

Gratitude Matters

Scripture used: [Matthew 11:28-30 \(NIV\)](#)

OVERVIEW

In an age of self-centeredness and narcissism, Pastor Tilden preached a contrarian message focused on the importance of humility. The paradox is that Jesus did not always fit the archetype of humility. Jesus possessed extraordinary confidence, boldness, and authority. But these traits were matched with abundant compassion for those at the margin, spiritually and materially. Jesus was an important person, a public leader, followed by a multitude, yet He was never focused on any status symbol; He was only focused on lifting others' spiritual status. Pastor Tilden explored this different definition of humility: to paraphrase C.S. Lewis, true humility is not thinking less of oneself, but thinking of oneself less (less often, less frequently, to be free to think of others more).

KEY POINTS

1. Our nature dictates that we don't like yokes. At a young age, human beings want to be the hero of the story, the center of attention, to live "The Story of Me, Starring Me." We perceive the world as revolving around us. We reject the yoke of restraint, of not having ourselves at the center. But we inflict a cost on others when we are focused on ourselves. In addition, self-centeredness does not bring lasting joy - it tries to fill a void without ever bringing deep satisfaction. We can get caught up in our own needs and desires. Instead, we must remember that life on Earth lasts the same as the blink of an eye, that material things come to nothing.
2. The better life is the fruitful life, yoked to Jesus in humility, and with an eye focused on eternity. When we are yoked to Jesus, we are in step with God, prioritizing the things that God prioritizes, and the impact of our lives are aligned with the same purposes that Jesus expressed with His life. Like Jesus, our lives can have the impact of allowing people to recognize that there is a God who loves them, and our lives can lift people up in grace, justice, and kindness. In this way, we stop writing "The Story of Me, Starring Me" and we allow God to write "The Story of Something Greater than Me" throughout our lives. Our scripture states that the divine yoke is easy, the burden is light. Jesus came to give life and not to take it away. We must allow God to work through us.
3. Humility is courageous. It is asking the right questions, and seeking more spiritual freedom. We go from "What's in it for me?" to "What is God calling me to do?" In [Philippians 2:5-11 \(NIV\)](#) we see the demonstration of Jesus' humility; He was willing to put aside his divine prerogatives and enter into His Creation, bearing our sin and going to the cross to die for us - He truly demonstrated a love that changes the world. Jesus was secure in His father's love; He could live for others and not for Himself. Note that Jesus also demonstrated a key principle that only sacrificial love can bring about transformation of the heart. We should be wary of the temptation to use coercion or compulsion to bring about the Kingdom of God, because such tools of the world don't connect people in a relationship with God.
4. Our Scripture assures us that when we come to Jesus, we find rest in our souls. We no longer need to seek value from things of this world, but we know we have eternal value that can never be taken away. Because of that, humility is able to grow in our lives, and because we are able to think of ourselves less often and less urgently, we are set free to think of others and God's purposes more.

DISCUSSION

- 1) **HEAR** - Who do you know in your life that is an example to you of humility? Why? How do you know if someone is humble? What do you think of the definition of humility in this message?
- 2) **UNDERSTAND** - What would it look like to practically "not think less of yourself" and try to think of yourself with sober, accurate judgment? Are you often tempted to "think less of yourself" or "put yourself down"? What would it look like to practically "think of yourself less" - to take the focus off of your own needs and desires, and to create space to consider others and to consider God's purposes in your life? What makes this mindset difficult? Consider the invitation that Jesus gives in [Matthew 11:28-30 \(NIV\)](#). How does the idea of being "yoked to Jesus" make you feel?
- 3) **DO** - It is very difficult to grow in humility when we are insecure about our identity or value or when we are self-centered in our ambitions. Spend some praying about which of these two, or perhaps both, you struggle with. Meditate on [Philippians 2:5-11](#) and ask God to make His love for you powerfully real. Pray for one way you can "think of yourself less and think of others more" this week. See you next Sunday!