

Get Over Yourself
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Philippians 2:2-4 (NRSV)

Make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others.

Two weeks ago we began our series based on the bestselling book by Archbishop Desmond Tutu and His Holiness the Dalai Lama. The "*Book of Joy*" examines what they have experienced in their lives and what scientists have found to be the wellsprings of joy.

They spend the first part of the book looking at obstacles to joy, but we have decided not to focus on the obstacles, the second part of the book is what they call: **The Eight Pillars of Joy**.

Two weeks ago, we looked at the first pillar PERSPECTIVE.

A healthy perspective really is the foundation of joy --- because the way that we see the world is the way that we experience the world.

Changing the way that we see the world will change the way that we feel and the way that we act --- and ultimately --- it can change the world itself!

So getting a healthy and authentic perspective is the start of finding real joy.

Our second pillar that we will focus on this morning is HUMILITY.

Archbishop Tutu shared a great story to get us started.

"A bishop was about to ordain candidates to the priesthood. They were speaking about the virtues, including the virtue of humility. One of the candidates came up to the bishop and said, 'My lord, I've been looking in the library to find a book on humility.' The bishop said, 'Oh, yes, I've written the best book on the subject.'"

I promise you, this will not be the best sermon ever preached on humility!

Humility is a funny thing.

What fascinates me about humility is how dictionaries tend to define it. Most often they state that humility is a modest or low opinion of one's own importance.

I am not sure that the Archbishop or His Holiness would completely agree with that definition.

Seven years ago next month I embarked on a journey that would change my life. I completed my first half marathon at Fort Harrison in the whopping time of 3:08 minutes --- you notice I didn't say I ran it. I basically walked the 13.1 miles.

Two years later, I RAN the Chicago Marathon.

I am training for a half marathon next month in Louisville and my training plan required me to put in a ten mile run yesterday.

This past week had been tough, but I had been able to somehow sneak in my runs.

But as I went out yesterday to run, my legs wouldn't go. I somehow ran 2 1/2 miles before I had to sit down and try to convince myself to go again.

It was humbling!

But it really didn't change my opinion of my self importance.

I know I am a slow runner --- I am just happy to finish

So what does humility mean?

It comes from the Latin word for earth or soil --- HUMUS

Humility brings us back to earth --- it reminds us of our humble beginnings.

Remember the words in the traditional funeral service:

"Ashes to ashes --- dust to dust"

Or the words we say on Ash Wednesday as we place ashes on your forehead

"You are dust --- and to dust you shall return"

Humility reminds us not to get too large a view of ourselves.

The Dalia Lama shared a Tibetan prayer that says:

"Whenever I see someone, may I never feel superior. From the depth of my heart, may I be able to really appreciate the other person in front of me."

The challenge is for us to recognize that we are all brothers and sisters and children of our creator God.

Because when we get that 40,000 foot view --- we realize that we are just one of many. All of God's children are of value.

It goes back to the concept of Ubuntu that I shared two weeks ago.

Ubuntu says: "A person is a person through other people." or put another way: "the belief in a universal bond of sharing that connects all humanity"

When we see our interconnectedness and embrace it --- it humbles us.

In many ways the idea of Ubuntu can also be summarized in our passage from Galatians.

The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

The key to humility is understanding that the world does not revolve around ME. It doesn't revolve around you --- it revolves around God.

Humility leads us to understand that we need each other

We are not truly independent or self-sufficient

We are inter-dependent with each other

The terrible disasters that we have witnessed lately are some of the best reminders of how much we need each other.

- Houston needs us
- Florida needs us
- Puerto Rico needs us
- Virgin Islands need us
- Cuba needs us
- Mexico needs us

Without help --- many will die

They cannot rebuild on their own --- they need all of us to help

Leonard Bernstein, the late conductor of the New York Philharmonic orchestra was asked what was the most difficult instrument to play.

Without hesitation he replied,

"The second fiddle! I can get plenty of first violinists, but to find someone who can play the second fiddle with enthusiasm—that's a problem. And if we have no second fiddle, we have no harmony."

This is the problem we face.

We don't easily want to play second fiddle because it's too humbling a position.

We want to be important.

Do you remember the great scientist George Washington Carver? Maybe we need to learn from him.

George Washington Carver is remembered for developing hundreds of useful products from the peanut.

When he was young he asked God to tell him the mystery of the universe.

But God answered: That knowledge is reserved for me alone.

So he said, "God, tell me the mystery of the peanut."

Then God said, "Well, George, that's more nearly your size."

And he told him.

But I want to be clear --- being humble does not mean that we should become timid.

We need to use the gifts that God has given us to make the world a better place.

But we need to remember the source of our gifts --- GOD --- --- when we understand that -- THAT is humility!

As the Archbishop reminds us:

"Humility allows us to celebrate the gifts of others, but it does not mean you have to deny your own gifts or shrink from using them. God uses each of us in our own way, and even if you are not the best one, you may be the one who is needed or the one who is there."

Paul in his letter to the church at Philippi says in chapter 2, verse 4, "let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others." Then he gives us the ultimate example of this in verse 5f, "let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, Who though he was in the form of God, Did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, But emptied himself, Taking the form of a slave."

Jesus emptied himself. He poured himself out for us.

His attitude was not directed to himself.

It wasn't ME, MINE.

It was you, ours.

Do you remember the story from the 2016 Summer Olympics in Rio?

USA Track and field star Abbey D'Agostino during the second semifinal heat of the women's 5,000-meter race, stopped to help a fallen runner.

It all started when New Zealand's Nikki Hamblin took a tumble on the inside track. Impossible to avoid the fallen runner, D'Agostino tripped over Hamblin, stumbling to the ground herself.

Rather than get up and plow past Hamblin, D'Agostino stopped to check to see if her Olympic rival could continue and helped her off the ground.

She finished the race almost 2 minutes behind the winner of the heat.

That is the attitude that Paul was talking about when he reminds us of the humility of Jesus.

In our western, North American culture we are trained from childhood that life is all about ME, MINE, and MY WAY.

Even our religion is based on MY relationship with God, My eternal destiny, MY beliefs.

If I'm good with God, then I can check that off my list and move on with my life.

What if we changed the ME, MINE, and MY WAY to WE, OURS, and GOD's Way.

Joy is found when we change the **me** to **we**.

May God help us change our attitude so that Joy may grow in our lives.

Listen to Paul as he shares with us an early Christian hymn in Philippians 2:5-11

Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus,

who, though he was in the form of God,

did not regard equality with God

as something to be exploited,

but emptied himself,

taking the form of a slave,

being born in human likeness.

And being found in human form,

he humbled himself

and became obedient to the point of death—

even death on a cross.

Therefore God also highly exalted him

and gave him the name

that is above every name,

so that at the name of Jesus

every knee should bend,

in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
and every tongue should confess
that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.