

St Paul's Sept 2026

Exodus 17:1-7. Phil 2:1-13

Humility and Christ's attitude

I am going to speak from Philippians on humility and also what it tells us about Christ, as it is a key passage on understanding him a little more.

Humility is a **big theme** in Christianity. It comes up at **Christmas**, with Jesus being born in a stable and at Easter, when he rides into Jerusalem on a **donkey** and on **Maundy Thursday** washes the disciples feet. It is a theme Jesus often spoke on. When the disciples argued about who was the greatest, he said to become like little children, and another time he said *"the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many"*.

Philippians says this was his mindset, **his attitude**, one of humility, and it says we should **have the same mindset or attitude**. *"Let this mind be in you, that was in Christ Jesus". "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."*

It is **not thinking you are above others**, but valuing others above yourselves. It is not first of all promoting yourself and your own interests, but **looking to the interests of others**.

It is from the word **humus**, which means ground. Grounded. Not all high about ourselves.

It's an **attractive attitude**. **We don't like it when** people are obviously just trying to advance themselves. There's a **teacher** in Rachel's school who seems to do that, and we sometimes go "oh, she does that", before we check ourselves. While she has a **new headteacher**, who seems really down to earth and normal, and seems to be interested in everyone, and it's really nice.

It is an attitude we are exhorted to try to have. And as we walk with **Christ, and learn from him**, we will increasingly have this attitude. We can still try our best at things, try to be the best we can be. But we don't think we are better than others.

The passage is **also a massive passage on the nature of Christ**. It starts by saying *"who being in very nature God"*. Jesus was and is **God**. He is totally different to us in his nature.

But then it says *"did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself"*. He however **didn't grasp it**. Striving for the position, grasping it, he didn't do. Instead he **emptied himself**. This is really important to understand him. He was God but he emptied himself **of all the God things**, whilst still being God. God is all knowing; he emptied himself of that. God is all powerful; he emptied himself of that. I think many think of Jesus like a superhero, like Superman; being God full of power that he could walk on water and heal. But he said in *John 5:34*: *"truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing."* He had emptied himself and obeyed the Father, and the **Spirit anointed him** to walk on water and heal people in those moments. But he couldn't do them of his own accord, because although he was God he had emptied himself.

It goes on *"but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross"*. He became a human being, then humbled himself to the very bottom, to serve us and obey the Father, to death on a cross. His mind is best described as one of humility.

But as he humbled himself and trusted himself fully to the Father, the Father did then raise him up and give him the name above all names.

So that's where he is again, God in his rightful place of glory. And Jesus once said *"when you see me, you see the Father"*. God's attitude is one of humility. Let us try to have the same mind in us.

Nicholas Burton
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