



2537 Lee Road  
Cleveland Heights, OH 44118-4136  
Telephone: 216-321-8880  
Website: [www.COTSumc.org](http://www.COTSumc.org)

## **“Walking Humbly” October 16, 2022**

**Exodus 23:9; Romans 12:3, 9-18 (CEB)**

Rev. Amanda Moseng  
Sanctuary Worship

Humility. By default, it is one of those things we are not quick to say we possess for concern that we will not sound humble in the process. “Oh yes, I am so humble.” “I’m the humblest person I know.” That does not necessarily sound very sincere, does it? It is a quiet virtue, one that we feel and that others can easily identify in us. We are now midway through the BE Campaign, and I have been thrilled by your excitement and engagement in this campaign. We are learning and growing together, but most importantly, we are working to make our community a little more like the Kingdom of God. The foundational scripture for the BE Campaign is Micah 6:8 “He has told you, O mortal, what is good, and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice and to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God?” Though we’ve discovered God’s idea of justice is more expansive than ours and that biblical kindness involves more than just being nice, humility may be the most difficult of the three. What does scripture tell us about humility and what does it look like in our lives?

In this portion of the letter to the Romans, the Apostle Paul is articulating what the righteousness of God looks like in our everyday life. In other words, what does it look like to live out our Christian faith each and every day? How should we live? Paul exhorts his listeners to humility when he said “don’t think of yourself more highly than you ought to think. Instead, be reasonable since God has measured out a portion of faith to each of you.” In the portion of Romans 12 that we are passing over today, Paul compares the church to the body of Christ and lists a few of the different gifts given to believers. We all have different gifts, but we are all needed. We should not get tripped up thinking that we are better than someone else.

Paul uses a form of the Greek word *phronein* four times within verse 3 alone. *Phronein* relates to your mindset, the way you think about things. We are responsible for the mindset and mentality we have about ourselves because that impacts how we view others. In Romans 12:2 Paul wrote “Don’t be conformed to the patterns of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds so that you can figure out what God’s will is- what is good and pleasing and mature.” We undergo the process of renewing our minds, which do not do on our own but through the power and presence of the Holy Spirit, so that we can see ourselves and others in a reasonable way.

We see this exhortation repeated in verse 16 “Consider everyone as equal, and don’t think that you’re better than anyone else. Instead, associate with people who have no status. Don’t think that you’re so smart.” We will return to some of that verse in a little bit, but it underscores Paul’s exhortation to humility in the way we think about ourselves. We have the tendency to think highly about ourselves, but Paul knocks us down a peg here. Rather than the prideful stance we might default to, we are invited instead to consider the way of humility.

This humility was demonstrated in the life and mind of Christ. In Philippians 2 we read “Do nothing from selfish ambition or empty conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. <sup>4</sup> Let each of you look not to your own interests but to the interests of others. <sup>5</sup> Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, <sup>6</sup> who, though he existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be grasped, <sup>7</sup> but emptied himself, taking

the form of a slave, assuming human likeness. And being found in appearance as a human, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross.” Humility is emptying ourselves of selfish ambition, conceit, and pride. It is a mindset guided by Jesus Christ and one we must continually revisit and renew so that we have an appropriate view of ourselves and others.

A humble mindset sees other people as equals and in the family of faith, as siblings in Christ. The way we think about others impacts the way that we treat them. We see this play out when it involves someone who is different from us, whether racially, ethnically, socioeconomically, gender identity, sexual orientation, and so on. We have the responsibility to treat everyone as the beloved creations of God that they are and to recognize the image of God in others. Our verse from Exodus 23 is part of a series of instructions detailing the social responsibilities of God’s people. “Don’t oppress an immigrant. You know what it’s like to be an immigrant, because you were immigrants in the land of Egypt.” The NRSV reads “You know the heart of an alien, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt.” The original Hebrew word used here means foreigner, stranger, sojourner, or guest. It gives the connotation of both long-term and temporary stays. For the Israelites, they knew what it was like to be in Egypt and to experience the cruel and oppressive practices of Pharaoh. They were to treat the stranger differently precisely because they were once in a similar position. These strangers are the marginalized in the community. Time and time again we see in scripture that God has a heart for the marginalized. They hold a special place in God’s heart. Do the marginalized hold a special place in our hearts? It takes humility in heart and mind to welcome everyone.

Paul exhorts the Romans to “love each other like the members of your family.” This presumes that you love the members of your family, whether biological or created otherwise. We all have a place, and we all belong. The spiritual family was a place of belonging, community, and support for the early church. In this letter to the Romans, we see Paul inviting them to fling the door open wide: “Contribute to the needs of God’s people, and welcome strangers into your home.” Be a community of grace and humility where all can feel welcome. That message rings true for us, today. In humility, think of the needs of others. Create space for them. Show them the love of Christ. We do not do this for anything in return but to reflect the heart of God. This is putting the mind and humility of Christ into action.

We are not just called but required to walk humbly with God. Humility is not optional for us as Christians. The Gospel of Luke tells the story of an encounter Jesus had with a Pharisee and a tax collector. One day they went up to the temple to pray. As the Pharisee prayed, standing loud and proud, he gave thanks to God that he was not like everyone else—crooks, evildoers, adulterers, and even called out the tax collector. He touted how often he fasts and how much he tithed. In comparison, the tax collector did not even lift his eyes toward heaven but struck his chest and said “God, show mercy to me, a sinner.” In response to this scenario, Jesus said “All who lift themselves up will be brought low, and those who make themselves low will be lifted up.” In ancient times, no one liked the tax collectors but looked up to Pharisees. Tax collectors were considered the bad guys who had sold themselves out to the Roman Empire. This tax collector was excluded. He would have been marginalized. The Pharisees did not want to associate with tax collectors. And yet, Jesus showed preference for the marginalized and the outcast. Jesus ate with tax collectors, which was absurd to the Pharisees and legal experts of the time.

Paul echoes Jesus’ heart towards the marginalized when he said “Consider everyone as equal, and don’t think that you’re better than anyone else. Instead, associate with people who have no status.” This is an exhortation to us today, as well. This is a call to come alongside our neighbors, regardless of who they are. We are able to financially support many wonderful ministries here in the Heights and greater Cleveland but what about the people themselves? What if we were just as committed to the relational aspect of ministry? What if we learned names and stories? What if we listened well instead of just aiming to fix a problem? And I am 100% guilty of it myself. But this exhortation from Paul causes us to consider who we are and what we are about. Is absolutely everyone welcome here at Church of the

Saviour? We have the opportunity before us to humble ourselves and align our hearts, actions, and values with God's. No one said humility was painless, but it is required of us.

A thread running through these passages is hospitality. The opposite of oppressing the stranger is welcoming them. In a matter of words, Paul expresses to the church in Rome that they must show hospitality to others, both within their community and without. Hospitality is a defining mark of the church. The early church was born out of hospitality, and it grew because of hospitality. This calls to mind the passage in Acts 2, which describes the early church community, with thousands of believers being added to their number. They extended welcome. They did life together. They shared meals. They prayed and worshipped together. The church stands and falls on the practice of hospitality. And this goes beyond welcoming new people into the congregation and doing acts of charity, even though both are important. Rather, we must move beyond these things to hospitality as an act of justice. "Hospitality as charity offers crumbs from our tables; hospitality as justice offers a place at the table."<sup>1</sup> It is transforming the systems that are inhospitable to many. This is a different way of viewing hospitality, but one we see demonstrated in the life and ministry of Jesus. Jesus broke down societal barriers and invited all to feast at his table. He made space for the ones who were excluded. He turned systems and structures on their heads. He showed us the way of hospitality and humility. We cannot have one without the other.

When Bishop Gregory Palmer joined us for our first COTS Conversations, he talked about the gospel. Within the context of that conversation, he got into the topic of the church. He said that the gospel creates the church and shapes the community. For Bishop Palmer, the gospel is the good news about what God has done and is doing to bring about new creation, seen chiefly in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. If this is the gospel, then the church must be cruciform. It must be shaped around Christ. This tells us that the church does not exist for us, but for Jesus Christ and his ongoing work and mission in the world. The church exists for those who are not yet here. As followers of Jesus, as the church, will we humble ourselves so that we can fully participate with God in God's mission of love, redemption, and reconciliation in the world?

It starts with simple actions. Not necessarily easy actions, but simple. First, allow the Holy Spirit to develop the mind of Christ in you. This is taking every thought captive for Christ. Start becoming more aware of your thought patterns, the way you think about people who might be considered "other." What is your knee-jerk reaction to someone who is different? Fear? Suspicion? Recognize your thoughts before they turn into actions. Pray that you would see the world through God's eyes, that you would know God's heart for humanity. Next, find opportunities to participate in hospitality. This certainly includes within the walls here at COTS, because we need people who will extend welcome and nurture a culture of belonging. We want every to feel and know that they are welcome here at COTS. Everyone has a place at the table here. But think beyond these walls. Where are the pain points in our community? Where and how can you be an advocate? Consider your passions, talents, and experiences. Where do they align with the needs of our community? Finally, humility looks like being willing to accept that you might be wrong. None of us hold the market on absolute truth. A posture of humility and the willingness to learn and see things differently is a gift. It is something we do not see much of during an election season. We can get so entrenched in our beliefs that we are not willing to consider any other sides. Be willing to hear and listen to others, even if you disagree, even if they infuriate you.

Walking humbly gives the image of continuous movement. Most of the time it is forward, but sometimes we do take steps back in the process. We learn and grow as we go along. But we keep going, following after the one who showed us the way of humility. Walking humbly with God requires a shift in mindset, heart, and actions so that they align with God's. We must have the mind of Christ, have God's heart for the marginalized, and act in ways that align with

---

<sup>1</sup> Feasting on the Word Commentary

the gospel. It is surely more comfortable to focus on our own needs and wants, to treat church as a social activity. That is far easier to control, and it does not ask much of us. But what does God ask of us? To do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with our God. Thanks be to God. Amen.