

## Philippians 2:5-11

Have you ever felt **swamped** with troubles - as if you were at the bottom of mountains and mountains of **problems** - as if you were deep in a **well** or **mine shaft** with no way out - as if you were “up a creek without a paddle?” These are the kinds of circumstances which may lead us to something as serious as a nervous **breakdown**. Or at the very least, they can leave us with a **bad attitude**. I hear a lot about bad attitudes, and I’m sure **you** do too. No one is **exempt** from a bad attitude either - not children, or parents, or pastors, or teachers - not **anyone**.

With all those bad attitudes floating around in the world, what do you think **causes** them? Hard times? Problems? Being picked on? How about being deserted by everybody? Or just plain living in a sinful world? Actually, **none** of these things can **cause** a bad attitude, unless you **let** it happen. We are to be in **control** of our own attitudes, and God encourages us to **take** control of those attitudes by following a perfect, positive example - the example of our Savior, Jesus. God wants us to **Imitate Christ’s Attitude**.

People do a **lot** of imitating in this life. We pick up and imitate attitudes - both positive and negative - rather **easily**. And **children** are perhaps the **best** imitators of all. If you want to know how **you** sound to other people - just listen to your **children**. Perhaps you didn’t realize it, but if you have children, your home is **bugged**. There are typically two **microphones** found in every child - one in each **ear**. These highly sensitive instruments pick up **everything** - table prayers, ordinary conversations, and incidental remarks; as well as a wide variety of words, phrases, and off-hand comments. These all-absorbing microphones then transmit all they **hear** to the highly impressionable **minds** of our children. This information then becomes the **vocabulary** of the child; and it forms the basis for that child’s values, priorities, actions, and reactions.

Some psychologists say that a child’s values and standards are well established before he or she even enters **school**. That thought illustrates the importance of following through on the advice which Solomon expressed to the people of **his** day, “*Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.*” Parents, **train** your children by setting examples for them which God would be **pleased** to have them imitate. Your influence upon those children is **immeasurable**! Raising children is a **tremendous** responsibility - and knowing how **sinful** we are, makes it quite **frightening** as well. It is frightening

because our children **can** and **do** pick up our **bad** attitudes, perhaps even **easier** than they pick up our **good** ones.

And so, it is extremely important for us to be **aware** of our bad attitudes, and to **deal** with them. God tells us that there are essentially two conditions which will inevitably bring about a bad attitude. They are **selfishness** and **pride**. And in our text today, He shows us that **both** of them can be **overcome** by us, because they **have** been overcome by **Jesus**. Let's see first of all how Jesus dealt with **selfishness**. We read, "*Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: who, being in very nature **God**, did not consider **equality** with God something to be **grasped**, but made Himself **nothing**, taking the very nature of a **servant**, being made in **human** likeness.*" This makes it very clear that Jesus was **not** selfish. Although He is true **God**, He did not selfishly choose to hang on **only** to His **Godhead**, which He rightfully **could** have done. Instead, Jesus selflessly **gave up** three tremendous personal possessions - His **power**, His **glory**, and His **riches**. Jesus is the **almighty** Son of God, but He **gave up** His power saying, "*I tell you the truth, the Son can do **nothing** by Himself. He can do only what He sees His **Father** doing.*" Jesus is the **all-glorious** Son of God, but He **gave up** His eternal glory, allowing Himself to be sent to the earth, and to live here without any great fanfare. And Jesus is **rich** far beyond any earthly standard, yet Paul tells us that He gave **that** up too. "*Though He was **rich**, yet for **your** sakes He became **poor**.*"

Did you ever stop to realize just **how** poor Jesus allowed Himself to become? He didn't have a **house** to call His own, He got His temple **tax** out of the mouth of a **fish**, and on several occasions He **borrowed** a **boat** from which to preach. **Now**, on Palm Sunday, we hear how Jesus borrowed a **donkey** to ride into Jerusalem. He also borrowed a **room** to use for celebrating the Passover with His disciples. But far more important than **all** of that, Jesus made Himself **poor** by taking upon Himself **our debt** - a debt of **sin** which we could **never** repay. But then again, Jesus doesn't **ask** us to repay Him either.

All of these things exemplify a totally **selfless** attitude on the part of Jesus. This is the **same** attitude which God would have us **imitate**, just as the Apostle Paul attempted to do in **his** life. Paul could easily have adopted a **selfish** attitude. At the time that he wrote this letter to the Philippians, Paul had been separated from his friends, placed in chains in prison, and to top it all off there were people running around town and preaching out of **false** motives. If Paul had been **selfish** he might have said, "God, why are you **doing** this to me? Haven't I been Your

faithful **servant**? Haven't I been working **hard** to bring people to You? Why don't You let me **out** of here, so I can get **rid** of these false prophets?" But instead of worrying about **himself** and all the problems **he** was having, Paul reminded himself, and the Philippians, and **us**; *"Do nothing out of **selfish** ambition or vain conceit, but in **humility** consider others **better** than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your **own** interests, but also to the interests of **others**. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus."* In other words, **Imitate Christ's Attitude**.

Jesus "*made Himself **nothing***" by taking something **on** Himself - the nature of a **servant**. And that brings us to the **second** cause for a bad attitude - our **pride**. Often it seems that we are too **proud** to be servants. We want to **be served** by others. We want God to do good things **for us**. We want Him to make us **happy** and keep us **healthy**, while we **sit back** and take it all in. But Jesus does **not** behave that way. He is our **perfect** example of **humility**. Jesus humbled Himself by becoming a human being. Yet, He wasn't just **any** human being; He was a **servant** of God. And even more, while He was a servant of **God**, He was also a servant of **men** - a servant who was **so** humble that He was not too proud even to wash the **feet** of His disciples, and to be put to **death** by a painful, shameful, and accursed crucifixion. This also is the attitude which God would have us **imitate**.

When we **Imitate Christ's Attitude**, we are showing Jesus that we **love** Him. And we all know that actions speak **louder** than words. As we celebrate Palm Sunday today, we hear the **words** of the crowds, proclaiming Jesus to be the **Messiah**, the Son of David. We hear their **hosannas**, and it is truly a **joyous** occasion. But **what happened** to those crowds in less than a week's time? Where did they **disappear** to? Were some of them to be found amid the **mob** who came to **arrest** Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane? Were some of them in **Pilate's** courtyard, crying out for Jesus' **crucifixion**?

We need not belabor the fact that their **actions** didn't back up their **words**. However, what we **do** need to consider is, **do ours**? Will our actions come up **short** of our words? Will our hosannas and alleluias **fade away**, and become **lost** in the weeks **after** Palm Sunday and Easter? The answer is, of **course** they will - but **not always**. As God's children who **love** Him, we will strive to **Imitate Christ's Attitude**, and live our lives **selflessly** and **humbly**. And even though we aren't **perfect**, as our **Savior** is perfect, yet God is **pleased** with our efforts - and He **shows** us His good pleasure by making His face **shine** on us. God certainly

made His face shine on **Jesus**, for we hear that, “*God **exalted** Him to the highest place, and gave Him the name that is **above** every name, that at the name of Jesus **every knee** should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and **every tongue** confess that Jesus Christ is **Lord**, to the glory of God the Father.*”

That sounds pretty **exciting**, doesn't it? Obedience brings **blessings** whether they come here on earth through your parents, or teachers, or employers, or government; or whether they are blessings which can **only** come from our heavenly **Father**. It's up to **us** to decide what our **attitude** is going to be. If **your** attitude has not been a **good** one, it's not my purpose to make you feel **guilty** about it. Instead, I would ask you to take some time with God and His Word, and to realize the tremendous **blessings** which the LORD is offering to **all** those who love and serve Him. **Imitate Christ's Attitude** - and receive His **blessings** with **joy**. Amen.