

Finding Home Away from Home



“LOVE”

PHILIPPIANS 2:1-11

Displacement in the Christmas Story

Three weeks ago we saw Mary and Joseph leaving home and how God met them in the manger with **hope**

Two weeks ago we saw the Holy Family fleeing to Egypt to escape King Herod; the 4 Ws of **peace**

Last week we saw the Magi, having left home, in the East to follow the star, encounter great **joy**.

Today we reflect on Jesus leaving heaven to become fully human and the amazing **love** behind this.

The Inconceivable Incarnation!

Jesus becomes fully human while remaining fully God

He emptied His right to independently exercise His privileges of deity

He lived His life by submission to the Father and dependence upon the power of the Holy Spirit

How lowly the body that the infinite God would squeeze down into it as His home,

Yet being His home, how glorious the human body!

Paul's Application of Other-Centeredness in Phil 2:1-11

Be of one mind: verse 2

Do nothing from selfish ambition or vain conceit: verse 3

Count others as more significant than yourself: verse 3

(Realizing the true value of others: (see CS Lewis quote from the essay “Weight of Glory”))

Look out for others interests in addition to your own: verse 4

A life of other-centeredness as opposed to a life of self-centeredness

How pervasive is our self-centeredness that filters everything, even our attempts at kindness

To live with ourselves at our own centers is the new normal after the fall.

We are quick to even turn injunctions of other-centeredness into justifications for self-centeredness

Love your neighbor as yourself: Leviticus 19:18

You can't love your neighbor unless you love yourself, so love yourself first, and then love your neighbor

Seeing that you already love yourself and always will, work to love your neighbor as much as yourself

How to Go About Pursuing the Other-Centered Life: PERSPECTIVE

As opposed to the fruitless effort of attempting to negate innate self-interest

Seeing other-centeredness as the path to self-fulfillment

All people will end up doing what they think is in their best interest (even the martyr)
Realize the truth that greater joy and deeper life are to be found in giving away
Jesus: it is more blessed to give than receive: Acts 20:35; lose your life, find it: Matt 10:39; 16:35
St. Francis' famous poem: Make Me An Instrument of Thy Peace
There is a warping of this principle: in the guise of appearing to serving others, serving oneself
Notice in Phil 2 how Jesus' emptying leads to His glorification

How to Go About Pursuing the Other-Centered Life: SCOPE

The god-like awareness of global need is overwhelming
Individual humans are not meant to carry the weight of the needs of the world
God's plan: there is purpose in your placement
Key principle: Attend to what is around you and practice your other-centeredness there
This is not to minimize other-centeredness (one person's need can consume another person)
God is able to move you anywhere He wants to take you by means of what is right next to you
Faithfulness in what is right around me is prerequisite for stewardship of "bigger" things: Matt 25:21
Psalm 138:8: "The Lord will fulfill His purpose for me."

The Prayer of Saint Francis of Assisi

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace:
where there is hatred, let me sow love;
where there is injury, pardon;
where there is doubt, faith;
where there is despair, hope;
where there is darkness, light;
where there is sadness, joy.

O divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek
to be consoled as to console,
to be understood as to understand,
to be loved as to love.

For it is in giving that we receive,
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

Amen.

“It is a serious thing to live in a society of possible gods and goddesses, to remember that the dullest most uninteresting person you can talk to may one day be a creature which, if you saw it now, you would be strongly tempted to worship...

C.S. Lewis, in an essay entitled “The Weight of Glory”
