

Message: From Lofty Throne to Lowly Manger

Sermon Series: Helping Others Follow Jesus

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Luke 2:8-20

The “incarnation” means God became human flesh in the Person of Jesus. I repeat: GOD BECAME HUMAN. This is such a startling truth that I have difficulty comprehending it. This is the same Christ at the center of the worship scene in Revelation 5. I love Eugene Peterson’s paraphrase in *The Message*: “*The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighborhood. We saw the glory with our own eyes, the one-of-a-kind glory, like Father, like Son, Generous inside and out, true from start to finish.*” (John 1:14) God “moved into our neighborhood” because God loves us and wants us to have light, not darkness; and eternal life, not death. Jesus came to show who we can be and how we can live. Everything about Jesus’ life illustrates His confident humility. His birth narrative (Nazareth, Bethlehem, shepherds, farm animals, a manger, etc), His life (this King did not even have a home), His ministry (often to the outcasts of society) and His death (utter abuse and abandonment) all speak to confident humility. He insisted these traits be in His followers, too. Humility can bring out the best in others – and the worst. Humility repulses some people. Jesus won the hearts of some soldiers and one thief on the cross; but others crucified and reviled Him. Some wise men worshipped; but not King Herod. Eleven disciples were committed to His team; but not Judas. Confident humility is one of Asbury’s core staff behaviors.

In his book, “*Humilitas*,” John Dickson defines humility as, “*The noble choice to forgo your status, deploy your resources or use your influence for the good of others before yourself. More simply, you could say the humble person is marked by a willingness to hold power in service to others.*” He notes that humility: 1. Assumes your dignity and strength 2. Is a choice you make (otherwise it is humiliation) 3. Is social. It is redirecting your power for the sake of others, not yourself.

APPLICATION: How does the definition above help you better understand the character of Jesus? Who do you know who models confident humility? What does confident humility mean in your context? (Really think this through.)

I’m excited for this new series. I hope you’ll get a gratitude & sermon journal and bring your Bible with you to worship service each Sunday.

I’ve said over the last two weeks we ALWAYS begin the understanding of our faith with 2 external authorities: scripture/tradition. We begin with “What does the **Bible** say?” We also ask, “What is the teaching & tradition of the **church**?” **Reason** and our own **experiences** are essential, too. This provides balance, but we always begin with “What does God’s Word say?” Our theme today is “**Confident Humility.**” The first 3 sermons in this series come from Asbury’s Staff Core Behaviors: **Confident Humility, Committed Team Player** and **Genuine Kindness.**

Background: Luke 2:1-7 *In those days a decree went out from **Caesar Augustus** that all the world should be registered. ² This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria. A real time/place (not mythology).*

³ *And all went to be registered, each to his own town. ⁴ And **Joseph** (Matthew 2 – Mary’s pg before marriage. How would you respond if someone told you “My child was conceived by the Holy Spirit.” Whispers. Gossip. Rumors. Derisive comments. Joseph thought this, too, until the Lord told him in a dream it was true.)*

*also went up from Galilee, from the town of **Nazareth**, Nathanael, a later follower of Jesus said, “Can anything good come from Nazareth?” How could the Messiah be from such a Podunk town?*

*to Judea, to the city of David, which is called **Bethlehem**, Judea is not prominent, nor is Bethlehem*

*because he was of the house and lineage of **David**, When the prophet Samuel was looking to anoint a new king to replace the failed Saul, he found David, who was the youngest of 8 sons. He was a shepherd. He was overlooked and unlikely bc of his youth. David had confident humility. He showed it when he was anointed by Samuel, when he faced Goliath, when he interacted with crazy Saul and consistently in other ways.*

⁵ *to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. ⁶ And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. ⁷ And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn. Jesus was born in a manger bc there was no room for Joe/Mary in the inn. A teenaged girl traveling far from home/family having a baby surrounded by animals. Humility, not grandiosity was the mark of Jesus’ personality and character in His every behavior.*

Luke 2:8-20 – Confident Humility

And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹ And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. ¹⁰ And the angel said to them, “Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. ¹¹ For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. ¹² And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.” ¹³ And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, ¹⁴ “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!” ¹⁵ When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us.” ¹⁶ And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger. ¹⁷ And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child. ¹⁸ And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. ¹⁹ But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart. ²⁰ And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

Amazing contrasts: the **Savior** (highest status) arrives as a baby in a manger (lowest) in a backwater town in a minor/overlooked country, an **angel** (high) delivers a message to **shepherds** (low); Why not carpenters, soldiers, blacksmiths or wheat farmers? Shepherds had bad reputations & were ceremonially unclean and couldn't worship in the Temple bc of their dirty hands.

Confident Humility is found throughout Jesus' earthly life

***Incarnation** - For God to become a human being and not have the best of everything seems wrong.

***Childhood** – grew up in Nazareth. *“Can anything good come from Nazareth?”* was Nathanael's question. Jesus didn't live in a palace. He learned from His carpenter dad. Confident Humility.

***Creature comforts** – none. He didn't even own a home. He had no property. Wasn't wealthy. He could be cold or wet, hot and been sunburned & sweaty. He could've bitten by mosquitos. He was human down to His toenails. Confident Humility.

***Disciples** — none were polished, theological intellectuals. They were crusty fishermen, a tax collector and a guy who seemed to have a lot of doubts. The only “good” choice appeared to be Judas Iscariot. Jesus' selection of followers shows. Confident Humility.

***Ministry** – Jesus ministered to all but found a special place with the needy and outcast. He touched lepers. He ate at the table with tax collectors. He talked to sinful women. Jesus also chose women to have special places in His ministry. In the Easter story, the 1st person the resurrected Jesus appeared to wasn't Peter, James or John – but Mary. A woman. He elevated women by letting them be the ones to spread the news. Confident Humility.

***Passion** –When Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper, He knew what would happen. Yet he washed Judas' feet and handed him the sop while Judas betrayed Him. He knew Peter would deny Him. He could've called 10,000 angels to destroy the Romans. With confident humility, he went to a trial, where He was insulted, slapped, beaten, stripped, forced to carry His own cross and crucified. With confident humility He drank from the cup of suffering, bled and died for our sins. Yet, he wasn't ultimately humiliated – He knew the rest of the story. Conclusion: It takes confidence to stoop. Jesus is God. He is the Lion of the Tribe of Judah. But He is also the Lamb of God. He stooped bc He knew Who He was. Confident Humility

Application:

Confident: It's easy to lose your nerve/voice. I've personally been there. Some struggle with low self-esteem. On the other hand, we can be so confident we become arrogant. God has a way of humbling the proud. It's better to humble yourself than to let God do it. God humbled Pharaoh, Nebuchadnezzar & Herod.

Humility: We are born with this premise. *“I am the center of the universe.”* We try to maintain this pretense. Your pride competes with mine. We get upset when someone usurps us. Humility recognizes not all goes according to how I want it. This explains our anger, anxiety, envy and greed. It all goes back to what made the devil leave heaven: PRIDE. How willing am I to stoop and wash dirty feet? Will I lower myself to do menial tasks? Humility means I am genuinely willing to be used in whatever role God places in front of us.

Dana & I went with our family to Disneyland. Here are some **pictures** of us with our grandkids. I noticed 2 things:

1.) The facilities were so clean. (2.) The staff was so nice. I saw a guy cleaning in a white uniform cleaning the streets. I thought, "I'll bet few, if any, ever ask HIM for a picture." Somebody is doing all the menial work, but Goofy and Mickey get all the attention. I thought about life at Asbury. In a way, I'm dressed up like Goofy and I get a lot more attention than I should – but the truth is – this place simply couldn't exist were it not for YOU doing all the things you do. Your prayers, presence, gifts, service and witness.

Jesus was the only person who has ever lived who was better than anyone else, but He never treated another person like He was too good for them. Our script- to follow Jesus and to help others follow Him. If Jesus was the Greatest and He could stoop, why can't or why won't we? Who do we think we are? That's the problem. Where does our confidence come from? Ourselves? The world? Your money?

Humility can bring out the best in someone. It did with Mary/Joseph, the shepherds, the wise men, John the Baptist (*"He must increase but I must decrease"*), but Herod and the Pharisees plotted to kill Him. 11 disciples were on his team but 1 consorted with the devil. One thief accepted Him while the other reviled Him. Some people are repulsed by humility.

Such is the confidence that we have through Christ toward God. Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to claim anything as coming from us, but our sufficiency is from God, who has made us competent to be ministers of a new covenant." 2 Cor 3:4-5

Let me ask again, "Where does your confidence come from?" If you can answer this, humility will take care of yourself.