

The Servant King March 1 2020 Philippians 2:5-11

Today on Communion Sunday, we come to the very heart of the book of Philippians. The verses before us display the very heart of God as revealed to us in the gospel.

It's one of the most beautiful and powerful passages in all of Scripture, full of deep teaching about Jesus our Lord, but also filled with rich application for us.

Read Philippians 2:5-11 and pray

In this passage from Philippians, Jesus shows us what true humility is and how far true humility will go.

Paul had just encouraged the Philippians to practice true Christian fellowship, now he brings the message home by showing how much Christ did for us.

Today's passage traces the incredible journey of our Lord Jesus from the glories of heaven to the horrors of the cross and then back to glory again. It's the most amazing display of humble obedience ever witnessed in heaven or earth.

And God calls us to model our lives after it.

So let's begin with verse 5 which simply says: **"Have the same mindset as Christ Jesus."**

There is so much wrapped up in that brief little statement.

We're called to be like Jesus.

And we're especially called to be like him in his humble obedience as displayed in the gospel.

That phrase “**have the same mindset**” means “to direct your mind” in a certain direction, to allow the mind of Christ to form and shape you in your relationships with each other.

Verses 6-8 tell us that Jesus started at the highest place. **“Though he was God, he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to.”**

Long before Jesus was born at Bethlehem, long before he created the world, from all of eternity, he shared eternal glory with God the Father and God the Holy Spirit.

Jesus has always existed as God; he is in very nature God; he is equal to God. You can’t start any higher than that.

And yet, and this is the amazing part, **he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to.**

He’s setting the supreme example here where he didn’t use his position as God for selfish purposes but rather to serve.

Jesus started at the highest place. And then he travelled to the lowest place. Verse 7 says, **“He gave up his divine privileges.”**

Quote Hymn: From Heaven you came etc.

He poured himself out in love for you and for me in humble obedience to the Father. He started at the highest place – he was equal to God with all the rights and privileges as God.

But he made himself nothing.

He gave up those rights and privileges in coming to earth as our Saviour.

Here we see Jesus the Son of God emptying himself, laying aside his glory, giving up his rights and privileges as God.

He started at the highest place. He travelled to the lowest place. And in verses 7 and 8 we can trace the downward steps Jesus took in his journey of humble obedience to the Father.

He took the humble position of a slave.

And what is a slave? A slave is someone who has no rights.

Jesus took the attitude of a servant or a slave, and he said to his Father: “Not my will but yours be done.”

He just added servant to his resume. In taking the nature of a slave, Jesus did not cease being God, but rather gave up his rights as God in order to become a servant.

In the words of D.A. Carson Jesus became a nobody. He made himself nothing. He willingly gave up all his rights and took the very nature of a servant.

Jesus demonstrated this in a powerful way at the Last Supper when he removed his outer clothing, got on his knees and washed his disciples’ feet.

The first step downward for Jesus was becoming a servant, submitting himself to his Father’s will, and willingly giving himself in humble service to others.

Then our text tells us he became a human being.

Verse 7: “he gave up his divine privileges; he took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being.”

Here we have the incarnation. In Genesis 1 man was created in the likeness of God. **Here we find God being made in the likeness of man.**

Verse 8 says he **“appeared in human form.”** The invisible God became visible. He took on flesh for all to see.

He became a man. Jesus didn't cease being God when he became human, but rather his glory was veiled in human flesh. He laid aside his glory as God in order to become human. **He was truly God and truly man.**

Jesus became a servant. He became a human being. And then he became obedient to death. Verse 8: **“he humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal's death on a cross.”**

To humble yourself means to make yourself low. This verse shows us how low Jesus was willing to go.

He was obedient unto death. He was obedient even to God's command to die, to willingly give up his life for others.

Jesus became a servant. He became a human being. He became obedient to death. And finally he suffered the humiliation of the cross.

Back to verse 8: **“he humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal's death on a cross!”**

Dying on the cross was the most humiliating and painful death of all. The cross in Jesus' day was not a decoration or a piece of jewelry.

People shuddered at the thought of the cross. The word itself was avoided in polite conversation. The Romans hated those who died on the cross. The Jews considered them cursed.

To die on a cross was the most shameful, cruel, despised death of all.

But for Jesus it was even worse, because it was on the cross that Jesus suffered and paid the full penalty for our sins.

This was the final downward step for Jesus, the lowest rung on the ladder. He was obedient to death – **even death on a cross.**

The cross was Jesus' destination all along. All the other steps down the ladder were simply necessary steps to get him there. **The cross was the heart of Jesus' mission, and it's the heart of the gospel.**

Apart from Jesus' death for us on the cross, there would be no salvation. Apart from Jesus' death for us on the cross, there would be no hope of eternal life.

Jesus had travelled from the highest place to the lowest place. There was no place lower the Son of God could go than death on a cross.

Fortunately for us the gospel doesn't end there. The gospel is the good news of Jesus' death and resurrection. God didn't leave Jesus in the grave, but raised him from the dead and exalted him to the highest place.

Hear verses 9-11: **"Therefore, God elevated him to the place of highest honour and gave him the name**

above all other names, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue declare that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

“God elevated him to the place of highest honour.”

Jesus humbled himself, but God exalted him. The journey down was all the things that Jesus did. But the journey back up is all the things that God the Father did.

Jesus humbled himself; God exalted him.

It’s always this way with humility and exaltation. You can do the humbling, and let God do the exalting. **Or you can do the exalting, and let God do the humbling.** Jesus humbled himself, and he let God do the exalting.

Notice that God exalted him to the place of highest honour. This is the same word used in Psalm 97:9 which says, “For you, O LORD, are the Most High over all the earth; you are exalted far above all gods.”

Jesus humbled himself to the lowest place, and God exalted him to the highest place. There is no one and no thing higher than Jesus Christ. God exalted him to the highest place.

“God gave him the name above all other names.”

Jesus was named “**Jesus**” at his birth. **But at his exaltation he was given the name “Lord”,** or as the apostle Peter put it in Acts 2:36: **“God has made this Jesus ... both Lord and Christ.”**

God exalts Jesus to the highest place and makes him Lord of all.

We learn from this passage that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow and every tongue declare that Jesus Christ is Lord. (Philippians 2:10)

This means that all beings everywhere – angels, demons, humans, living and dead, will one day submit to Christ, bowing before his sovereignty and confessing him as Lord.

The word “**declare**” here simply means “to acknowledge something openly.” It doesn’t mean that everyone will be saved at the end of time, but rather that everyone will acknowledge Jesus as Lord.

As D.A. Carson writes: “There will not be universal salvation; there will be universal confession as to who he is.

In short, you can bow before Jesus now, or you can bow later. But one day everyone will bow before him and confess him as Lord.

Finally, this all brings glory to God the Father.

Everyone will acknowledge the Lordship of Jesus Christ to the glory of God the Father.

So, what shall we say in conclusion to all this? Let me leave you with three application points.

1) There is no task too small to do for Jesus. When you choose the path of humble obedience as Jesus did, no

task is beneath you when you do it out of love for Jesus and your neighbour. We're called to serve each other in love.

2) There is no obedience too difficult that God requires. Jesus humbled himself and became obedient to death, even death on a cross.

With Jesus as our example there is no obedience too difficult that God requires. Along with the command, God will give you the strength to obey.

3) There is no reward so sweet as that which God gives. Jesus showed the ultimate obedience, and he received the ultimate reward. You can't outgive God. Humble yourself in the sight of the Lord, and he will lift you up.

Jesus is the supreme example of humble obedience because he started from the very highest place, and he journeyed to the very lowest place.

No one travelled further than Jesus on this road to humility, because no one ever started as high or went as low as he did.

God calls us to have the same attitude as Jesus, to step out of our comfort zone, and humbly serve each other.

Prayer: Lord we thank You for meeting us here today, and for Your Word which reminded us of the suffering our Saviour went through to save us.

May the words we have just heard, and the song we are about to sing, prepare our hearts for Communion.