

October 1, 2017

Sermon by Carol-Ann Chapman

For Nobleton/Schomberg United Church

Scripture: Philippians 2:1-13

If then there is any encouragement in Christ, any consolation from love, any sharing in the Spirit, any compassion and sympathy, make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others.

Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death-- even death on a cross. Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Therefore, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed me, not only in my presence, but much more now in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, enabling you both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

I think my Toyota Matrix is finally on its last legs...a couple of weeks ago I blew a tire which was replaceable, but soon I'm going to have to look at winter tires, because I'm pretty sure my others were worn down last winter. The struts need to be done...I've been putting this off. The air conditioner doesn't

work...thankfully we didn't have a hot summer and I was told this week that a brake light is out...not a big deal but just one more thing, so I've been trying to decide if or what car I should buy. In the process for determining which car is best for me, I came across an environmental campaign called "What Would Jesus Drive." Now the message is that as caregivers of creation and followers of Jesus that we should be driving fuel efficient vehicles and that we will choose to walk, bike, car pool or use public transportation when possible. It is an interesting way to help people to be more concerned about the environment, which is important...but I thought...what if those were things we didn't need to be concerned with...things like air pollution...what would Jesus drive?

My first thought was a cute little red convertible....I imagined Jesus driving down the highway with the top down pointing at the people...a little like "Buddy Christ" from the movie Dogma. (show picture)

Then I thought no...maybe Jesus would drive an extended van so that he had enough room for him and all of the disciples. I also found some humorous takes on what Jesus would drive.

For example, Jesus would drive an old Plymouth because God drove Adam and Eve out of the garden of Eden in a "**Fury**"

Or Maybe Jesus would drive a Dodge truck...after all, Moses' followers were warned not to go up a mountain "until the **Ram's** horn sounds a long blast"

Or perhaps Jesus would have drove one of Joshua's hand me downs...a Triumph sports care with a hole in its muffler...after all we know that "Joshua's **Triumph** was heard throughout the land"

...and finally maybe the answer is a Honda...after all the answer is right there in Acts when we read, “The Apostles were in one **Accord.**”

These are all cute suggestions, but if we think about it, we already know Jesus’s chosen mode of transportation...the week before his death...as he entered Jerusalem Jesus rode into the city on a humble donkey. Jesus who was a king, didn’t come on anything elaborate...not a chariot or a grand horse...no a lowly work animal. So I imagine if Jesus was to choose a vehicle today, it would be something simple...something that would get him from point A to point P. Like a pack mule, with just enough room to carry what he needed. Not the prettiest, sleekest car, something that didn’t stand out, maybe something used...something that just blended in and said I’m just a regular, guy...just trying to pay the bills and do my job.

Jesus’s job on this earth was that of teacher. He was often referred to as “Rabbi” which means “Teacher.” Teaching didn’t always come in the form of a parable or sermon...Jesus’s teachings also came in the form of a living example. The Message version of Paul’s letter to the Philippians, says this:

⁵⁻⁸ Think of yourselves the way Christ Jesus thought of himself. He had equal status with God but didn’t think so much of himself that he had to cling to the advantages of that status no matter what. Not at all. When the time came, he set aside the privileges of deity and took on the status of a slave, became human! Having become human, he stayed human. It was an incredibly humbling process. He didn’t claim special privileges. Instead, he lived a selfless, obedient life and then died a selfless, obedient death—and the worst kind of death at that—a crucifixion

Jesus, though divinely ordained...the Messiah...with the ability to access God' power, chose to live a humble and human life. He could have lived the privileged life of a Royal but instead he chose the life of a servant...we don't have to go far this week to see what Jesus gave up...to see how a royal son is treated. This week we watched Prince Harry in Toronto for the Invictus games, hobnobbing with the elite...meeting with Barack Obama, Justin Trudeau and Melania Trump...being escorted by security...riding in elaborate limousines filled with caviar and champagne. Sure Harry spoke and motivated people...but he did it without giving up his privilege...no I'm not putting down Harry...he seems like a pretty nice prince...but everything he does comes with the honor he has been bestowed because of his lineage. Jesus on the other hand also came from a Royal stock...from names like Abraham and Isaac, David and Solomon...Jesus son of God, but Jesus humbled himself...gave up his privilege. Jesus was much more than a carpenter or a teacher...but he never portrayed himself as such or lived that way.

And Paul tells the Philippians how they can live humbly like Jesus: ***Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others.***

So does this mean you or I cannot drive a nice car?...I don't think so...but I think it tells **me** to take a step back and ask myself why I need a nice car. Do I need a car because it looks sexy...or because the neighbours down the street just got a new SUV and I deserve something just as nice...or is it because I need something reliable...perhaps something that is better on fuel...maybe something I can use to go visiting...maybe with 4 wheel drive to help me down the dirt roads

or winter weather? I need a car that will help me do the job I was called to do...caring for others...looking out for the interests of others. There are some beautiful cars out there but it is the beauty within the driver of that car that really counts.

Humble people are the most beautiful people in the world. A well-known beauty product company asked the people in a large city to send pictures along with brief letters about the most beautiful women they knew. Within a few weeks thousands of letters were delivered to the company.

One letter in particular caught the attention of the employees, and soon it was handed to the company president. The letter was written by a young boy who was obviously from a broken home, living in a run-down neighborhood. With spelling corrections, an excerpt from his letter read: "A beautiful woman lives down the street from me. I visit her every day. She makes me feel like the most important kid in the world. We play checkers and she listens to my problems. She understands me, and when I leave she yells out the door that she's proud of me."

The boy ended his letter saying, "This picture shows you that she is the most beautiful woman. I hope I have a wife as pretty as her."

Intrigued by the letter, the president asked to see this woman's picture. His secretary handed him a photograph of a smiling, toothless woman, well-advanced in years, sitting in a wheelchair. Sparse gray hair was pulled back in a bun, and wrinkles that formed deep furrows on her face were somehow diminished by the twinkle in her eyes.

“We can’t use this woman,” explained the president, smiling. “She would show the world that our products aren’t necessary to be beautiful.”¹
(6)

It’s not the outside that counts. It’s not our money, power or a fancy car that makes one great and beautiful. It is what is inside that really matters. Jesus showed us that the way to true greatness lies in the path of humility.

We are called not to just follow the teachings of Jesus but to live as Jesus did...as Jesus would if he walked the earth today. Humbling ourselves, means we put aside those things we think we have a “right” to and instead use our lives to serve one another as Jesus would.

As you go forward into this week...***Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus*** and may you find the beauty within...one that is humble. And may what drives you not be a fancy car, but the desire to love and serve others.

Amen.

¹ Dr. Mickey Anders. Sermon Writer, <https://www.sermonwriter.com/sermons/philippians-25-11-jesus-ride-anders>