

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

"You better change your attitude, mister / missy!" How many of you have said that to your kids... or heard someone else say it to theirs? If we say that to our children, can you imagine that maybe God says it to his children, you and me? Why is attitude so important? Think about it. Why does it even matter? As long as we ultimately do or say the right thing, who cares what the attitude is? Parents, you do. And God does too. Suppose you tell your son or daughter to empty the dishwasher. They grumble and complain, and slam cabinets and rattle dishes. Their brow is furrowed the whole time. They're mumbling under their breath the whole time. When they're done, they storm past you and say, "There... the stupid dishwasher is empty!" Is your response? Thank you, honey! Great job!" Or is your reaction more likely to be: "You better change your attitude!"

Now we see more clearly why attitude is important. And it is for God too. In fact, it's more important to God than it is to us. We can sometimes have a negative attitude, but we suppress it inside so no one's the wiser about it. But we can't hide a wrong attitude from God. He sees it every time. And he's not happy about it.

So today, listen, dear Christians, for you God is talking to you and he's telling you: "You better change your attitude!" In particular he's talking about our attitude in our relationships to others.

Attitude, by the way, means your mindset. The way you are thinking. That underlying disposition that influences the way you think and act. That's what God is calling on us to change.

What kind of attitude should you have in your heart when it comes to your relationships with others? Let me just back up a couple verses before our text: "**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.**" (Philippians 2:3, 4 NIV) Consider others more important than yourselves. This is the change in attitude that God is calling on us to make today! Simple, right? Okay, got it, preacher. Let's learn something new.

But not so fast! It's one thing to know it. It's another to do it. It's one thing to do it, but an entirely different thing to have that attitude! And that's the heart of what God is challenging us to ponder today. Not just whether or not we are serving others... but what's in our heart when we're doing it? What is our attitude?

ENTITLEMENT

So what is our mindset... the underlying disposition that shapes our thoughts and actions? As modern Americans, we are in a culture that is all about entitlement. Just because of the fact that you breathe air, you believe that you are entitled to any number of things. You are entitled to "**have it your way**" when you go to Burger King. You feel entitled to **a break today**... in fact, you *deserve a break today* at McDonalds. L'Oreal wants you to buy their products "**because you're worth it.**" The attitude of entitlement says, "I'm worth more than you, so I deserve more than you."

Entitled is an Easter egg hunt where the big kids are getting all the eggs and the little kids can't get them. The big kids have 12 lbs and the little kids hardly any. The parents of the little

kids go to the people that put it on and complain. “We paid. We waited. Our kids are younger and couldn’t move as fast. It’s not fair!” They feel entitled, but the parents of the big kids feel entitled too because they can’t help it if their kids are bigger and faster. They worked harder so they should get the eggs!

After Thanksgiving sale. 1000 people but 22 TV’s. The lucky few who got the 22 feel entitled. They got their first. The rest are mad because they were there and got gipped. They feel entitled too, but didn’t get one.

And this isn’t something new and it’s not just our culture. Jesus’ disciple felt that way. James and John had a private conversation with Jesus, asking special entitlement, special position. They all break out into an argument about who is greatest. And this after Jesus had just said how he would be arrested, beaten, spat upon, mocked and crucified. This goes right past them and they feel entitled. “You’re a king, so I just want to be your number two man, Jesus!” Jesus saw their wrong attitude and said that’s what the kings and rules of this age are like. But they were not to be like that. “Not so with you.” That attitude of “me first” and “I deserve it” and “You owe it to me.” That’s a wrong attitude! It’s a dangerous attitude. It’s an attitude God hates. It’s an attitude that can land you isolated from God in eternity.

Now this attitude of truly humble service is a hard concept to grasp. Paul knew it’s not easy to fully comprehend, so he he gives an example of what this looks like. And to do that, he turns us to the example of the Lord Jesus himself. This is an amazing portion of Scripture that teaches us so much about Jesus. All of our 7-8th grade catechism students have had to memorize these verses. So could I challenge you to do the same? Some of you may never have memorized

So listen to this instruction. Everyone feels entitled. How do you resolve this? Change your actions? No. Adjust your filters? No. Here it is. The message for today. **Change your attitude.** Change it how? What does this look like? Listen carefully: I’m reading from the NIV 2011

5 In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset [attitude] as Christ Jesus: And what mindset or attitude is that? It’s not the mindset of entitlement. It’s not the mindset of “I deserve” and “You owe me” and “I’m worth it.” No, listen to the mindset of Christ:
6 Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; 7 rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.

This past weekend I’m sure most heard about the lottery mania hitting our nation. The jackpot hit a record \$640 million. And I know some of you bought lottery tickets too. And if you did (or even if you didn’t) I bet you thought about how you would spend all that money. “Well, I’d buy a new house / car. I’d help my parents renovate their home. I’d give a really generous gift to Good Shepherd and our building fund.” I know how you think! But as generous as you may have thought you would be, be honest. You still had plans on how to use some of that wealth on yourself, didn’t you?

So I want you to imagine how incredible it is that Jesus was by very nature God, yet he didn’t use that status to his own advantage. Rather he became human and freely gave it up. That means everything on the planet is his. All riches. (The \$640 million jackpot is laughable to Jesus.) All authority. He is the creator. All belongs to him. And he did not use it to his own

advantage. Ever. Remember when Jesus was starving in the wilderness after 40 days without food? Satan said, “Come on! Turn a stone in to a loaf of bread! Who will know?” Jesus refused. He would not make use of even that smallest use of power for his own benefit. Complete humility! Complete selflessness.

Today is Palm Sunday and we see clearly the humility of Jesus. He is king of the universe. As he rides in to his city, Jerusalem, he was entitled to a war horse, chariot, trumpeters, and even a legion of angels shouting “glory to God in the highest.” Let your imagination run wild about the kind of procession Jesus *deserved* that day. But instead the procession consisted of Jesus riding on a lowly donkey. People put a few branches and cloaks down to soften the ride. That’s it? The king of the universe comes to town, and that’s it?! Humility. Total, selfless humility. Jesus didn’t come to earth for his own advantage. Not in the slightest. That’s clear by what follows:

8 And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death— even death on a cross!

Total obedience to the father. Completely selflessness right up to the end. And at the end when he had the choice: go to a cross and die in excruciating pain and in isolation from my heavenly father for the sake of people who are disobedient and rebellious... OR... call in some angel reinforcements and enjoy the riches I’ve had from eternity... Jesus chose you. He valued you more than himself. He had your interests in mind, not your interests.

It goes on:

9 Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, 10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

In humbling himself and placing the needs of others first, Jesus perfectly accomplished the will of the Father in saving mankind. The Father exalted his Son and placed him above all things. In putting the needs of others ahead of his own, Jesus won the biggest victory imaginable for all of us.

Now, what does this all mean? Change your attitude by first of all confessing your wrong attitude. Confess your attitude and mindset of entitlement: valuing yourself above others. Taking care of your own interests over others interests.

Second, take a long look at Jesus’ attitude and mindset. And the first reason is this: Jesus attitude... his mindset in relationship with others... is first of substitutionary. That is, he did what we have been unable to do. It’s important to see his perfect attitude so you can rejoice and appreciate that God credits what Jesus did to you. Through faith in Christ, you are clothed in Christ. That is, Jesus holy and perfect attitude when it came to his relationships with others is wrapped around you. The wrong attitudes you have, when you confess them to almighty God, are forgiven by Jesus. His perfect attitude in obedience to the Father is credited to you. His obedient death on the cross is exactly the payment for sin that you needed. This is what I mean by substitutionary. If you want to have life with the Father now and forever, then you need to have in a perfect measure the mindset of Christ! Through faith in Christ, God assures us that we meet his expectations perfectly. When you have faith in Christ, his mindset and attitude become yours. They are imputed upon you even though you by nature do not have them. They are covered over you so it’s what the Father sees when he looks at you!

The second reason we look long at the attitude of Jesus when it came to his relationships with others. We now have the example and the motivation to have the same attitude and mindset. My Lord Jesus gave up divine majesty, power, glory and riches for me. For you. He was obedient for me. For you. He died on cross for me. For you. Does that mean anything to you? Doesn't it mean everything to you? This is eternity changing truth that means the almighty God loves you and accepts you? What do you have to say to that?! Maybe... thank you? And isn't living your life now in line with the life of Jesus a big thank you to God? Isn't Jesus' life now a great example to us so we can see what a holy, God-pleasing life looks like so we can live to his glory in thankfulness for what he did for us?

So: change your attitude. Make it like Jesus' mindset in his relationships with others. What does that mean? It means you get rid of that feeling of entitlement forever. It means you don't use people and possessions for your own advantage. Instead you use your gifts, your resources, your time to love and serve others to the glory of God. Value others above self. Put their interests ahead of your own.

Again, listen to your God who says: "Change your attitude!"

"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."

I want to challenge you to put this into practice starting immediately. What would it look like if starting right now, you valued your **spouse** above yourself... put your spouse's interests ahead of your own. What if you started now to value your **kids** and their interests above your own? What would it look like if you valued **the people in this church** above yourself and placed their interests above our own? What would it look like if we, Good Shepherd, as a church had a culture and mindset of **valuing those outside our church** above ourselves... and their interests above ours? Can you see how this is a total game changer? How awesome would it be if, when people thought of Good Shepherd, they would say: "Oh yeah, that's the church that values us and places the interests of others ahead of their own." Can you see why God wants us to change our attitude when it comes to our relationships with others?

Friends, remember how Christ valued you above himself and placed your interest before his own. Palm Sunday is a beautiful reminder of that. It's what ultimately led him to the cross. And because of it, your sins are fully and freely forgiven. Now thankfully follow his example in your relationships with others. Change your attitude, people! And watch how God is glorified! Amen.