

COVID-19 and Philippians 2

March 24, 2020 * Langford Community Church * Graham Gladstone

Well hello! So glad that you could be here today! Our circumstances continue to change but God remains the same.

What I want to do with you today is look at COVID-19 through the lens of Philippians 2.

Because let's just admit right off the top that all of the social distancing we're doing is hard. It's a pain. The kids are home from school, we're trying to work and parent at the same time, you have to line up to get groceries. Life is not the same as it was and we are all making (at this point), voluntarily sacrifices, in order to stop the spread of COVID-19.

And let me just say right off the bat – that that's GOOD. We NEED to be doing that. And if you're not, you really should. Julie's really helped me to look at this from a medical perspective, in order to realize that the less we circulate, the less the virus circulates, and the less the virus circulates, than fewer people are going to catch it. Less people with the virus means that medical people have a fighting chance to use the resources that they have to help people who DO get sick.

And thinking this way has actually shifted my social perspective too - from a self-centred one to an others-centred perspective. I went into this thinking - 'I'll be okay; I can risk it' but now I realize that I need to think 'I need to limit myself so I don't put others at risk.' COVID-19 is dangerous and if me staying home means I won't pick it up and pass it to another person who passes it to their neighbour who has an aunt in the middle of cancer treatments, then I'm going to stay home.

So we DO need to be intentional about limiting our social contact. We DO need to do a good job of washing our hands. And we do need to put up with these various inconveniences, not only for our own benefit, but for the benefit of others.

And if you know Philippians 2, you'll know that this is where Scripture and real-life meet.

In Philippians 2:3-4, Paul writes: 3 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. (In short, don't automatically think you're better than others but actively put them first)...

4 Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others (Phi 2:3-4 NIV).

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When you limit yourself and stay in when you really want to go out, you're putting the interests of others you'll never even meet before your own. When you embrace the closures instead of resenting them, you'll putting the interests of others before your own. When you buy ONE package of TP instead of twelve, you're putting the interests of others before your own.

And Paul doesn't want us to neglect ourselves – he does say 'look to your own interests' – but not only to our own – and doing what we need to do while taking care of others.

So when you social distance and self-isolate – you are doing a very biblical thing.

And not only that, you are following in the footsteps of Jesus Himself. As Paul continues Philippians 2, he goes on to say – I'm not asking you to do this because it's a nice idea; I'm telling you to do this because this is what Jesus already did for you. Jesus was not selfish; Jesus was not conceited. In humility, He put our interests before His own, made Himself a slave and died on the Cross to reconcile us to God. He laid down His life for us. And Paul says 'because He did that, let YOUR attitude be the same as His.'

5 Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus (Phi 2:5 NIV).

So let me wrap this up by saying this – when you make sacrifices for the benefit of others to stop the spread of COVID-19, you are following in Jesus' footsteps and serving others. Keep it up. I know that many of you are staying in and limiting your social contact. That's good.

I also know that many of you are making phone calls and sending cards and carefully making meals and dropping them off on people's doorsteps. That's good too! If there is an opportunity to carefully serve another, go for it. Otherwise, serve them by staying home.

And maybe this can help to reframe the situation. Not – 'ugh I resent this because it's a pain' but 'I accept this because it's a way for me to help others, as Christ already served me.'

3 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves.

4 Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.

5 Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:

6 Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped,

7 but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.

8 And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death-- even death on a cross!

9 Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name,

10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

(Phi 2:3-11 NIV).

Stay safe, trust God and prayer and precaution, not panic.