

## Message 29 October 2017

### Introduction

I want to start by asking a question. What is your general temperament? How would other people describe you in a few sentences? Might they say; “he’s a nice person but a bit cranky at times”; or she’s lovely but she’s a bit of a ‘worry wart’, or maybe a bit of a nervous person lacking in confidence.

Now some people might ask, “How can that be?” That person’s a Christian now so surely they have got it all together. Isn’t that what happens when you get saved, become a Christian, or as some say born-again. Surely you instantly change and become a wonderful, loving, kind, gentle and humble person who is wonderful example of what a person should be.

Well I afraid as we all know; it’s not that simple. When we are saved by applying Jesus’ work on the cross our future changes, our status changes, because we come into the family of God as adopted sons and daughters; but we still have stuff to deal with.

Because you see our personality doesn’t change; we are still a product of our genetics and our upbringing. Our past woundings are still with us. There is still work to do to become more like Jesus even after we are born again.

One our readings today really surprised me when I dwelt on it.

Matthew 11:28-29 (This is Jesus speaking)

*28 Come to me, all of you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.*

I find it remarkable, that Jesus, the King of Glory, the Prince of Peace; the very Son of God describes himself as ‘gentle and humble in heart’! How can God himself be humble? He’s the Creator, the Lord of all! Well you see this is an example of God’s ways being so much higher than ours. Being humble is very important if we want to be God-like.

And I'm going to suggest that lacking in humility is a major obstacle to spiritual growth and health. You see if I am not humble I'm very likely to conclude; I'm ok, and there is nothing I need to change about me.

I remember as a fairly new Christian my Pastor suggesting I might like to go on a Marriage course that the church was involved in. Me; go on a marriage course! I'm sure I laughed because I thought how ridiculous and how unnecessary it was for me a Deacon in the church at the time, to go on a marriage course. That was because I was a great husband and there was nothing in our marriage that needed attention.

I don't think my wife Pauline necessarily shared the same view. Any way to help with numbers I agreed to go on the marriage course. And you know it was of the best decisions I have ever made.

As part of the course we had to write letters to each other communicating some of the areas that needed to change. That marriage course was a watershed time in our relationship.

I found out for the first time, our relationship had serious issues because I had serious issues. But the most significant thing God revealed to me, was how much my wife Pauline truly loved me and how much she was having to bear.

That course changed our lives forever and I can say with all due humility we now have a truly wonderful relationship. All because I relented and had enough humility, likely only a very tiny bit, to subject myself to the wisdom of God through that Christian marriage course.

But you see when we lack humility one of the problems is that we can't see what we don't think we need to look at. I repeat; when we lack humility one of the problems is that we can't see what we don't think we need to look at.

But Jesus is saying to us, that humility and gentleness is a Christ-like characteristic. He's saying that he is humble and gentle and we are to become like him. He even says in that scripture that we are to take his yoke upon us and learn from him.

*Verse 29 Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart...*

Take a yoke upon me! A yoke? Isn't that's what cattle have? When cattle were used in physical labour, they were yoked together with a big wooden board and that made them completely subjected to the farmer. They were directed where to go and what to do. They had no free will to do what they wanted to do; they had to do what the farmer required, which generally was ploughing a field.

So Jesus is saying to us; "take my yoke upon you and learn from me". He's saying we are to humble ourselves, give up our free will, be subject to him (taking his yoke upon us) and learn from him. We are to be students of the great Master learning from him and not just intellectual knowledge but doing what he teaches us.

And this is not learning so we will obtain the glory of gaining recognition for being quite clever, like when you graduate from University. This is learning to be humble and gentle and loving; so we can love and serve better than what we are doing at present.

And I'm suggesting that we must first accept this lesson of humility to make any real progress in our walk with God. Even to become a Christian takes a step of humility. You have to accept there is a higher being than yourself.

Many people can't do even that. They can't accept that there is a God. But God himself says that they are without excuse because the creation itself bears witness to his existence.

*Romans 1:20 For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities – his eternal power and divine nature – have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.*

But many people can't accept there is a God because that would make them lower than him and they just can't accept that. So they fail the first test of humility and therefore never find salvation and eternity with God. What a tragedy.

But if you have found God and I hope and pray that everyone here has; then God is calling us to follow Jesus. To live humbly and gently ever listening to him, ever learning from him, because we are close enough to do so; we are yoked to him.

## Working on ourselves

One of the best ways we can follow God, is to pray and ask him, 'what needs to change in me?' What attitude do I need to change? What actions do I need to repent of? Whom should I forgive, for love and obedience to God's sake?

Sometimes we can simply ask ourselves, how did I go today? Was I loving? What was my attitude like to authority today? Was I forgiving? Was I gentle? It's a great thing to have the humility to seek to be self-aware of our own attitudes and behaviour.

If you are really serious about being closer to God and growing to be more like him you might even ask others how you are going. Dare you ask a friend or your spouse if there is anything you need to work on to be a better person? Wow; what a scary thought; but the revelation from them might just significantly change your life for the better!

Now it's great to find out what needs to be worked on in our lives but sometimes we find ourselves stuck with that attitude, stuck with that behaviour and our self-will isn't enough to change. That's where Pauline and I have found the Elijah House Prayer ministry has been so helpful.

It addresses issues such as;

Honouring your Father and Mother; and helps with issues that we have because we have conscious or even subconscious issues relating to our upbringing.

Other topics addressed are; Basic Trust, being Performance Orientated, Lack of Forgiveness, Repentance and Restitution, Parental Inversion, Hearts of Stone, Bitter Roots including Bitter Root Judgement. And those are just in Part A of the course that the Elijah House Prayer Ministry deals with.

But in order to receive healing and growth from such a ministry we have to be humble enough to accept, that perhaps I'm not as spiritually healthy as I think I am. Perhaps I have things I need to learn about myself, perhaps there are things in me that need to change, that need to be healed.

Do you have the humility to accept you need to change in some parts of you?

Now I'm not just going to leave you there. But instead I want to invite you to a seminar on the 9<sup>th</sup> November; at our church in Malvern street. There are going to be a number of different speakers who have been involved in the Elijah House prayer ministry for years and they are going to help us see how we can learn and change.

Flyers are available on the table at the entrance.

Here's a test you might like to consider, as to how well you are doing on humility;

### One

What do you do when someone wrongs you (in your opinion)? Do you get angry fairly immediately? If you do that's the opposite of humility – that's pride. Have they hurt your pride? Does the god of yourself rise up in anger with a raised voice – or does a criticism of that person come quickly to mind. "What would she know she just an idiot!

Or if someone wrongs you do you just remain calm and dare I say 'roll with punch'. Maybe there's an element of truth in their criticism, maybe there something from their criticism I can learn even if it was a bit harsh – that's humility.

### Two

When was the last time you reflected on the words or behaviour of someone towards you and just decided to forgive them? Particularly good if you don't try to justify their actions; ah they were drunk, or he's a bit of an idiot anyway!

We don't want to forgive from a place of supposed superiority, (that's pride). We choose to forgive them because it's the right and loving thing to do. That's humility! We can even try to understand that everyone struggles a bit in life and none of us get things right all the time.

### Three

How often do you ask God for help in your everyday life? If you don't ask for God's help on a regular basis, it might just be an indication you are lacking humility. You might have an independent attitude that, "I've pretty much got it

all together and only very, very occasionally, say in a crisis I might call out for God's help". Actually I'm going to suggest we need God's help every day. If you have a really good prayer life you can ask God for help on a regular basis.

Actually our prayer life or lack thereof might just be a good indication as to how independent we are and therefore how much humility we do have or don't have. And remember we can ask for God's help at any time it doesn't have to be in our quiet time.

So I'm going to finish there, with reminder of the Elijah House Prayer ministry and training seminar coming up soon. So please grab a brochure.

And remember; what the Lord requires of each of us;

*1 Pe 5:5... All of you clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.*

Amen