Christian Humility

Sunday 25th January 2026, St Peter and St Paul's

One of the topics we have been exploring recently in our Wednesday evening Bible and Banter sessions is the idea of humility. When we discussed it last Wednesday it prompted some really good discussion, not just about what it means to be humble, but about what humility actually looks like in everyday Christian living. Humility is something that feels in rather short supply these days. Most of us would probably say that we are humble people, but when we stop and look honestly at our actions, we might find that the picture is more complicated. One rather fun exercise in the course booklet we're using asked us to rate our own humility, and then say what rating we thought others would give us.

Humility, after all, is not a fashionable virtue. We live in a culture that rewards confidence, self-promotion, and being heard above the noise. We are encouraged to build a personal "brand", to stand out, to ensure that our achievements do not go unnoticed. Against that backdrop, Christian humility can sound weak, old-fashioned, or even naïve. And yet Christian humility is none of those things.

Part of the difficulty is that, as Christians, we sometimes misunderstand humility ourselves. We think we are being humble when we put ourselves down. We can slip into the habit of putting ourselves down especially in our worship, focusing heavily on our sinfulness while losing sight of God's love and grace. But Christian humility is not about thinking badly of ourselves. It is not false modesty, nor is it about denying our gifts or abilities. It is not about becoming smaller so that others can walk all over us like a doormat. Instead, humility is about seeing ourselves truthfully, in a no holds barred way, doing away with our rose-tinted glasses, and learning to live in that truth before God.

As we worked through the material on Wednesday evening, one of the questions we asked was this: was Jesus truly humble? We often think of Jesus as the perfect example of humility, yet much of what he did doesn't look all that humble on the surface. He overturned the tables in the Temple. He openly challenged religious leaders and rulers. He spoke with extraordinary authority about himself for example when he said "I am the way, the truth, and the life." Yet Scripture tells us very clearly that Jesus showed humility. Not by pretending to be less than he was, but by choosing to take on our human nature. He knelt down and washed his disciples' feet. He touched the unclean. He associated with the downtrodden and those whom society preferred to ignore. His humility was not meekness or hand-wringing gentleness; it was something far deeper and far stronger.

The Bible repeatedly warns us about pride. Pride is not just arrogance or boastfulness. It is the quieter, more dangerous belief that we are self-made, self-sufficient, and self-justifying. Pride whispers that my needs matter more than yours, that my perspective is the right one, that my worth must constantly be proven. Humility, by contrast, begins with truth: The truth that we are created, not self-created. The truth that everything we have, our talents, our opportunities, even our breath, is a gift from God. The truth that we depend on God far more than we like to admit. That is why St Peter urges Christians

to “clothe yourselves with humility”: humility is something we choose to put on each day. It does not come naturally; it must be practised. We practise humility when we apologise sincerely, when we thank people generously, or when we resist the urge to win every argument. Humility is practiced when we serve without needing recognition, and when we pray honestly, without performance or pretence. Importantly, we practise humility when we accept our own limitations. There is a particular kind of pride that disguises itself as virtue: the pride that says, “I must cope with everything alone.” Vicars are especially prone to this type of pride. Christian humility allows us to say, “I need help.” It allows us to rest, and to be human.

In a world driven by noise and self-assertion, humble lives stand out. They radiate peace rather than anxiety. They invite trust rather than competition. They reflect something of Christ. Humility also prepares us for joy. Pride is exhausting. It requires constant effort and constant defence. Humility frees us from the burden of self-importance and opens us to gratitude. When we no longer feel the need to prove ourselves, we can finally receive life as the gift that it is. Jesus says, “Whoever humbles himself will be exalted.” This is not a promise of worldly success, but of spiritual freedom. God lifts up the humble not by inflating their ego, but by anchoring them securely in love.

So perhaps the question for us today is not, “How can I become more impressive?” but rather, “How can I become more like Christ?” Where might we need to loosen our grip on pride? Where might we need to listen more carefully? Where might humility open a door that pride has kept firmly shut?

Christian humility is not weakness. It is strength under control. It is confidence rooted in God rather than self. And it is one of the clearest ways the light of Christ shines through ordinary lives.

Let us pray that we may have the courage to practise it quietly, faithfully, and trusting that God is at work in what the world so often overlooks.

Amen.