

# SERMON NOTES: PHILIPPIANS 2:6-11

## THE MIND OF CHRIST

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- **Main teaching point of the passage**

Christ is our supreme example. He humbled himself, became a servant and is now exalted in glory. Humility must be integral in all that we do, especially in mission.

- **Key points from the passage to support and demonstrate the main teaching point**

1. Christ gave up heaven, emptied himself, thought of others before himself and was obedient to death – he trusted the father’s plan.

2. John 3:16: God’s plan is to save the whole world (all that respond to his free gift) through sacrifice not conquest. Central to us being involved in his plan is being like him – being servant hearted and humble.

3. Christ as servant king is totally counter cultural. Sadly, mission history has often been bound up with colonisation and power. That is opposite of the spirit of Christ (2 Corinthians 12:7-10). It’s only as we give up control and trust in God he works through his power and wisdom.

- **illustration to help with key points above**

***The example of Bartholomaeus Ziegenbalg – a missionary with the mind of Christ***

When we look back on the last three hundred years of cross-cultural mission we might have mixed feelings. Yes, many people around the world heard the good news but it’s a sad fact that many missionaries were indistinguishable from colonialists - looking down on the people they served - something that would have been abhorrent to the Lord Jesus. It’s a welcome relief to come across the wonderful story of Bartholomaeus Ziegenbalg, a German missionary employed by the Danish government to work in the Crown Colony of Tranquebar, on the South-East coast of India.

In 1706 Ziegenbalg, arrived in Tranquebar and sought to “share the Scripture with cultural awareness.” He was motivated by a strong belief in the Word of God, “...the Word of God was efficacious and powerful for personal conversion and holiness”. As soon as he and his colleague arrived, they experienced opposition from the local Danish chaplain, Hindu leaders and Brahmins and the Danish governor. Ziegenbalg was later imprisoned for four months on trumped-up charges. “They had no interest in gaining political or territorial advantage over the local people... the pietists were seemingly without racism or imperialism which aggravated the European colonialists.” (page 54, Nehrbass, Arrington and Santos).

Despite these early setbacks, under Ziegenbalg's direction, the Danish mission grew through prayer and hard work. They began a day school, teaching in the local language, for the missionaries opposed the Westernizing of Indian Christians. Ziegenbalg believed they must "...understand the worldview of the indigenous inhabitants in order to share the gospel with them." (p57, Nehrbass, Arrington and Santos). They were able to translate the New Testament into Tamil, having mastered both colloquial and written Tamil in two dialects, completing a Tamil dictionary. The church gradually grew and eleven years later they had to expand the building. Due to Ziegenbalg's emphasis on personal conversion and his enabling of local leadership, "as the Indian Christians moved from the Danish protectorate in search of work, most bore faithful witness, which resulted in church growth elsewhere in South India." (p.58, Neghbass, Arrington and Santos).

After thirteen years in India, Ziegenbalg died at the age of 36, due to intense workaholism and stress. His legacy? Two hundred and fifty members in the church, a seminary for the training of national leaders and the New Testament and Genesis to Ruth translated into the Tamil language. "During an age in which colonisation and prejudice were normal, his respect and empathy for the host culture caused him to focus on the people over the task and gave him an ability to maintain flexibility. With love for the Indian people, he shared God's message wherever he could at festivals, work and play...In demonstrating how to bring an uncompromising gospel to the marginalised of Asia, he confirmed Christian care and concern for the indigenous people and brought awareness of the importance of global missions to Protestant Europe." (p62, Neghbass, Arrington and Santos).

Ziegenbalg put his life and liberty on the line so that the every-day Indian might come to personal relationship with Jesus – without thinking of himself as special. No wonder the European colonialists opposed him! Ziegenbalg lived out Philippians two and calls us to do the same.

*2021, Gallagher, Robert, Bartholomaeus Ziegenbalg Models Holistic Missions, ed. Nehrbass, Arrington and Santos in Advancing Models of Mission, William Carey Publishing*

- **Suggested applications**

Christ is calling all of us to consider others before ourselves. How can we put others before ourselves in our church community?

As we obey Christ's call to go into all the world (Mark 16:15, Luke 24:44-49 and Matthew 28:19) we must go as servants and in his strength. We must leave behind thoughts of superiority, specialness, ideas that we know what needs to happen. We must work hard to differentiate between what's our own culture and the what's the gospel; we leave our culture at home.

Can we sometimes be guilty of thinking of ourselves and our own community at the risk of forgetting those who are far away, that have never had the chance to hear the good news? Why not challenge your church about how they want to respond to the call to take the good news to those unreached peoples. Christ said in Mark 16:15: "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation."

You can encourage anyone who is interested in mission to talk to the church leadership. After that why not suggest they look at <https://eu.aimint.org/getinvolved/find-your-fit/>, answer a few simple questions and then explore tailored opportunities.

You can find out about Unreached People groups if members or groups in your church would like to commit to pray regularly (see <https://prayafrica.org/>).

An AIM Mission Advisor would be very happy to give advice or information at any time, you can email Debbie on [mobcoord.eu@aimint.org](mailto:mobcoord.eu@aimint.org).