will be on the run, as vulnerable and helpless as any new family could be, as they seek to protect their child from those who are seeking His life.

And as for defending Himself? A baby can only smile and gurgle in the face of a threat – and the infant Christ, we can believe, was no exception.

In coming to us this way, God is showing that *He loves weakness*.

Have you lost power, control, or the ability to support your own life? Then take heart; God loves weakness, and He has you right where He wants you.

3. Heaven Is A Place For The Helpless

Blessed are the helpless, He says. He knows what it's like to be helpless.

Blessed are the forgotten, He says. He knows what it's like to be forgotten. Blessed are those who can't lift their hand to their mouth, who are too ashamed to answer the phone, or who can't get a new job. Desperation is a doorway for this King of the Helpless. Blessed are you when you are helpless, because

then you have an opportunity like no other to learn to be loved by God.

Conclusion

This Christmas Day is a day to meditate on the God who challenges every power structure of this world by His humility.

God comes to us in
the virtually nothing
and the mostly
nowhere.

No king, no queen, no president, no prime minister, no celebrity has been able to leave the kind of mark on the world that a small infant born homeless in the ancient land of Palestine has left on the world.

The High King of Heaven has endorsed the state of desperation by His very coming to the world. And if you are in this place, to you He is reaching out His hand. This Christmas, as one year closes and another begins, it is only the hand of the humble that can reach out and take His once again.

Trust. Believe. Humble yourself. And do it all before the King of Heaven who loves you – and holds your future in His hands.

Pride makes us artificial and humility makes us real.

(Thomas Merton)

Living In Humility, Living In Christ

NEW YEAR'S DAY

Our New Year Questions

Through the model of Christ, we now become people who can, in humility, value others this year more than ourselves. It's a year for *humility*, a year for looking to the interest of others.

Scripture

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others (Phil. 2:3-4).

Message

Every new year, people around the world gather in town and city centers to celebrate the passing of one season and the birth of another.

Could this be the year when Christ's humility is formed in us to such a degree that we don't recognize ourselves by year's end?

In business there is an old adage that says, "To say yes to one thing is to say no to something else." Every day, you and I get dressed. We *put*

on one thing, but before we do, we usually *take off* something else first. To say yes to a *new thing*, we have to say no to an *old thing*.

Before we can "put on" Christ (Gal. 3:27), we have to "take off" a few things that get in the way of Christ's humility being our new fashion statement this year.

1. Taking Off Selfish Ambition

Taking off selfish ambition is one place that Phil. 2:3 begins. If we have set our sights on getting our own way, subtly using others to elevate our own name or reputation, then selfish ambition is at work.

We can even be serving others while we are inwardly serving our own needs, fixated on our own ultimate gain.

We can't be self-absorbed and embrace weakness at the same time. Take 30 seconds, right now, to consider one area of your life where you can put someone else ahead of yourself, helping them succeed (even if it is at a cost to your own success).

In doing so, you are putting off selfish ambition so you can put on the humility of Christ.

2. Taking Off Vain Conceit

If selfish ambition is about doing good for personal gain, vain conceit is about looking good for personal gain.

If we want to put on humility, there are a few things we must take off first.

Do you remember back in high school saying something like, “They’re conceited,” or “They think they’re so amazing.” Conceit speaks of excessive pride in oneself and one’s own accomplishments.

In this case, the clothing we must take off is vital if humility is to mark our lives. We can’t wear vanity and humility at the same time. Like two of the same poles on two magnets, humility resists a heart that finds itself to be its own secret admirer.

Take 30 seconds, right now, to consider if any conceit has begun to worm its way into your heart. If so, take another 30 seconds to consider how you might take that vanity off by doing something that may be humbling in your own eyes.

Humbling ourselves by asking forgiveness of someone, doing a task

that seems beneath us, or confiding in someone about our fears or failures – these are all good ways of losing something old to take up the new way of humility.

3. Putting On Humility

Putting on humility, after we have taken off selfish ambition and vain conceit, is now much easier – though it will cost us the same that it cost Jesus in His lifetime.

Humility means we put others before ourselves, considering them better than us in how we treat them (and we tend to treat ourselves pretty well).

Humility means that we choose to become small, choose to “make ourselves nothing,” so that God can receive glory for the moments of success (redefined by the life and teaching of Jesus) that occur in our lives. We lose our taste for accolades; recognition from God is all we need.

Conclusion

Take a few moments to sit down with a journal, and write down 10 ways you would like to see Jesus break through in your life this next year.

After you’ve written each item down, make each one a prayer and talk to God about your hopes for the year. As He shines light on each of your requests, make notes you can return to at the end of next year.

Humility is becoming a lost art, but it’s not difficult to practice. It means that you realize that others have been involved in your success. (Harvey Mackay)