

God & The Servant

March 17, 2013

The Greatest Humility

Isaiah 50:4-9

How do you feel when you have to do something you don't want to do?

- Maybe it's hard, or will take a long time, or a great deal of effort, or a great deal of time or money...?
- Does it change your attitude if it results in something beneficial? Beneficial for who? You? Your family? Your friends? Strangers? Enemies?

Today we get to Isaiah 50 where we see a quality in the servant we often neglect

We talk sometimes at great length of Jesus' power to save, ability to save... the courage with which he carried out his assignment, the quiet strength with which he endured the cross... but this morning, through the text of Isaiah 50 I want us to see that

BIG IDEA:

The servant demonstrates the greatest humility by his willingness to save.

The Lord GOD has given me
the tongue of those who are taught,
that I may know how to sustain with a word
him who is weary.
Morning by morning he awakens;
he awakens my ear
to hear as those who are taught.
⁵ The Lord GOD has opened my ear,
and I was not rebellious;
I turned not backward.
⁶ I gave my back to those who strike,
and my cheeks to those who pull out the beard;
I hid not my face
from disgrace and spitting.

⁷ But the Lord GOD helps me;
therefore I have not been disgraced;
therefore I have set my face like a flint,
and I know that I shall not be put to shame.
⁸ He who vindicates me is near.
Who will contend with me?
Let us stand up together.
Who is my adversary?
Let him come near to me.
⁹ Behold, the Lord GOD helps me;
who will declare me guilty?
Behold, all of them will wear out like a garment;
the moth will eat them up.

The humility of the servant was world altering.

- In antiquity humility was not considered a virtue... in fact the word commonly meant "debased" or "crushed"
- Aristotle: "the love of honor and high reputation are the most pleasant things one can contemplate or attain for oneself."
- The Romans distinguished between *modestia* and *humilitas*. The former was a dignified restraint, the latter a shameful lowering
- Ancient Israel is of the only known places where a God whom the people served took special interest in the lowly... and the world mocked it.
- But the cross changed everything... when the greatest man who ever lived humbled himself to the most humiliating form of public execution that existed... the world slowly began to change its mind about the what humility was.
- Jesus foreshadows the paradigm shift: (Radically redefines what Greatness is)
- ³⁵ And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came up to him and said to him, "Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you." ³⁶ And he said to them, "What do you want me to do for you?" ³⁷ And they said to him, "Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory." ³⁸ Jesus said to them, "You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with

which I am baptized?”³⁹ And they said to him, “We are able.” And Jesus said to them, “The cup that I drink you will drink, and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized,⁴⁰ but to sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared.”⁴¹ And when the ten heard it, they began to be indignant at James and John.⁴² And Jesus called them to him and said to them, “You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them.⁴³ But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant,^[d]⁴⁴ and whoever would be first among you must be slave^[e] of all.⁴⁵ For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

Jesus’ willingness to save demonstrates his humility because...

1. He was willing to condescend.

Philippians 2:3-11

Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.⁴ Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.⁵ Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus,⁶ who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped,⁷ but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.⁸ And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.⁹ Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name,¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

- Think of the enthusiasm and hope we hold out for heaven... what we will experience, how wonderful it will be etc.
- How often do we reflect on how difficult it could have been to leave for roughly 33 years to experience life as a human?
- We appreciate that he did it, and why he did it... but think about the things you find difficult...
- Relationships – for a long time his brothers didn’t believe he was the messiah
- Work – He was a carpenter for probably 15 or so years... (ever struggled with feeling under-used, over qualified and like you are doing something beneath you?)
- Sorrow - friend Lazerus died, cousin John was beheaded.
- Finances – Jesus spent his ministry years relying on others for food and shelter...

2. He was willing to learn obedience through suffering.

Hebrews 5:8-9

Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered.⁸ And being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him

- It is amazing, in my life... how much easier obedience is when suffering isn’t involved... but we see something particularly amazing about the humility of Jesus.
- His obedience to the father was made perfect by being forged in the fires of suffering.
- Authentic obedience then, perfect obedience, is obedience amidst suffering... how many of us throw up our hands to God at the first sign of “things not going our way..”?

3. He was willing to die for his enemies.

Romans 5

For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.⁷ For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die—⁸ but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

- All the power of God wrapped in a mortal body, willingly given to the hands of sinners to be broken on our behalf... there is no greater act of humility.
- ⁶I gave my back to those who strike,
and my cheeks to those who pull out the beard;
I hid not my face
from disgrace and spitting.
- Think about that... Col 1 tells us that Christ SUSTAINS ALL THINGS... that means the Roman officials and the whips they used and the nails themselves were consciously held together by the sustaining power of Christ while they were used to murder Jesus.

Closing Question

Does your life reflect, at all, this kind of humility?

- I have 3 ideas how we could start cultivating humility:
 1. Ask someone to help you
 2. Actually talk about Christ with someone you “haven’t had an opportunity” with.
 3. Consider joining Christianity Explored.