

***Atonement Riches:
Christ, Our Example***

Philippians 2:1-18

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Atonement -

how the death and resurrection of our Lord and Saviour brought us, who were estranged, into fellowship and unity with our God and Father.

It has been considered by believers from the earliest days of the faith. From many different angles. Many different theories put forward. Each helping us to grow in thanksgiving and praise to our God for the great gift of salvation that is ours.

And, honestly, we need these many different viewpoints. No single explanation of Christ's atoning work is sufficient in and of itself.

And so we've spent the last few Sunday evenings meditating on each of these different pictures of the atonement.

Christ the Victor. The theme that is so often considered and celebrated on Easter weekend, particularly through the scriptural lens of 1 Corinthians 15.

O Death, where is your victory? O grave, where is your sting?

Christ our Ransom. Echoing the words of Jesus:

Mark 10:45: "For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many."

Christ our Substitute.

Where we thought of Jesus as

- the new Israel (and we went to *Matthew* for that)
- the new Adam/humanity (that's the point of *Romans 5*)
- the new Creation (where we listened to *2 Corinthians 5*)

Last week we saw Jesus through the eyes of John the Baptist, as

Christ, the Passover Lamb.

The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! (John 1:29)

Look, here is the Lamb of God! (John 1:36)

Jesus came to bring atonement.

He is the Victor, the Ransom, the New Creation and the Lamb that was slain.

And friends,

we can be none of those things.

They are once for all.

Ah - we live **through** these elements in the person and work of Jesus.

Their effects flow right through into our lives.

But we cannot be those things.

We are **NOT** the Saviour.

We live life, and look forward to eternity,

because of what Jesus the Saviour has done for us

- full and free.

We receive this as His gift into our lives. With thanksgiving.

But it doesn't end there.

There is one more facet on the gemstone of Atonement.

It is Jesus as **our example**.

Early on in our church season we considered the Christian life as a life of **apprenticeship**.

We are all in an apprenticeship with Jesus.

We picked up on the call of 1 Peter 2:9

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people,

(By the way, do you hear the wonderful words of closeness, of intimacy, of togetherness with God? -)

....*IN ORDER THAT*....

(- See? Getting saved isn't the end of the story. Getting put into a right relationship with God isn't where we stop and rest and relax. It is, actually, the **BEGINNING** of the story!)

....*you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.*

We take the message of Jesus and carry it out into the world.

In that way we are following in the footsteps of Jesus.

To echo the message of this morning, we pick up and carry on where Jesus left off.

That is the call and task and mandate of the Church.

And for **that** we look to Jesus as our Example.

Listen to God's Word as it calls us in that regard:

PHILIPPIANS 2:1-18, P.197 (NT)

I am struck, every time I read this passage, by the words of verse 12 & 13.

Did they strike a chord with you, too?

Listen to them again -

12 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;

13 for it is God who is at work in you, enabling you both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

Work out your own salvation.

Doesn't mean - get yourself saved.

Rather - **work out the implications of your salvation.**

Given the fact that you are saved - **now what?**

How will that show?

What difference does it make?

Do that without grumbling or murmuring.

Do that intentionally and with effort.

Hang in there and keep doing it....

....that's the point of verses 14-18.

But the real meat and potatoes of this passage is earlier.

The **HOW** of Christian living, the heart and soul of the "**now what**" is found in verses 1-11.

Paul writes, in effect:

If you are going to do anything as a Christian, if you are going to live any sort of a Christian life at all, do me a great big favour and live it this way.....

Have the same mind

Have the same love

Be in full accord

Get rid of selfish ambition

Don't be conceited

Be humble

Look to the interests of others, not yourselves

And, if you're starting to scratch your head and wonder where in the world you'll get the motivation to live this sort of life

- a life that, on its own would be **extraordinarily** challenging to live -

the motivation for this kind of living is found

by looking to Jesus

as our example.

These words from Philipians 2 are actually part of an early hymn of the Church,

It's a hymn that brings to mind two great Old Testament themes:

1. From Genesis 3 comes the image of the first Adam, who desired to be God even though he was just a mere creature. Coveting equality with God, he grabbed for it. He sinned greatly and fell in a most awful way.

The New Adam did no such coveting or grasping or sinning or falling.

2. The second picture is from Isaiah 52-53, the image of the suffering servant. This prophetic portrait speaks of one coming, one who would endure horrible agony for the sake of his people; the Atoning Sacrificial Lamb.

Two opposite picture -

Jesus comes to counter-act the effects of the first.

He comes to fulfill the second.

As that one who was, and always remained God, Jesus could have very easily, while here on earth, asserted his divinity, steam rolling over all opposition.

During the temptation in the wilderness he could have called out and stones would have become bread.

He could have jumped from the pinnacle of the temple and demanded that angels rescue him.

Even in the Garden of Gethsemane he could have called for legions of angels to come to his defense and they would have.

He could have, as the son of Mary, grasped at equality with God.....

But he didn't!!

Which is the miraculous part of it all!

He, who came to earth to disarm Satan,

to regain supreme and total Lordship over all

chose to do that through the path of servanthood,

the way of obedient suffering --

that was his pathway to Lordship!

He poured himself out, completely out, all the way to death.

He....

the suffering servant.

totally humiliated.... for **our** sake!

Let that work, that attitude of Christ now affect you, believer.

Let it shape you.

Let Jesus be your atonement example.

I want to suggest to you, briefly, four different effects that can have in our life.

Number one - **Self-denial**.

God calls us to give up our preoccupation with "*rights*."

That's hard when our culture keeps bombarding us with messages that we have some birthright to be the centre of attention. Combine that with a fallen human nature that quite naturally and eagerly drifts toward self-promotion instead of self-denial, and you have a deadly mixture.

The lies are loud and clear - we've all heard them:

- the key to joy is getting

- the key to becoming somebody is to look out for "number one."

Jesus said,

"Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must become slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many." (Mk 10:43-45)

Self denial.

Second way in which we can live as Apprentices of Jesus the Atonement Example.

Identification.

That is - identification with our neighbours.

Learn to walk in the shoes of those you serve.

Jesus identified with us in our moments

when we feel like we're about to collapse,

when we get suckered into temptation of cheap, degrading sorts

when life disappoints us bitterly.

Doesn't mean we mimic the flaws of our neighbours.

But we **do** identify with them.

Third element of our Atonement Apprenticeship:

Obedience.

What motivates you -

God's agenda..... or your own?

God's agenda..... or the agenda of your family & friends?

God's agenda..... or that of our culture?

Let our primary motivation be to gain **His** approval and not the approval of anyone around us.

As we serve others, let's seek to fulfill God's agenda for their lives.

Just as Jesus came to earth to fulfill the will of His Father in Heaven, not his own.

And finally - as Apprentices who follow Jesus our Atonement-bringer - let's walk in his footsteps by shaping a culture in this church of -

Sacrifice.

Let me ask you -

How much are you willing to give up for Jesus?

Ever find yourself saying, "*Ah, I've given enough. Let someone else.....*"

enough money

enough time

enough of letting another person have their way

enough physical effort

enough phone calls or meetings

How much are you willing to give up for Jesus?

Do you think he wrestled with that along the way -

- facing constant challenge and humiliation at the hands of Jewish leaders

- knowing pain and suffering were waiting

- enduring a form of death reserved to humiliate political rebels

Do you think he struggled with the temptation to quit?

Amy Carmichael wrote:

*"Can he have followed Christ far
who has no wound, no scar?"*

Being Christ-like costs.

Don't whimp out on Jesus.

Go the distance.

And know this - that as we live these attributes of Atonement Apprenticeship, we will find a peace, a deep inner **satisfaction** growing in our lives,
placed there by the Holy Spirit.

Christ was exalted because of His obedience.

Now, while it won't be in the same realm, our obedience results in the smile of our Heavenly Father.

We are saved by Jesus.

Now we have the joy of being able to respond to His great gift of life to us.

We can know the pleasure and blessing of our Lord in our life and in our relationships as we follow in the King's footsteps.

We can look forward to hearing the words, "*Well done, good and faithful servants.*"

We can know that labour done in His strength is never done in vain.

No, never in vain.

So, pray for the Holy Spirit grow in you:

Self-denial

Identification

Obedience

Sacrifice

Satisfaction.

And look to Jesus for examples of each.

Ah, yes, let's pray that we would look more like Jesus.

And bring greater glory to Him.