

## *Ubuntu*

### **Philippians 2: 1- 13 (October 1, 2017)**

#### ***Philippians 2: 5-11***

5Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, 6who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, 7but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, 8he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death— even death on a cross. 9Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, 10so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

#### ***Historical Context***

Philippians 2:5-11 is known as the Kenosis Hymn (from the Greek word *ekenosen*, "he emptied,"). The kenotic hymn may be the oldest piece of Christian writing. Kenosis says that God is powerful enough to give up his own privilege in order to empower others.

#### ***Theme: Ubuntu***

The Kenosis Hymn functions as an illustration of what Christian citizenship means. Unity comes in serving God through service to each other. There is danger in selfishly looking out for one's own interests at the expense of others. This way of thinking mirrors the Ubuntu philosophy, which literally means that a person is a person through other people. We humble ourselves, we empty ourselves because we know that we cannot succeed unless all succeed.

Desmond Tutu describes Ubuntu in this way: "Ubuntu speaks particularly about the fact that you can't exist as a human being in isolation. It speaks about our interconnectedness. You can't be human all by yourself, and when you have this quality – Ubuntu – you are known for your generosity. We think of ourselves far too frequently as just individuals, separated from one another, whereas you are connected and what you do affects the whole World. When you do well, it spreads out."

Similarly, Nelson Mandella noted: "A traveler through a country would stop at a village and he didn't have to ask for food or for water. Once he stops, the people give him food and attend to him. That is one aspect of Ubuntu, but it will have various aspects. Ubuntu does not mean that people should not enrich themselves. The question therefore is: Are you going to do so in order to enable the community around you to be able to improve?"

#### ***Gospel Story as a Case Study (Matthew 21:23-32)***

In the parable of the two sons, a man tells his sons to go work in the vineyard. The first son refused, but later obeyed and went. The second son initially expressed obedience, but actually disobeyed and refused to work in the vineyard. The parallel to Ubuntu is that what you do, more than what you say affects others. Affirmative responses alone are not praiseworthy as much as a life pattern that embodies them.