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So there's a guy named Herschel York that has spent the last 40 years studying churches. And you would think that they would all be different, right? Because every pastor is different, every congregation is different, every community is different. But he says that you can predict with astonishing accuracy when turmoil and trouble will appear in a church. And the first pressure point that they can point to comes about a year after a new pastor arrives.

See, because when a new guy gets there, there's a honeymoon period. Everybody is excited for the future, everybody is on their best behavior. But over time, people get to know the pastor and not everybody likes him. Right? That happens with every pastor in every church, because there are personalities that just don't meld together.

And when that comes to a head, people leave. Either the pastor goes, or the people that don't like him go. And then the next issue hits at about the three year mark. That's about the time when change is taking place. And people hate change.

They love the idea of change, but they don't actually want to be involved in it. And so when that happens, you get a group of people that don't like the decisions that are being made or don't like the direction the church is going. They want things to stay the same. And when that happens, they. They become dissatisfied and that wreaks havoc on the church.

There tends to be grumbling and complaining. They often try to get rid of the pastor, and if that doesn't work, they leave. And what's really interesting about this is that most pastors aren't aware of this structure, of these problems that come. And every time it happens, it's really difficult and painful and it hurts. And they usually decide the second time they don't want to put their family through it again.

And so they decide it's time to move and they begin to look for a new church. And that takes about a year. And in the United States, the average tenure of a pastor is four years. And of course, when they get to their next church, they have those exact same issues waiting for them at 1 years and 3 years. And the real tragedy of this is that pastors don't become truly effective until about their seventh year in.

I actually have a clock hanging up in my office that is counting down to seven years to remind me of that truth. What it does, it keeps my eye on the big picture. Instead of focusing on difficult days or the problems that come, we're 468 days in, it's 2088 to go. The next problem shows up at about the five year, Mark. See, every church has people coming and people going.

And so I think of it like two baskets. One is filled with berries. And when a pastor arrives at a church, you know, that's the first basket filled with berries. When someone dies or someone leaves, you take berries out of that basket. The other basket starts out empty.

And when somebody new comes, you add a berry to it. But eventually the day comes when there's more berries in the second basket than they were in the first basket. And when that happens, longtime members look around and they realize that the church isn't the same as it used to be, that there's new voices and new opinions and new things happening, and there tends to be a bit of a power struggle. And listen, pastors aren't immune to any of this because they have their own opinions, their own preferences, their own ideas and how things should be done. And we can be just as stubborn as anybody else.

I mean, not me, but Pastor Kevin, right? The idea here is that these points of friction are incredibly predictable. And on the surface, all these issues seem completely unrelated. The first year's personalities. The third year is about change.

The fifth year is about influence. But if you look underneath, they're all born out of the same soil. You see, every one of us has this natural tendency to believe that the things that matter to us should matter just as much to everybody else, right? We think that our preferences are obviously the best ones. And when you have a whole bunch of people and they all have different ideas, they're naturally going to start colliding.

People start pulling in different directions, and it leads to division. Division is the most common issue that churches face. We've all heard the stories of churches splitting over the color of carpet, over what the pastor wears, or all kinds of crazy things like that. And those aren't the real issues. Those are just the straw that breaks the camel's back.

And this isn't a new problem. It has plagued the church from the very beginning. We can see it all over the New Testament. The church in Corinth argued over who they should follow. In First Corinthians, 3 says, for while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of flesh and behaving only a human way?

For when one says, I follow Paul and another, I follow Apollos, are you not merely being human? The church in Rome argued about what they ate and what day they should gather. In Galatians 5:15, they were warned, but if you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another. James 4:1 says, what causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not that this is your.

That your passions are at war within you? I want you to think how crazy this is. These New Testament churches were founded by the apostles themselves. They saw and experienced all kinds of miraculous things, and yet those churches were constantly struggling with disunity. And what makes this even more astonishing is that this was one of the very things that Jesus prayed about the night before he went to the cross.

In John 17, Jesus is praying, and he said, I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they may also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. See, Jesus knew this was coming. He knew that churches would struggle with division. And Philippi was no different. And neither are we right.

This isn't some theoretical problem that happened 2,000 years ago. And it isn't just a problem for struggling churches. When you read Paul's letters to these different churches, you see some of them that are all kinds of jacked up, and the letter they get is dealing with all kinds of crazy problems. But that isn't what's going on in Philippi. This church was healthy.

They were one of the best churches that we're aware of in this time. But even in a good church, we find disunity beginning to bubble towards the surface. And if we aren't careful, the same thing could happen right here at Newt Ridge. There is nothing about us that makes us immune to this issue. I mean, every church everywhere wants unity.

Nobody has ever said, man, I sure hope our church ends up fighting with each other. It's not once, and yet it happens all the time. It was common in the New Testament, and it's common today. You know, there are people here at Newt Ridge that first started coming here more than 20 years ago, because the church that they were part of went through this. They watched people who had worshiped together for years turn on each other.

And it got so bad that eventually the church was torn in two. Just down the hill from us is a church that split just a handful of years ago, with one group believing and forming another church. And they both struggled. And the question is, how do we guard ourselves against that? How do we keep the same thing from happening here?

And so take a look. Starting in verse one of chapter two, it says, so if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the spirit, any affection in sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full cord and of one mind. So Paul is very clear about what he wants the Church of Philippi to look like. He wants them to be of one mind, to love one another, to be in accord.

And you put all those together and it's easy to see that his goal is a unified church. But it raises an obvious question. How do you get a whole church filled with different people to be of one mind? And obviously that doesn't mean that everybody should have the same opinion, right? That is never going to happen.

I think we even have a Yankees fan here, right? And it shouldn't be our goal for everybody to be the same. So what does it mean? And he answers the question. The next two verses, starting verse three, he says, do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility, count others more significant than yourselves.

Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Now, what you should recognize here is that the goal isn't to eliminate all differences. Instead, Paul tells them how to think in the middle of those differences. He says, do nothing out of selfish ambition or conceit. That is where division begins.

When people begin to make themselves the most important person in the room. It's my opinions, my ways, my preferences. And Paul is saying that the answer is, is humility.

Count others as more significant. Look out for the interest of others, right? And all those things, they sound really, really good. In theory. We can look at the outside, at others and tell them that's how they should think, that's how they should act.

But it's something else entirely when it's happening to you. So think about something that really divides people. It's politics, right? It doesn't matter whether you like donkeys or elephants. It doesn't matter where you sit on the spectrum.

There are positions on the other side that you can't even begin to comprehend how anybody could think that was good. I mean, their position just seems completely and utterly foolish to you. But. But here's the thing. The people on the other side are looking at you and, and thinking the exact same thing.

Now, put those two people in the same church and what happens? Paul doesn't say they need to change their opinions before they can be unified. He says that they both need to change the way they think about each other. It would be so much easier if this said we just needed to behave differently. But it says we need to think differently, differently somehow.

We need to learn how to look at someone and say, man, I think you're wrong. I think that what you want to do is the wrong thing. I think there's a way better way and at the same time consider that person more significant than ourselves to put their interests ahead of our own. And I don't mean just giving up your convictions or rolling over, letting them have their way. That isn't what this is calling us towards.

So how do you hold those two things together? How do you disagree with somebody at your very core, right? Even strongly disagree, and still put them ahead of yourself? And Paul gives the answer in verse 5. He says, have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus.

You see, the key to unity is not found by looking across the aisle or focusing on the other person. It is found by looking at our Savior. Paul doesn't tell us to just try harder to be humble. He doesn't give us like five simple steps for getting along with difficult people. He says that we're focusing on the wrong thing.

He wants us to stop focusing on ourselves and start focusing on Jesus. And we aren't just talking about the cross here. He brings us back before Bethlehem. In verse six, he continues, he says, talking about Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped. Now, what does it mean that Jesus was in the form of God?

And it's easy to misunderstand this because we sometimes use the word form to mean that something looks like one thing even though it isn't. And that isn't what's going on here. The best way to get what this is saying is to notice that he uses the exact same word in the next verse. So here it says Jesus was in the form of God. Then in verse seven, it says he took the form of a servant.

Jesus didn't merely look like a servant, he became one. Jesus didn't merely look like God. He was God. You see, Jesus did not begin to exist when he was born in Bethlehem. That's when he became a man.

But the Son of God has always existed. John 1, 1 says, in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. And notice how carefully John says that, because the wording is very intentional. See, John wants you to be thinking about Genesis here. In fact, John 1 is very much a commentary on Genesis 1.

And it says when the beginning began, Jesus was already there. And if you keep reading in verse three, it says all things were made through him, and without him was not anything made. That was made. Jesus is the member of the Godhead through whom creation was accomplished. And I want to unpack that a bit.

You see, I think most pastors make a mistake when they're talking about the Trinity. They spend all their time telling people how mysterious it is, and they never get around to explaining what the Bible actually tells us about the triune God. You know, the Trinity comes up and they just say, okay, well, you can't comprehend it. But I don't think the Trinity is just some mystery that we talk about in vague terms. I think that we can know and understand the triune nature of God.

And just one tiny little portion of that is. Is relevant to our discussion this morning. We need to understand that the three persons of the Godhead, so God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit, they never act independently of each other because they are one God. And theologians have a term for that. They call it the inseparable operations of the Trinity.

But that doesn't mean that the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are interchangeable. Scripture clearly distinguishes between them. And what that means is that some of the works of God find their completion in one person of the Trinity. But all members of the Godhead are working on it. So as an example, Jesus was the member of the Godhead who died on the cross.

It would not be right to say that God the Father died on the cross or the Holy Spirit died on the cross. It was the Son. But even there, all members of the Godhead were at work. Take a look at Hebrews 9:14. He says, how much more were the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit, offered Himself without blemish to God, Purify our conscience from the dead works to serve the living God.

So right there in a single sentence, you have the Son of offering himself through the Spirit to the Father. All members of the Godhead are always at work. That was true on the cross, and it is true of creation. Creation proceeds from the purpose and the will of the Father. And the Holy Spirit gives life and fullness to creation.

But it was the Son who brought it about. When you think about God creating the heavens and the earth, you should be thinking primarily about Jesus. Think back to Genesis. How did creation happen? God spoke.

You read through the first few chapters of Genesis. You'll see it over and over and over again. Genesis 1:3, God said, Let there be light. In 1:9, God said, the waters under heaven be gathered together. In verse 26, God said, Let us make man in our image over and over and over again.

10 times during the creation account, God said, but you shouldn't think of that like just a voice booming out of the nothingness. I mean. I mean, think about it. There was nothing before creation. There was no atmosphere to carry sound waves.

There was no one to hear anything. So what does it mean when it says God spoke? It means that God created through His Word. And John helps us to understand what that means. It wasn't merely His Word.

It was the Word, the Eternal Son. It was Jesus. All through Scripture we see that Jesus is the active agent in creation. Colossians 1:16 says, for by him all things were created in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities. All things were created through him and for him.

Hebrews 1 says, but in these last days he has spoken to us by His Son, whom He appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. Every part of creation owes its existence to Jesus. Every mountain, every ocean, every star burning in the far reaches of the universe, every single cell in your body. It all exists because the Son of God brought it into being. And I wish I had enough time to just truly flesh out the majesty of Christ as our Creator.

But that isn't the point of the passage. It isn't the point of the sermon. The reason that we're even delving into it is because you cannot understand the humility of Christ until you understand his glory. You can't understand how far he came down until you understand how high he was. This is the person that God said humbled himself.

He's the eternal Son of God, the Creator of heaven and earth, the One through whom all things were made. He possesses all of the glory and majesty and perfection of God. And yet, and we'll put verse six back up, though he was in the form of God did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped or something to be held onto. Despite its infinite worth as Creator, as God, Jesus deserves to be magnified and praised and celebrated. Revelation 4:11 talks about him.

He says, worthy are you our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power. For you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created. Worthy is the Lamb that is the testimony of heaven, worthy of all glory and all honor and all praise and all worship. Jesus had every right to demand that we celebrate his majesty, but he didn't. Verse 7.

He emptied himself by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men and being found in human form in. He humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on the cross. What I want you to see here is the direction that Jesus moves through this passage. We started that he was in the form of God, equal with God in every way, and then he empties himself by becoming a servant. Now what does that mean, that he emptied himself?

It doesn't mean that he stopped being God. That's impossible. Jesus was always fully God. When he was in Mary's womb, as he lay in the manger, when he walked the dusty roads of Galilee, when He hung on the cross, he was always fully God. He did not empty himself of his deity.

Instead, notice how Paul explains it. He emptied himself by taking the form of a servant. See, when God becomes man, he does not become less than he was. No, he took something on Himself, which is humanity. John 1:14 puts it says, in the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.

See, the Creator entered his creation, and he did not merely subject Himself to to the limitations of human existence. He took the form of a servant. The one who had every right to rule, came to serve. And throughout his earthly ministry, he willingly submitted to God the Father. John 6:38 says, For I have come down from heaven not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me.

And don't misunderstand that Jesus was not powerless. He was not less than God when he walked the earth, but he humbled himself. He emptied himself, and he lived in perfect obedience. And it didn't just end as a servant. He humbled himself to the point of death on a cross.

Nobody did that to Jesus. Nobody took his glory away. Nobody. Nobody overpowered him. He did it.

He humbled himself. That's what Jesus said. John 10. He says, no one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again.

This charge I have received from my Father. Jesus chose this. And even as they crucified him, he never stopped being the God that we saw in verse 6. The Bible is clear. We read a bunch of verses earlier.

All things were created by Jesus and all things held together by Him. That was still true at Calvary. Think about what that means. As the soldiers drove nails through his hands and feet, the atom in those nails continued to exist on only because he was at work to hold them together. The hearts of the men mocking him continued beating because he sustained their lives.

The lungs of the men who cried out, crucify him filled with breath because the one they cursed was holding them together. Creation was crucifying its Creator, and the Creator continued to sustain the the creation that sought to end him. He could have stopped it at any moment, but he didn't. He was stripped naked, he was beaten, he was tortured, he was nailed to a cross. And none of it happened because that's what the men wanted to do.

Jesus chose this. Matthew 26:53 says, do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father and He will at once send me more than 12 legions of angels? Jesus humbled himself, and he did it for you. He did it so that he could pay the price for your sins. He did it so that you could place your faith in him and be part of his family.

He did it for you. And remember why Paul is telling us this. Back to verse 5. Have this mind among yourself. See, this isn't some academic theology for us to admire.

This is the mind that is supposed to characterize the church. This is the means by which we can be truly unified. See, when we see how Christ humbled himself for the church, that shows us what it looks like to humble ourselves. That's the point. Paul wants us to look at our Savior until all those things that we tend to fight about look pitifully small and petty in comparison.

Jesus laid aside privileges that actually belong to him. Most of the things that churches divide over are things that we merely throw think belong to us. It's my preference, my opinion, my recognition, my way. What would happen to division in a church if we really had the mind of Christ? And what happens when two people disagree and both of them are more concerned about serving the other than they are about getting their own way?

What happens when nobody has to win or be recognized or to have their own way? There's nothing left for division to feed on. Jesus went from the highest place imaginable to the lowest. But that isn't the end of the story. In verse nine, it says, therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name.

Jesus humbled himself and God exalted him to his rightful place on the throne. And this is the principle here that we see all through Scripture. James 4:10. Humble yourself before the Lord, and He will exalt you first. Peter 5:6.

Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you. In other words, you don't have to spend your life making sure you get yours. You don't need to jockey for position. You don't need to fight for recognition. You don't need to demand your own way.

You can humble yourself and serve others and put others ahead of yourself. And you can trust God with the rest. Because for Christians, humility is never ultimately lost. We don't have to spend our lives clawing our way to the top because we know the eternal destination. The day is coming when we will be with Christ in glory.

And that frees us up to stop fighting about our own little kingdoms down here. Think about what that means for us, for Newt Ridge. Think about what God could accomplish through this little church on the Ridge if we actually live this way. Instead of us all pulling towards our own preferences, we all begin to pull in one direction. One people, one mind, one purpose.

And our purpose as a church is clear. It is to make much of God's name. Because God has not put this church here merely to give us a place where we can be comfortable. He has put us in the middle of a community that desperately needs the gospel. We live in one of the least church-ed places in the entire country.

There are people all around us who don't know Jesus. And we have the privilege of heralding the greatest truth in the history of the world. And we know what comes next. Verse 10. So 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.

This is where all of history is headed. Every knee will bow before its maker. Every tongue will confess that Jesus is Lord. Every person that has ever lived, every king who has ever ruled, every person that has mocked his name, every person that has denied that he exists, every, every single one of them will bow. The only question is when you can bow before him now as your Savior, or you can bow before him then as your judge.

But you will bow. There is no third option. Jesus Christ is Lord. That is a truth that we know and is a truth that others need. We're surrounded by people who don't know what we know.

And God has put us here to tell them. That is why our unity matters so much. We have something so much bigger to do than fight with each other. And that is worth humbling ourselves for. That is worth laying aside our preferences for.

That is worth putting the interest of others ahead of our own for. Because it's never been about us, it's always about Him. So let's humble ourselves, let's have the mind of Christ and work together to make much of the name above all names. Have you please stand for our closing hymn. It's number 43 in the hymnal.

It's All Hail the Power of Jesus Name.