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Walking in Humility

(Part 2)

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Series: The Mind of Christ

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(Part 2)

We've watched Him emerge from the shadows of anonymity. He chose to be born in a stable, lest we fail to grasp the meaning of His coming to earth. He grew up in perfect obedience to His mother and His stepfather. His attitude towards His brothers and sister were never less than godly. He chose to be a "doulos", a bondsman of His Heavenly Father, rather than living life according to His own wishes and desires. *He humbled Himself.*

As a child, He sat in the temple at the feet of the rabbis as the truth of the ages began to be revealed, yet when His parents found Him, He submitted Himself willingly to their authority, because *He did always those things that pleased the Father* and the Father wanted Him to be a living demonstration of humility and servitude. For thirty long years, He waited. Though He knew that time would be short and the opposition would be great, He waited. The reason? He knew that *His Father* knew best, and His Father wasn't ready yet to demonstrate His awesome power. Had you or I been Jesus, we would have wanted everyone to know who we were. We would have whispered it to our peers; we would have demonstrated some tiny evidence of our supernatural attributes so we could have the respect that God on earth deserved. Not Jesus.

Until the Father was ready, He did nothing. The reason? He was not in control of His life. *He was only in control of His choices.* And He chose, minute by minute, to just do whatever His Father wanted, even if it was mundane, trivial, difficult, or humiliating. He had died to Himself when He made that awesome choice in eternity past to give up His name, give up the benefits of His deity, and come to earth as a mere man. Then He made another choice. "Being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself." He chose to be a nobody, so everybody could become somebody in the Kingdom of God. He chose to die so man could live. He chose to serve so man could reign. He chose to give up the rights to His riches, so we could become "*heirs of God and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ.*" He did it all for us. Then He went back to the

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Father. And He sent His Spirit to indwell each and every born-again one. His message to us?

Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.
(Philippians 2:5 NKJV)

We, too, have a choice to make: a choice followed by a million choices. The first choice: to follow Him; to give up the rights to our future, our pleasures, our goals, and our self-centered claims to success in exchange for becoming a bondsman of the King. We give up our petty desires and dreams in exchange for the power to be victorious, the grace to overcome sin, the ability to possess indwelling peace in the midst of turmoil, grief, and pain. We give up our claims to earthly success in exchange for the promise of a Kingdom in which we will rule and reign over angels.

The truth of the matter is: we give up nothing in exchange for everything, for everything we give up is temporal; everything we gain is eternal. Everything we give up will burn. Everything we get in return are treasures which

...neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.
(Matthew 6:20b NKJV)

That's our choice, but it is followed by a million other choices. That choice but frees the enemy of God to open warfare. That choice sets in motion an onslaught of spiritual activity in the heavenlies that lasts until the moment God calls us home through the gracious window of death, or the moment He sends His angel to rapture His people into the heavenlies to spend eternity with Him. Until then, as the song says, our hearts must go on singing. Until then, we must choose with every breath whether we are going to do what *we* want, or simply die to our reputations and dreams as He did, *and let the Father do with us whatever He chooses*. What He chooses may well mean a cross. It did for His Son. Every minute of every day, we choose who knows what's best for us, and who determines what life will hold. Walking in humility, then, is the process by which a man or woman, minute by minute, humbles himself or herself and becomes a joyful spectator as God Himself lives his or her life.

Our example is Jesus Himself. While He walked this earth, He never at any time departed from a position of total dependence, which is, in effect, total humility. Not even once, for a fraction of a second, did Jesus *do His own thing*. He just let the Father live

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through Him and, in so doing, chose to walk in humility. Then He said to us, “Let this mind be in you.”

We have already watched as Jesus humbled Himself at His birth, through His childhood, at His baptism, and as He called out His disciples. We take up there in this study and move on to the next events in the Master’s life: His first public demonstration of His power, His first public declaration of righteous anger, and His first public confrontation with the world’s concepts of religiosity. One thread will be common: again and again He must *humble Himself*. As we watch Him, we ought to catch a glimpse of how God looks in the every day conflicts of life, and how He behaves in us when we allow Him to be Himself.

We take up reading in John, chapter two, verse one:

On the third day a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee. Jesus’ mother was there,

and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding.

When the wine was gone, Jesus’ mother said to him, “They have no more wine.”

“Dear woman, why do you involve me?” Jesus replied, “My time has not yet come.”

His mother said to the servants, “Do whatever he tells you.”

Nearby stood six stone water jars, the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing, each holding from twenty to thirty gallons.

Jesus said to the servants, “Fill the jars with water”; so they filled them to the brim.

Then he told them, “Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet.” They did so,

and the master of the banquet tasted the water that had been turned into wine. He did not realize where it had come from, though the servants who had drawn the water knew. Then he called the bridegroom aside

and said, “Everyone brings out the choice wine first and then the cheaper wine after the guests have had too much to drink; but you have saved the best till now.”

This, the first of his miraculous signs, Jesus performed in Cana of Galilee. He thus revealed his glory, and his disciples put their faith in him. (John 2:1-11 NIV)

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Jesus has been waiting for thirty years for this moment. You and I would still be waiting. We would have thought it beneath us. It was hardly an auspicious beginning to mark the transformation of the world. The Master was invited to a wedding feast, a feast His mother also attended. She was, perhaps, in some position of responsibility at the feast; we don't know for sure. Getting married was not something you took lightly in that Jewish culture. Wedding celebrations took an entire week. Those of you who are fathers of the bride and think her getting married was a one-way ticket to bankruptcy, listen. During that time, a series of banquets were held, and virtually everyone who had ever known the couple was invited. It was not uncommon for a whole town to be included. Imagine taking the telephone book and sending announcements to everyone listed. It was a caterer's nightmare. You had no way for certain of knowing how many might come, how much they would eat or drink, or how long they might stay.

One thing you knew, though. It probably would be a mob scene. It was an act of great rudeness to refuse to attend. The ultimate "slap in the face" was to be invited to a wedding reception and decline, or to accept and not show up. So the crowd was big, and their appetites were big as well. One thing must never happen: the host must never run out of food and never run out of wine. That would be a breach of hospitality of the highest order.

Now, chances are, you and I would never have even been there. For one thing, we wouldn't have considered it "spiritual" enough. The fact that all those people would be there and that we had spent our lives wanting to be available to people, would be incidental. We often miss God-ordained appointments with destiny by being unwilling to lower ourselves to attend such worldly events. Perhaps Jesus' mom urged Him to go; we don't know. We would have probably answered, "Get real, Mom, I've got a kingdom to create and I've only got three years to do it. Besides, I hate all the noise and the drinking and the unpleasant behavior. You go without me. I'll stay home and do my Bible Study."

Not Jesus. *He humbled Himself.* His earthly mother needed Him, and His Heavenly Father instructed Him to go. That's all the reason He needed. The disciples, according to verse 2, were with Him. This was part of their training; not a lesson in winemaking,

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a lesson in humility. I'm not sure what they learned, but I'm sure it was the beginning of three years of visualizing what it was like to be so dead to yourself that being alive became an adventure.

Not only was the occasion relatively trivial, the circumstances were next to ridiculous. In the light of the conflict of the ages between Satan and God, what difference did it make whether or not there was enough wine at a wedding in Cana. They all had more to drink than they needed. Anything was more than they needed. And to top off the humiliation, it was His mother who called the problem to His attention. Can't you imagine going to a party as a thirty-year old with your closest friends, and having your mother come up to you and bother you with the caterer's problems? If you or I were planning our grand entrance into the world of spiritual warfare, we'd have raised someone from the dead or caused a war to cease.

In all likelihood, there weren't even any reporters there. Why waste the Son of God's first great triumph over the elements of man on something like this? *Because wine wasn't the issue; humility was.* God had come to earth incognito, and was going to change this world from the inside out. He would perform miracles; thousands of them. But the miracles were not the reason He came. They were only teaching tools to get man's attention. *He had come to die.*

Tradition indicates that Jesus' stepfather was deceased by this time. We don't know. This incident would seem to demonstrate that His mother was somewhat dependent on her oldest son to help her. That was reason enough for the Master to do what He did. His ministry was only three days old. These "followers" of His still did not understand who He was. This would be the beginning of a series of miracles that would ultimately draw attention to the fact that God had come to earth. The way it took place was as significant as the miracle itself.

We don't know for sure what Mary expected Jesus to do. She knew who He was, but she probably had no idea yet what that entailed. There is a great possibility that she simply hoped He would scout around and locate some more wine. Whatever she thought, she got more than she expected. *We often do when we approach Jesus for help.*

His reply has been the subject of many commentaries. We

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won't dwell on it, because it is incidental to the subject at hand. He addressed her with dignity. The phrase, "woman" in that day was one of honor and respect. He honored her in every way. The King James Bible phrases His reply in verse 4:

...what have I to do with thee [in this matter]? mine hour is not yet come.

The NIV words it:

"...why do you involve me?" Jesus replied. "My time has not yet come."

The question may have been to find out just what she expected. The reason for the question was the timing, not the request. It may have been that He wanted to make it clear that the ultimate purpose for miracles was not to please man but to reveal God.

The way He did it was the key. He didn't call all the people together, wave a wand over the wine pots and announce His arrival to save the world. His was a mission of humility. Quietly, without fanfare, He called together some of the servants who were helping with the wedding and instructed them to take six water pots which were standing by and fill them with water; hardly a ruse to call attention to Himself. They were jugs usually kept for water used ceremonially for cleansing, and each of them held 20 to 30 gallons. That's a lot of water. *It's really a lot of wine.*

Then He instructed one of the servants to pour a glass of this "water" into a glass and take it to the head caterer for his approval. They did this. The master of the banquet was ecstatic. Not only was it no longer water, *it was far better wine than what had been served up to that point.*

Verse 11 sums it up:

This, the first of His miraculous signs, Jesus performed at Cana in Galilee. He thus revealed his glory, and his disciples put their faith in Him. (John 2:11 NIV)

How did He reveal His glory? That's an interesting question. I don't think it was necessarily by turning water into wine. I think He revealed His glory by *the way He turned the water into wine.* He had come to earth to demonstrate God's love for man through servanthood and submission. Both of those words are synonyms for humility. He glorified His Father by doing the

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most menial of things to honor His mother, while meeting a very simple, humble need. He had not come to earth to define the spectacular. Whatever He did that was spectacular, He did to define love. Love does *whatever is necessary to reveal God's heart*. Often that means doing that which is unpleasant, unpopular, distasteful, trivial. If the reason you are doing it is to glorify God, the unpleasant becomes filled with meaning. The unpopular becomes rich in fulfillment. The distasteful becomes acceptable; the trivial becomes vital.

Christians trying to lead their loved ones to Christ need to come off their holy pedestals and serve. Whatever it takes, wherever it takes you, may well be worth it to see that one come to glorify God. So Jesus' first miracle was a slice of nothing from the world's perspective, but it meant everything to a concerned mother and a handful of brand new converts. That's all that mattered.

The next event on the Master's agenda was more visible and more unpleasant. Just a few brief days had passed since the wedding feast had ended. How many people knew about the wine, and what effect that miracle had on His ministry we don't know. Jesus now has returned to Capernaum with His mother and His brother and His small gathering of disciples. It is almost Passover time. The event is found in John:

After this he went down to Capernaum with his mother and brothers and his disciples. There they stayed for a few days.

When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, Jesus went up to Jerusalem.

In the temple courts he found men selling cattle, sheep and doves, and others sitting at tables exchanging money.

So he made a whip out of cords, and drove all from the temple area, both sheep and cattle; he scattered the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables.

To those who sold doves he said, "Get these out of here! How dare you turn my Father's house into a market!"

His disciples remembered that it is written: "Zeal for your house will consume me."

Then the Jews demanded of him, "What miraculous sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this?"

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Jesus answered them, “Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days.”

The Jews replied, “It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?”

But the temple he had spoken of was his body.

After he was raised from the dead, his disciples recalled what he had said. Then they believed the Scripture and the words that Jesus had spoken.

Now while he was in Jerusalem at the Passover Feast, many people saw the miraculous signs he was doing and believed in his name.

But Jesus would not entrust himself to them, for he knew all men.

He did not need man’s testimony about man, for he knew what was in a man.

(John 2:12-25 NIV)

If you thought righteous anger and humility could not coexist, think again. Remember, Jesus never sinned; Jesus never was less than humble. Our definition of humility, then, must include this episode as well. Humility, remember, is not cowering in the shadows afraid to be recognized, lest someone call attention to what you are doing. Humility, on occasion, involves boldness, visibility, even vulnerability. *Humility is dependence*. It is total willingness to be used by God *any way God wants to use you*. It is willingness to be humiliated, misunderstood, spit upon, even crucified. It is the response of the will to the perfect plan of God in a way that calls attention to Him, not to you.

Jesus and His close followers, along with His family, were spending a few days in Capernaum. The Scripture records: “He went *down* to Capernaum.” Capernaum was 700 ft lower in altitude than Cana. It was there that the Master seemed to set up His temporary headquarters for a brief season. While He was there, it was time for the “Jewish Passover”. That’s an interesting phrase. According to Exodus 12 and Leviticus 23, it was originally called “the Lord’s Passover”. Now it had become the “Jews’ Passover”. The “feasts of the Lord” (Leviticus 23) had now become the “feasts of the Jews” (John chapters 5, 6, 7, 11, 19). This is the pattern that evolves when men take the Word of God (with godly intentions) and over the years, allow truth to turn into tradition. The fact that

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the tradition was originally based on truth is used to justify its continuance and even exalt the tradition to equality in importance with the word itself. Oftentimes we are hard pressed, after a few years, to even explain the Scriptural basis for the tradition itself. We must be careful.

What was taking place in the temple is not totally devoid of meaning in our day. The temple began as a place to worship Jehovah. God gave *ways* and *works* that assisted man in the performing of that worship. As the years passed, the *ways* and the *works* became equated with the worship experience. In order to accommodate the methods and the means, the Jews began to violate other basic Scriptural principles, ignoring the fact that the tradition generated was not necessarily of God, and the abuses those traditions created *were definitely not of God*. Had Jesus not been humble, that is, totally dependent on His Father, He would have avoided this experience.

He was beginning His ministry. From man's perspective, he needed the approval and the cooperation of the religious leaders, and He certainly did not need their opposition. In addition, Jesus had a great sense of respect for the law, having, in essence, been its author and finisher. So what He was about to do, He would not have done *had He had one ounce of pride*.

In order to accommodate the more than 250,000 animals that would be sacrificed at the Passover each year, the religious system had implemented a very profitable scheme. It was profitable for the temple and it was profitable for the priests. And so we have the forerunner of some of today's marketplace marketing schemes which, in the name of the gospel, use the gospel as a way to profit, all the while attaching spiritual significance to their acts of larceny.

A temple tribute had to be paid in exact half-shekels of the sanctuary, or in ordinary Galilean shekels. In the country at the time, however, some six or seven additional kinds of currency were in use as well, and it became necessary for some kind of program to be implemented to allow their currency to be translated or transferred into the currency used by the temple. Moneychanging stalls were set up in all the little towns around the countryside prior to the Passover, but a few days before the celebration was to begin, they were shut down, and all of this activity was confined to the temple itself.

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The atmosphere was carnival-like. Tables were set up in the Gentile court of the temple, completely desecrating the area. Fast-talking merchandisers were weighing foreign currency and haggling over the best exchange rate, making a healthy profit in the process. Some of that profit they kept, but much of it found its way into the temple coffers, and perhaps an equal amount found its way into the pockets of the priests through bribes. In an area adjacent to this, merchants had booths set up for the purpose of selling pigeons and other sacrificial animals to those who could not or did not bring their own. Their prices were hardly of the Wal-Mart variety.

The whole scene resembled a circus; not an atmosphere conducive to worship. The presence of this zoo did not call attention to God, but to the process and the procedure required by the temple authorities before you could worship God on their terms. And, as usual, those procedures were geared to generate maximum profits for the people at the top. How sad. Jesus was wounded in spirit; not because it would *affect His ministry*, but because *the Holy Name of His Father was being trampled underfoot by the self-serving systems of men*.

Because of His humility, He could not stand idly by. So the King of Glory come to earth had to demonstrate righteous anger in order to protest this abuse of His Father's Name. The flesh would have looked the other way. Humility demanded a response. Jesus humbled Himself and became vulnerable. How He did it was crucial. He did not do it to call attention to Himself or to further His own agenda. From man's vantage point, it destroyed His own agenda. He became an instant enemy of the hierarchy who controlled the people He had come to save. Silence, He could have justified, would have given Him an audience, and the end could justify the means.

Not Jesus. Pride would have dictated doing *anything it took* to keep His program intact. Humility required doing *whatever the Father asked Him to do to honor the Father's name*. For the first time, the Master confronted the religious hypocrisy of His day and when asked to justify His credentials, He spoke for the first time in a parable. He took truth and coined it in phraseology they could not grasp, because they did not comprehend spiritual truth. They asked for a sign to prove that He had the right to do what he did. He answered, "Destroy this temple and I will rebuild it in three days." He was speaking of His body and His

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death; they thought He meant the actual temple itself. He didn't bother to explain. Once the disciples received the Holy Spirit, they understood.

His miracles began to be noted by the multitudes during the Passover time, and many believed on His name. The natural man would have focused on the numbers, gloried in the victories, and begun a building program to house the crowds. They would have focused on the results. Jesus knew the heart of man. He knew that so long as He gave them what they wanted, they would follow Him in droves; but once the real meaning of discipleship surfaced, they would flee like cattle. "He knew what was in man." So instead of responding to His emotions, *He humbled Himself*. He just did what the Father wanted Him to, and left the results in the Father's hands. He hadn't come to build a program. He had come to do the Father's will. That's all that mattered. And when the traditions of men interfered, He humbled Himself and became vulnerable, *even at the expense of His entire ministry and reputation*, and let God through Him rebuke those who desecrated the name of His Father.

Oh, for that kind of humility in the church today. Oh, for men and women who *for the sake of the name*, are willing to be transparent, vulnerable, and steadfast. Not abusively, condemningly, or selfishly. Just honestly standing for what is right, and quietly waiting on the Father for the right moment to take their stand.

The turning of the water into wine and the cleansing of the temple have become somewhat controversial passages. They need not be. The issue at hand is the mind of Christ: how God responds to the daily confrontations of life when he resides in the body of a man or woman. The answer is singular: He always responds *by humbling Himself*. He always becomes vulnerable, and simply *does the Father's will*. It may appear on the surface to spell disaster for His reputation or His ministry. It may appear on the surface to be mundane or to lack the sensationalism that is prevalent in our society. God did not come to earth to please man. He came to earth *to save man*. What an incredible difference.

And that, Beloved, *is the only reason you are alive*. You, too, came to earth to die (to yourself) that others might live. You didn't know it until Christ came into your life, but now you know

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you too have a singular reason for living. Two things are certain. You may be called into the shadows and asked to do things no one else wants to bother with. If so, *humble yourself and let God express Himself through you by your servant heart.* Or, secondly, you might be called to become vulnerable by standing for righteousness when taking that stand seems certain death to your dreams or your acceptance. If so, *quietly give God the freedom in you to become so vulnerable that His will takes precedence over anything man might say or do.*

Both choices require humility. Humility is dependence. Humility is that awesome choice to die, so God in you can live. He may take you into the shadows or into the limelight. The key in either place is not where you are, but *who they see*, you or God. If you truly humble yourself, there is no doubt who they will see. They will see a man or woman who is *walking humbly with their God.* Don't put God in a box. Don't limit your concept of humility to anything less than His. Set Him free to be in you whatever He chooses. He didn't make us all alike. He only gave us all a like Spirit to direct us and control us. That Spirit will reflect Himself through you differently than He will through me. He will, however, *always reveal a heart of humility.* He will always be dependent on the Father.

Why not go out this week without so many prescribed, presumptive expectations or limitations? Why not ask God right now just to do with you in the next seven days *anything* He chooses? We have so limited God by telling Him what He can or cannot do with our lives. We want Him to stay within the boundaries of our concepts, rather than freeing Him to operate in the realm of the Spirit any way He wants. Maybe you normally seek out the limelight. Free Him to lead you to a quiet place where a miracle can take place that only those closest to you will understand. That's wonderful. Perhaps you normally, in the flesh, avoid confrontations of all kinds. Set Him free this week to lead you to the marketplace if He so desires, where you might be required to take a stand so unpopular that all your friends will counsel you to run and hide. Don't listen to them. *Just follow Him.* If He leads you to a wedding reception, go. If He leads you into a confrontation with the religious system, go. If He leads you back to that job or that relationship you had decided to flee from, go. Wherever He leads you, He's doing something wonderful.

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He's letting His mind be in you.

Dear God,

Whatever it takes, that's what we want.

Amen.

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Wherever He leads you
Don't you see,
You can walk
In humility?

Whether in victory
Or even mid strife,
Humility is letting God
Run your life.

It's letting Him choose
Where He wants you to go,
And as you do
You let His life show.

Sometimes it's doing
Things out of sight
That reveals to so few
His power, His might.

But sometimes it's standing
Before life's crowd
While letting His voice
Denounce sin out loud.

So what if my reputation's
On the line,
Lord, your reputation is
What counts not mine.

So whatever it is
It's Him not you,
You are just yielding
To what He wants to do.

Oh, learn the secret
And learn it today,
Humility is just
Letting God have His way.

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