

The One and Only

TRANSCRIPT (AUTO-GENERATED)

A couple of years ago, I was at a house warming party, and a couple of friends who shall remain nameless, and I'm really going to try and keep that promise this time, a couple of friends and I thought, we'd just go for a skate in the streets at

night. So we had a couple of longboards, and we were just cruising, like having so much fun, just cruising these streets. I didn't know the streets at all, and it was kind of dark, lit by the light of street lamps.

So we're cruising along this one particular road, three of us. And all of a sudden, it's like, oh, I feel like there's a bit of a hill. I think it drops down a little bit, but it's probably just a little hill that we can ride it out.

And then we get closer and closer, and it's one of those hills where you, the closer you get, you can't see the bottom. So the other two bail. They jump off, but me and my cocky, like, 20, 19-year-old self thought, no, it's fine.

I feel like it's not a big deal, not a big hill. I can take it. So I was committed to ride this hill out to the bottom.

And I'm picking up speed, more and more and more speed. And as I get closer to this hill, it just keeps on dropping down, and I don't see the bottom until I'm at the very top.

And it is a big, steep hill into the darkness at the bottom of the street, and then curving to the left. At this point, I'm thinking, you goose, I'm going to die right now, all because I had to see where this road went.

So I resolved, I can't bail at this point. I have to ride this out to the end. So I got down as low as I could, arms out wide, trying to balance my way, and I'm just picking up so much speed.

I don't want to over-exaggerate how fast I was going, but I know, based on a later detail in the story, significantly faster than I can run. I'm going quite fast, and I get like flashbacks. That's not good.

Barreling down this hill, I'm thinking, I can make this, I can make this. My knees are shaking, but I can make it. The end is in sight.

And then finally, my back leg gives out, shakes too much, I lose the board out from underneath me. I take about four big steps, trying to keep my legs beneath my body, but I'm going way too fast, and I just fall forward.

At this point, my skating instincts kick in, and I know the best way to fall is to roll. So I get like this, and land on my hip, and roll probably 20 times down the hill. Meanwhile, the board just goes flying further down the hill.

After 20 rolls, I finally come to a stop, and I have to go run down the hill to fetch the board from the bottom of the hill.

Finally, when my friends caught up with me, I had bloody wrists, holes in my sweater on my elbows, holes in my jeans on my knees and blood, and a hole in my sweater on the side. I was like aching and bleeding and in so much pain, but I was alive.

And NorthernLife, that's what I feel like we are at as a church right now. Not so much the crushing bloody bit, but that sense of being on a hill and picking up speed and momentum. I feel like this is a really good thing.

I feel like God's doing something amongst us. He's growing us and He's moving amongst us for His glory. And we're picking up speed and we're coming down this hill.

And I feel like we are at a critical moment where we are in danger of wiping out and crushing on the hill. The word dissipation is a word that means when the energies of something scatter and it loses its focus.

I feel like as a church, we are at risk of dissipation and crushing. So welcome to church tonight. It's great to have you here.

I feel like Paul in Philippians, his word to us tonight can directly speak to this situation that we find ourselves in.

And he's going to teach us something about what it takes to be united for the sake of the gospel, so that maybe as a church, we could bomb this hill and we could make it to the bottom for the glory of God. Let me pray.

Lord, as we come to your word, we thank you that we have it in our hands in more translations and versions than we know what to do with. We pray that you would speak to us from the word directly into our context now.

Help me as I deliver this message to get out of the way of what you want to do. Amen. We're in Chapter 2 of Philippians.

I really have to say, you must listen to the morning or else you're only going to get half the picture, because we're doing different sermons in the morning and the night. Please go to northernlife.org.au, find the old sermon.

You could watch it on YouTube, Spotify, Apple Podcast, any place you want within reason. Catch up on the sermons and you get the full picture of this Philippians series. But Chapter 2 is our text for tonight.

If you have a Bible, I really recommend you open it. It's so helpful to have the text in front of you to know where we are. The Book of Philippians is really a letter.

It's a letter to the Philippians. The Philippians are the group of people, the church that meets in a place called Philippi. And Paul has a relationship with this Philippian church.

So he's writing a letter to the Philippian church that directly addresses the issues and challenges and opportunities and threats that the Philippians were going through, because he has this relationship.

So when we come to this letter, the letter to the Philippians, there's a sense in which we're reading somebody else's mail, because we don't know the relational context that Paul and the Philippians had.

But what we do know from Acts 16 and from the Book of Philippians, is some of the specific issues the Philippians were going through. And it was an issue of disunity. This fledgling church that Paul had planted was dissipating into disunity.

And so Paul writes the letter to the Philippians to address the disunity that is growing.

As such, not that we are a church who is disunited, but as a church who is barreling down the hill on a skateboard towards the future that God has for us, I feel that there is a threat of disunity if we will not hold together.

So Paul's text to us, which was originally to the Philippians, I think lands squarely where we are as a church right now, that we would be united around something. He's going to tell us what to be united around.

Courtney read for us our passage tonight, Philippians 2 verses 1 to 11, and we're just going to basically work it through, work through it verse by verse, which is why you should have it in front of you. Starting with verse 1, Therefore, hold up.

When we see the word therefore, we got to ask what's the therefore? Therefore. If you came this morning, you would know what the therefore is therefore, but that's just another plug to listen to the podcast.

The therefore is looking back to Philippians 1, verses 27 to 30, which is actually one of the most important passages in the Letter to the Philippians, because it's the thesis statement of Philippians. You remember thesis statements from essays?

Scholars call it a *propositio*. It is the succinct statement that the entire Letter to the Philippians exists to support and to uphold and to prove and give evidence for. So this is like the point of Philippians is this in verse 27.

Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ.

Whatever happens, whether through life or death, prison or freedom, as Paul has just explained before verse 27, conduct yourself in the way you live your life, in a way that is a worthy outworking of the gospel that you have received.

And now in chapter 2, the dominant theme is unity, which comes out of the gospel as we conduct ourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel. So verses 1 and 2 of Philippians 2.

Therefore, if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being

one in spirit and of one mind. If, if, if, if. Four ifs. Paul's logic goes, therefore, if, if, if, if, then.

He's setting up a logical system where if these four things are true, it should lead to something. Actually, the Greek behind the if is not the kind of if that's like, if you make this really tricky shot, I'll shave my head.

Or like, if you, whatever. Whatever kind of stupid things we would do. Actually, the sense of the if is, assumes that it is true.

So scholars have argued that maybe a better way of translating this if is since. Since this is true, this, this, this is true, then this will be true. So what are the four things that he is looking at?

Number one, since you have encouragement from being united with Christ, that means a stirring and a prompting that comes from your active relationship with Jesus. Number two, since you have comfort from his love, Christ's love compels us.

Number three, since you have common sharing in the Spirit, of course, the Spirit is what we have in common, the Holy Spirit given to believers.

Number four, since you have tenderness and compassion, as the Holy Spirit moves in us to bring out the character of Jesus as tender and compassionate. Since, since, since, since, then.

Because of the truth of these four things, because of the truth of the gospel, then this is how you should live. And these are the four things that Paul says we should do since the gospel is true. Number one, we should be like-minded.

Number two, have the same love. Three, being one in spirit and being of one mind. Do you notice any patterns in these four?

Like-minded, same love, one in spirit of one mind. Do you think maybe he's talking about unity? Do you think maybe he's saying that since the gospel is true in these four areas, that compels us to unity?

Every one of those four things concerns the unity of the Philippian Church. It's a call to unity in the light of the gospel in verses one and two. Moving down to verses three and four.

Therefore, if, if, if, if, or since, since, since, since, then, one, two, three, four, dominant idea being unity, verse three. 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 interest of the others. For Paul, there is no place amongst the community of faith.

For selfish ambition and vain conceit that would seek to elevate you, yourself, up above the others, there is no place. He says, do nothing. The Greek behind vain conceit is literally empty glory.

I like that, because I think that's what it is. When you assert yourself higher than you should be, it is an empty glory that you receive.

And I think in Australia, we're actually probably pretty good at chopping the people down and who put themselves up. We call it tall poppy syndrome, which is maybe not a good thing, maybe partly a good thing.

But Paul has in mind a much deeper humility, that we would not be a people who, through selfish ambition, motivated by a heart that wants to give glory to us, raise ourself above others.

In fact, I think he's saying the heart behind one who has selfish ambition is fundamentally anti-unity. He's called us to live in the light of the gospel, to live with unity. And the first thing he says is do nothing out of selfish ambition.

You can't look out for yourself, because that pulls apart unity. If each person is looking out for themselves, instead, unity comes through humility.

I think the point is quite starkly made by Paul here, that the truth of the gospel, since the gospel is true and has impacted our lives, live as people of unity, not elevating yourself to pride and empty glory, but being humble, valuing the needs of

others above yourself. At NorthernLife, we've talked about pride and humility in the past in a sermon called Pride Cometh, if you want to look that up.

But what we came to is quite simply, what I think most of us would have heard, humility is not thinking less of yourself, but thinking of yourself less. That's the glue that brings unity, is humility.

And the thing which rips apart unity is pride, that would seek to elevate one above the others. Imagine a community of faith, a church, where each member genuinely, authentically and deeply values the needs of everyone else above themselves.

Every single person. There would be no one in need amongst us, because we would pull together our shared resources to care for that person.

When every person is looking out for the needs of others, there is a beautiful picture of this gospel unity and fellowship. But what happens if you are the one giving and valuing the needs of others, but you are not looked after yourself?

It's kind of like when you're the last person in the massage train. Every person is massaging and getting massaged, apart from the poor guy at the back who is just doing this. Or the same with like a conga line.

Everyone is having a great time doing the kinky thing, apart from the guy at the front, he's got his hands in his pockets, like walking around with the tail of 50 people.

It's a serious problem, though, if we are to be a community that genuinely values the needs of other people, it kind of falls apart if we don't all chip in, because we're not looking out for the needs of others, and there are some holes there.

I find this quite challenging, to be a person who actually values the needs of other people above themselves. I feel like this is calling me to much, much, much, much deeper humility than letting somebody else have the last Tim Tam at Bible study.

Like that's the classic example of there's one Tim Tam left on the chair, and there's 15 people looking at it, not wanting to be the one who takes it.

That's not really coming out of humility, that's coming out of a desire to not be the embarrassing one to take the Tim Tam.

But the calling that Paul gives us is to value the needs of other people above yourself, to genuinely look out for them more than you look out for yourself.

But how do you deal with the potential pain and suffering that comes from that kind of model in a fallen world? We're not all going to perfectly look after each other or look out for each other's needs, and so there will be suffering involved.

And I think Paul preempts that question and that response, and he answers it in verses 5 to 11. This is, I think, in my opinion, the best passage of scripture in the entire New Testament. In fact, the entire Bible.

Philippians 2, 5 to 11 is like it. This is so sick. So here we are.

I feel like we're like before Mount Everest or something. A glorious passage from verse 5. In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus.

So recap of where we've been. Verses 1 to 2, the gospel, the truth of the gospel compels us to live in unity. Verses 3 and 4 say that unity is deeply undermined by pride and the need to assert yourself, but humility will bring us together.

And then verse 5, Paul says, in your relationships with one another, look to Jesus as the model and the example of humility. Verse 6, Jesus, who being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage.

In Genesis 3, remember what the serpent says to Adam and Eve, when he's tempting them or it is tempting them. When the serpent tempts Adam and Eve, he says, you will be like God.

The temptation to seize equality with God has been there from the beginning of sin itself. And now, Philippians 2 says, Jesus, who though being in very nature God, he did not consider equality with God something for him to use for his own advantage.

Rather, he used it for the advantage of other people. Verse 7, rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant being made in human likeness. He took, Jesus took the nature of human.

The word nature there in verse 7 is the same word for nature in verse 6. So then we have this like beautiful Christological truth about who Jesus is, that he is in very nature God. And yet, at the same time, mysteriously, he is by nature a man.

So in Jesus, these God and human natures come together perfectly. And this Jesus, verse 7 says, is the one who used his equality with God not for his advantage, but he gave it up for the sake of others in an act of humility.

Scholars have debated for a long time just what it means for Jesus to give up, like just what Jesus gave up when he became a man. The word is kenosis, which comes from a Greek root, which means emptying.

They think that in some way, Jesus emptied himself of something that he had with the father when he became a man without taking off his divinity or his deity. We believe Jesus took off the robe of glory that he had in the father's presence.

And John 13 says he put on a towel and washed his disciples' feet. This is the God who is a man who left his status as God and became a man to love us in humility. This is Jesus.

And verse 8, Being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself again. This is a repeated pattern of humbling himself by becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross. Death on a cross.

The cross was the worst form of capital punishment the Romans could come up with.

Cicero, who is a Roman historian, said these words, Far be the very name of the cross, not only from the body, but even from the thought, the eyes, and the ears of the Roman citizens. This is the worst death a human being can suffer.

So painful, they invented a word to describe it, excruciating, from the Latin crux, meaning cross. This is the example, the paragon of humility that we are called to. That Jesus, being in very nature God, stepped down, becoming a human.

And not only so, but he became a human, obedient unto death, even the worst, most shameful, and most painful kind of death possible. Because at every stage, Jesus humbled himself before others.

In his birth, he takes off the robe of glory he had in the Father's presence, to take the nature of a baby. He humbles himself. In his life, Jesus constantly humbled himself before others.

When he washed the disciples' feet, when he was tired but he still had that conversation and still healed that person.

And in his death, we find the best and the biggest and the most wondrous example of the length that Jesus would go to to humble himself before others.

At every stage of Jesus' life, he humbled himself and humbled himself before others and humbled himself. I'm going to read this glorious passage all the way through from verse 5 to 11.

And I want you to listen to it with the setup, the setup that we are actually, actually looking to Jesus as our example. That something that Jesus has done is to be a pattern for the way we live.

Verse 5 says, In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus. So from verse 5, In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus.

Who being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage. Rather, he made himself nothing.

By taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness, and being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross.

Therefore, God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every other name, at the name of Jesus.

Every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. Someone please say Amen. This is like it.

This is the best scripture. The paradigm of the kingdom. The paradigm of the kingdom is that those who humble themselves will be exalted.

And Jesus, in his birth, his life and his death, shows us that paradigm of dissension and then ascension to unfathomable glory. And that's what Paul gives us.

These 5 to 11 is a staircase down to the depths of humanity, that this one who is in very nature God, stepped down and became human, and he became a servant, and he washed his disciples feet, and he became obedient to the cross.

And in that lowest moment, God exalted him like a balloon held underwater that blasts out. And now Jesus is ascended to the right hand of the Father in heaven, with the name that is above every other name.

This is the paradigm of the kingdom, is that humility leads to glory. Not our glory, but the glory of the Lord. So what are we talking about?

Unity. This whole epic scripture is plastered with the banner Unity over it, that we are to look at the humility of Jesus, and the pathway of humility leading to glory in the end. We look to the example of Jesus, and we conduct ourselves likewise.

That we would have Unity together because of our humility.

If you feel like you're the one at the end of the message train, giving and giving and not getting anything, remember that there's a cross that shows that those who humble themselves will be exalted ultimately, because our Saviour was.

Sometimes we don't, all of the time, we don't love each other perfectly, so that we all fill each other's needs.

But amidst the suffering and the kind of injustice and the weirdness that comes along with that, there is a cross-shaped humility that bears the cost, because Jesus bore the cost for us. But remember the cross.

The cross means humility, and it leads to our Unity. In fact, the cross is not only the prime paragon example of Unity, of humility, which leads to Unity, it is the actual thing that unites us. And so we look to the cross for two reasons.

The first is that in the cross, our Savior purchased our freedom and redeemed us, that we would be alive and can gather here today. We stand, sit, most of us, in the power of the cross.

And we look to the cross as the example of humility, of laying your life down before others, that would bring Unity together in the cross. As we close, I'm going to invite the band to come up.

NorthernLife, as we start to gather speed on this metaphorical skateboard, riding down the hill, we pick up speed and God starts to do something amongst us.

Let us not dissipate into disunity and discord, and a lot of other words that begin with dis, but let us, by keeping our eyes fixed on the cross and the example that our Savior gave us, of a radical humility.

Let us be united, so that for the glory of God, we may ride this thing to the end, to the end that God has for us, for His glory and not for our glory.

And as we do that, as we lift up the name of Jesus, even right now, in a couple of minutes, as we lift up the name of Jesus, and we give glory to the one who is worthy of everything we could ever give him, let it bring us together.

If we will be, amen, if we will be a church that lifts up Jesus and looks to the example of the cross, and it will bring us together, we can transform Hornsby for the glory of God. We can see people come to know Jesus and life eternal.

We can see amazing things for the glory of God, if we will lift him up. So I'm so excited to be a part of a church that can be united. We are united, but let us not drift into disunity.

The title of this sermon that I was given is The One and Only. And that's Jesus. Jesus is The One and Only.

For the glory of His name is the supreme desire of our hearts, that above any selfish ambition that we would seek to raise ourself up, we lay that down at the foot of the cross, and we lift up the name of Jesus, and it brings us together.

So would you like to stand as I pray? We're about to have an opportunity through the medium of music to sing and to lift our voices.

And even that is this beautiful symbol of unity, that we sing the same words at the same time, and we lift up Jesus on the cross and let it bring us together. So let me pray. Lord Jesus, we thank you for your example on the cross.

We praise you and we stand in wonder and awe at your humility that you would leave heaven and come to earth and die for us. To redeem us from the curse of the law and to give us life everlasting.

And so now we stand before you, those of us who have put our faith in you as your redeemed and blood-bought children, children of the Father. And with the breath that you brought for us, we use it to give you glory and to lift up your name together.

And I pray for this Church NorthernLife as exciting things are happening amongst us, as your Spirit does His work.

May we not drift and dissipate into disunity, but instead, Lord, by the example that Jesus showed us, may we in humility be united under the name of Jesus, the name above every other name.

Do something powerful amongst us in this church for your glory, for your glory, Lord. And then together, as the people of God, we say, Amen.