

March 27, 2022

"Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit..."

"Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant..."

Philippians 2:3-7

Over the past weeks we have considered just two of the countless examples from Scripture that help us to better understand how easy it is to be trapped by our own selfishness and just how destructive that can be. Our lives as those who follow Jesus must always be lived to his standard; ***"If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever want to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it."*** (Matthew 16:24-25)

Living ***"Do nothing out of selfish ambition and vain conceit..."*** is my calling, my single task as one who follows Jesus. So, making this commandment a reality in my life from day to day is absolutely essential. As a believer I can do nothing less, but how, in this world, can I even begin to live this commandment?

Thankfully, the Apostle shows us the way. As I have noted before, there are in most commandment-based passages key words that help us to understand the process of keeping that commandment. In this passage those key words must include, I think,

Humility: Jesus let go of being God and made himself nothing or as other versions say, he ***"emptied himself"***. The opposite of humility is arrogance. Humility begins with an emptied self and arrogance makes us full of ourselves. As believers we are called to empty ourselves. In a very real way this demands that we surrender our existence to God giving up ourself-serving battle to survive; no easy task.

Consider: How do we view others? What labels do you use to understand others? Because we are all driven by an animal-like instinct for survival, we nearly always view others as competitors for what we believe we must have to guarantee that survival. Our natural view of others then, always begins with an animosity found in our self-serving drive to survive. In order to justify this instinctual behavior we paint those we view as competitors for survival with a broad brush of judgment and condemnation. Paul says that those who are emptied will ***"...consider others better than..."*** Quite literally he is telling us to decide in our humility that those we view as competitors for survival are more worthy of survival than we are.

Look: As believers transformed by the renewing of our minds we have a different purpose in our existence. Before we knew Jesus we were, like everyone else, fighting to survive against every real and perceived threat. We battled for everything we believed essential to our survival even with those we love and care for the most. But now, Paul will say, we must look to the interests of others. Instead of pursuing the gratification of our own needs above all else we become those who want to help those around us secure what they need.

Attitude: Jesus did not just empty himself of his Godhood to come here, he went beyond emptied to take on the ***"...very nature of a servant..."*** Jesus is calling us to empty our selfish drive to survive, to decide that the survival of others is more important than our own, to work to meet the needs of others through self-sacrifice, and ultimately to become servant-minded. When I have surrendered my battle to survive to the God of heaven it will change how I view others, it will

transform who I labor for, and ultimately it will cause me to become the obedient servant of God that my Lord and Master was and is.

