

FBC Service Sunday February 4 2024 Phil 2:1-11 The Humility and Honour of the Cross

This morning the Scripture we're looking at brings us to the very heart of the book of Philippians, and is arguably the most breath-taking passage in all of Scripture. How fitting for Communion Sunday.

If you want to consider the mountain peaks of revelation concerning the Person of Christ, this passage on the glorification of our Lord Jesus, is the Mount Everest among the amazing story of how the eternal Son of God stepped out of eternity into our world and became a man.

These few short verses in the letter written to the believers in Philippi, capture some of the most amazing truths that have ever confronted the minds of men.

Some people believe these words may have been an early hymn that the church sang together, but either way, it's one of the most beautiful passages in all of Scripture, full of deep teaching about Jesus our Lord, and also filled with rich application.

Here we stand in awe as we enter the realm of history. We cannot possibly hope to fathom all that is involved in these wonderful words.

This is what Paul, later writing to Timothy, calls the "*mystery of godliness*", how God was manifest in the flesh, was seen among men, and preached among the nations. What do we learn about the actions of the Lord Jesus? **One thing stands out like a beacon in the night!**

This is where humility begins-the readiness to lay aside the right to enjoy our rights.

The scripture uses this very expressive term, "*he emptied himself.*"

Jesus poured himself out, like taking a bucket and pouring out its contents so there is nothing left inside. He poured out every right he had to enjoy life as God.

The truths here are so profound, that I ask myself, how can I do them justice.

Imagine if someone stood next to you by the Grand Canyon watching a glorious sunrise, and asked you, "Can you explain to me why this is so beautiful?" You would struggle to respond.

In our text today we see the magnificent picture of Jesus displayed in His most sublime act: His emptying of Himself for our sins.

How can I explain to you its beauty? I don't think I can, but I hope I can simply bring you before our God and let the beauty of the gospel itself draw you to Him.

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

What does it mean to humble yourself? *The Bible says, "Humble yourself in the sight of the Lord,"* (James 4:10) and "*He who humbles himself will be exalted.*" (Luke 14:11)

What does it mean to truly humble yourself? Paul had just encouraged the Philippians to practice true Christian fellowship that is shaped by the gospel of Christ. **Quote Verse 3.**

Now he brings the message home by showing how much Christ did for us, how far He went to save us.

He says that our attitude should be the same as that of Jesus who demonstrated such humble obedience.

Today's Scripture 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.

Let's begin with verse 5 which simply says: *"In your relationships with one another, your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus."*

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

That phrase *"your attitude should be the same"* means "to think or direct your mind" in a certain direction. God is directing us to allow the mind of Christ to form and shape our relationships with each other.

Verses 6-8 trace the descent of our Lord Jesus in his humble obedience to the Father.

First of all, we see that Jesus started at the highest place.

Verse 6: *"though he was God, he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to..."* **This verse speaks of Jesus' pre-existence as God.**

Long before he was born at Bethlehem, long before he created the world, from all of eternity, Jesus 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 consider equality with God something to cling to. That word **"cling"** means **"to seize something for yourself."** Jesus was God, but he did not use his position for his own selfish advantage.

This corresponds to Philippians 2:3 where we read: *"Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others."* Once again, Jesus is setting the supreme example here where he did not even 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, he made himself nothing."* The phrase literally means that he emptied himself. He poured himself out in love for you and for me in humble obedience to the Father.

Song words of How Can It Be. He left his Father's home above, so free so infinite his grace. **Emptied himself of all but love and died for Adam's helpless race.**

He started at the highest place – he was equal to God with all the rights and privileges as God. **But he gave up his divine privileges.** He gave them up, laying aside his glory in coming to earth as our Saviour.

Jesus 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.

First of all, he became a servant. *“he gave up his divine privileges. He took the humble position of a slave.”* The first step downward for Jesus was taking the nature 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 the Father: *“Not my will but yours.”*

We just saw in verse 6 that Jesus is in very nature God. Now we see that he took the nature of a servant. This doesn't mean that he stopped being God. **He just added slave to his resume.**

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 got on his knees and washed his disciples' feet. Paul says our attitude should be the same as Christ Jesus.

Rather than clinging to our own privileges and rights, we should humbly serve each other in love.

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

Secondly, he became a human being. Back to verse 7:

“He gave up his divine privileges took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being.”

Here we have the incarnation. Jesus humbled himself by becoming a human being.

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 in full view of all.** He became a man. Jesus did not 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 unto death. Verse 8:

“When he appeared in human form, he humbled himself in obedience to God.” That word **“humbled”** is the same word used in verse 3:

“Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves.” To humble yourself means to make yourself low. This verse shows us how low Jesus was willing to go. Jesus 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 God.

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 a 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. Cicero called the cross "a most cruel and disgusting punishment." 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 he paid the full penalty for our sins.

Isaiah 53:5-6. *"He was wounded for our transgressions. He was crushed for our sins. He was beaten so we could be whole. He was whipped so we could be healed. Yet the Lord laid on him the sins of us all."*

This was the final downward step for Jesus, the lowest rung on the ladder. In obedience to God, he suffered death on a cross.

Let's be clear on something - 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, the gospel does not end there. Why? The gospel is the good news of Jesus' death and resurrection. God did not leave Jesus in the grave but raised him from the dead and exalted him to the highest place. Look at 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".

How mind blowing is that! May these words be emblazoned on our memory banks forever! Let them lift your spirits heavenward. They talk about a name, but this is no ordinary name.

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, and he is above all things.

Names! We all have them. They're important to our knowing one another and to others knowing us.

Most of our names are unimportant, that is, we could have any other name on earth and still be the same person we already are.

Our text tells us that there is a name that is above every name.

It's a name that brings help to the helpless, peace to the tormented, rest to the restless, hope to the hopeless and comfort to the comfortless.

This name has cooled many a fevered brow. This name has broken for millions the chains of sin. This name has delivered the captive and thrilled the saint.

The old hymn writer had it right when he wrote those powerful lines, **“That beautiful Name, that beautiful Name, from sin has power to free us!**

That beautiful Name, that wonderful Name, That matchless Name is Jesus!.”

The one who bears this name has been called everything from Adam to Wonderful and his name is Jesus.

In Heaven they know that Name! In Heaven they praise that Name! In Hell they know that Name! Satan knows that Name! One day, he too will bow and praise that Name!

All over the world, with every tick of the clock, men curse and despise the name of Jesus, but it's this name that brings forgiveness of sin, and peace with God.

Only He can take the vilest of sinners and make them clean. Only He can take a lost sinner and reconcile him to God.

Whether a person acknowledges the glory of that name in this life or not, His is still a name that is chief among all names.

My church family, when we make much of the Lord Jesus, we're merely doing what God has already done. God has decided that the name of Jesus should be lifted up to the heights of Heaven.

His name is **“above”** every name. That means that it is “over, beyond, chief”.

Although we often think of **“Jesus”** as being the name above all names, it's likely that the name meant here is actually the name **“Lord.”**

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.”* (Acts 2:36)

God exalts Jesus to the highest place and makes him Lord of all, that *“all may honour the Son just as they honour the Father.”* (John 5:23)

The word **“Lord”** is used three ways in the New Testament. It's used sometimes as a polite form of address. Like you and I may address a superior as **“sir”**. Second it is used for the master of a slave. Maybe it would be the equivalent of our **“boss”**. It refers to a person who has authority over another.

Third, the title Lord was used for God. The name above all names that is given to Jesus is the name Lord God.

All around us people use the name **“Lord”** in different ways. Some people call Him the “Lord Jesus” as a title similar to “Prince William”. Others refer to Jesus as Lord because they see him as a great leader among men.

When a Christian calls Jesus Lord, they are acknowledging Him as God and as the one who has supreme authority in their lives and circumstances. They acknowledge Him as the one who rules overall.

Before the first century came to a close, the Roman Empire was demanding that Christians acknowledge Caesar as Lord. The Romans demanded that all citizens give homage to Caesar as a divine lord. Many Christians went to their death rather than say, "Caesar is Lord."

May we all unashamedly own Jesus as Lord in our lives.

Notice one more thing as we close:

We do not declare that Jesus is Lord . . . God does. God gives Him this position.

Jesus is Lord whether we recognize it or not. He has God-given authority. He is not waiting to be declared Lord. He has already been declared Lord. He **IS** the Lord.

If you want to complete the picture , read the closing chapters of the book of Revelation, and chapter 5 where every tribe and tongue and people and nation is gathered before the throne singing,

"Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honour and glory and blessing", because he was slain from the foundation of the world."

Prayer: Heavenly Father, it's much easier to listen to a sermon than to put it into practice. We confess that our problem isn't information. We already know what you want from us.

You have already given us everything we need to obey. Help us to do it. Give us the mind of Christ that we might live as he did—living only for others. We pray in the name of him who gave himself for us. **Amen.**