

Good morning everyone! If you don't know me, my name is Calvin and I'm the Jr. High Youth Director here at Servant of Christ. I've had the privilege to give sermons here before, but I've never taken full advantage. So this morning, I want to take a selfie with all of you in it. I don't want to waste any time, so while I'm taking the selfie I'll just start my sermon.

Up front isn't good enough...need to get on a chair.

Today is the last day of our Believe series. We started in the fall with examining our core beliefs as Christians – the section was called “Think.” Then we went into “Act,” and now we are in the “Be” section; who are we becoming? Today's topic is on humility, which I think is the most important to talk about, and the perfect one to save for last. But in order to understand humility, I think we need to talk about the flip side.

A few years ago I was a part of a graduate program called “The School of Church Leadership,” and one of the classes that I took was a spiritual formation class. The professor opened up by talking about “the human condition.” He asked if anyone knew what he meant when he said “the human condition.” Some people speculated, and he explained that what he meant was that all humans suffer from an “**obsession with self.**” That obsession is rooted in pride. Some people speculate that the cause of all sin is pride...the cause of all sin is the human condition.

The selfie is a perfect metaphor for the human condition. Instead of pointing our cameras outward, we are turning it inward. We use our phones to turn inward all the time, and not just for selfies either. There are so many good stories of people texting and walking into things. Do you remember the story about that woman who was texting in a mall and walked into the fountain? How many of you have run into something while texting? Ok, you don't have to raise your

hands...maybe that would be too embarrassing. And selfies, we go to great lengths to take selfies, don't we? And how many tries does it take to get *THE PERFECT SELFIE*?

Here are a couple of selfies that I've taken that I think are pretty funny.

[PHOTO 1]

[PHOTO 2]

But selfies aren't always great. People can get seriously injured while taking selfies, and some people have even died. We lose track of where we're going, we aren't aware of our surroundings, we don't see the imminent danger, and people have died. It's really sad.

I want to be clear that I am not saying that taking a selfie is a sin. It can be a great way to capture a moment, they can be really fun, and they are really popular. I'm only using it as a metaphor. If we continue with our metaphor about selfies being like the human condition, then I think that the same dangers can be said about our spiritual lives. We read in Romans 6:23 that the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life. When we only focus inward and on ourselves, we lose track of where we are going, we aren't aware of our surroundings, and we aren't aware of imminent danger.

Pastor Melissa talked about the Cranky Code of Conduct last week, and listed off a bunch of different inward focused rules, like, "I deserve special privileges because of who I am," or, "I deserve what I want, when I want it." We get so caught up in ourselves, and that isn't life giving. It's life taking, instead.

Humility, on the other hand, is the opposite of pride and the human condition. A lot of people think that humility means thinking less of yourself. For instance, if I'm really good at a

sport, I might pretend that I'm not good or say that I look goofy while I do it, or something like that. If I'm really smart I might say that it was luck, or try to explain areas that I feel really stupid. But humility isn't self-deprecating. Pastor Rick Warren, the creator of "The Purpose Driven Life," once said, "Humility isn't thinking less of yourself; it's thinking of yourself less."

It's turning our cameras out to the world, rather than turning them inward.

Earlier I said that humility is the best to save for last, and maybe the most important part of the series to learn about. Why? I believe that humility fights directly against the human condition. Humility is the beginning of Christ centered behavior, and it is at the center of what we are called to **BE** as Christ followers. Think about it, kindness and gentleness, patience, generosity, service, all of these things start by thinking of someone else before ourselves.

Humility is tough. It's tough to do, nevertheless remember to do it. Humility takes practice and reminders, just like anything else. We can learn to be humble; we can practice it and get better at it, and eventually master it. One great way to learn how to be more humble is by looking at the life of Christ. Christ's entire life and ministry on earth was grounded in humility.

Open up your Bibles to John 13, and we're going to look at the text one more time.

(Take the time to open them up)

When Jesus washes his disciples' feet it is during the Last Supper. Jesus knows that these are his last few hours with his friends before his crucifixion, and he starts to impart his last words of wisdom and advice to them. Jesus does something out of character, he gets down on his hands and knees and starts to wash the disciples feet. Remember, they are in an arid climate, the deserts of Palestine, and they are wearing sandals. Fresh water was hard to come by, so regular showers

and baths didn't happen. When people did wash, it was usually their hands and sometimes their head. And if their feet were washed when visiting someone, it was done by servants. Jesus, thinking of others before himself, washes their feet; the master doing the work of servants.

Then, in verse 13, he says something interesting. Let's read together. [READ 13-17] Jesus says that servants are no greater than their masters, and messengers aren't greater than the one who sent them. Jesus isn't saying, be the person who sends messages or be the master, he is telling them to be the servant. He acted as the servant by washing all of their feet, and told them to do the same. He tells us to not think of ourselves as better than anyone else, and to serve them. **That's not pride. That's humility.**

There is another passage that sums up Christ's life of humility on earth. Philippians 2:6-8. [READ PASSAGE] I want to break up this passage into smaller chunks and examine them a little bit deeper.

Verse 6, Jesus was in the form of God (aka was God), but didn't want to exploit it. Then in verse 7, he emptied himself and took the form of a slave. From the very beginning, the incarnation, God was humble. The word incarnation means that a deity takes the form of a human. God was made into flesh, and was born to Mary. Have you ever held an infant? They are so vulnerable, they can't support their own head because it's too heavy for their tiny little neck muscles. They need to sleep like 20 hours a day, and need to be fed and changed. God, the almighty God who created everything, came down to earth in the form of a vulnerable infant, thinking of YOU. God left the perfect paradise of heaven for your sake, not for God's sake. **That's not pride. That's humility.**

Later in life he spent time teaching, healing, feeding, and caring for everyone. He traveled everywhere, was called to random cities, and was persecuted the entire time that he did it. At one point Jesus found out that his cousin, John the Baptist, had been executed for no reason. He grabs a few friends and goes out on a boat to be alone for a while. But a crowd is following him and looking for him, and the scripture says that he felt their pain (literally, felt it in his gut), so he thinks of others first and goes to shore to meet their needs. **That's not pride. That's humility.**

Lastly, in verse 8, God does the unimaginable. "He humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross." Death on a cross was an execution reserved for the worst criminals. Jesus (God), who had done nothing wrong, was crucified for you. I mentioned Romans 6:23 before, and this is how that all played out. The free gift of God is eternal life, and we get that eternal life through the death and resurrection of Jesus. It is because of Christ's humility to become obedient to death on a cross that we get to have eternal life.

When God took the form of a human; when God was a tiny, vulnerable infant; when God spent years ministering; when God died on the cross; God did it all with you in mind.

This is the paradox of God, and who God calls us to be. God could easily sit in the heavens and be perfectly fine without us. God could turn inward and only care about what concerns God...but God chose to be concerned with us. God practices humility with us in everything; God calls us to humility.

That paradox flips everything upside down:

- Am I making enough money? → Am I giving enough? Because God gave to me.

- They need to apologize to me! → I forgive them no matter what. Because God forgave me.
- They owe me what I deserve. → Am I giving others what they deserve? Because God gives me what I never earned.
- I'm better than them. → I'm a servant to all. Because Christ was a servant to all.

Let's turn our metaphorical cameras out to the world. Let's practice it, follow Christ's example, and be humble in everything. Practice it. Remind yourself. Read about Christ's example and then live it out. Focusing inward is life stealing, but turning our eyes, hearts, minds, hands and feet outward is life giving.