

Having the Mind of Christ

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[0 : 00] Well, now we turn to the preaching of God's Word, and we're going to pick up where we left off a few weeks ago when I was with you last, looking in the letter of Philippians, Paul's letter to the church at Philippi in chapter 2.

We'll be looking at verses 5 through 11 today. And as we get going, I want to turn back to this book that I talked about earlier, this new directory for public worship. And it really has been a helpful tool to me in just preparing sermons and being able to lead worship.

I don't know if anyone's familiar with this book, but it really has a whole wonderful list of parts of worship and how to consider it appropriately and what a worship service should look like. It includes prayers not only of confession, but prayers of invocation, prayers of petition, prayers of intercession. It talks about the sacraments, how to go about leading the Lord's Supper and baptism. It even speaks of funerals and weddings, how those are to be conducted in a God-honoring way. And so, in a way, this book kind of serves as a blueprint for the church.

[1 : 07] It wasn't designed in such a manner that it's supposed to be a rigid form of worship that we have to follow every bit of it. But it's meant to be a guide for us in such a way that we can worship the Lord with sincerity and in truth while still having great freedom in how we form our worship.

And so, in thinking about it as a blueprint, that's what we're going to really be seeing today in our passage. Paul gives us a blueprint of sorts.

It's a blueprint that he says is the mind of Christ. If you remember from a few weeks ago, we looked at verses 1 through 4, where Paul talks about the need for unity within the church.

There's some disunity, there's some conflict that's occurred. We don't really know what that looks like, but we know Paul has been made aware of it and he desires to address it. And so, in thinking about promoting unity, he also says this needs to start with the individual through personal humility. And so, he doesn't end his instruction there. He goes on, as we'll see today, by giving us this blueprint, that blueprint which is the mind of Christ himself.

[2 : 17] The blueprint of perfect humility. And so, let's turn to our passage, though we'll be focusing on verses 5 through 11. I want to reread verses 1 through 4.

So, turn with me to the reading of God's Word. Philippians chapter 1, chapter 2, starting in verse 1. And so, if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.

Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself.

By taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men, and being found in human form, he humbled himself by being obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

[3 : 33] Therefore, God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Father, this is the word of God. Pray with me again. Almighty God, you are the Father of lights. And so we ask, Lord, that you will shine in our hearts and in our minds, that we might understand your message that you give to us in these scriptures.

We ask, Lord, that the gospel will come to us not only in word, but also through the power of your Holy Spirit. And so, Lord, by your Spirit, please guide us in your truth and strengthen us to all obedience, that we may desire to glorify your name.

We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Now, as I mentioned a few weeks ago, we are looking through verses 1 through 4, and Paul gives this plea for unity within the church.

And as I mentioned, this plea is really founded on not only coming together as one mind and one heart with one another, but he looks at it more deeply in recognizing the need for personal humility that we must have.

[4 : 53] But he doesn't end that instruction just by saying, this is what you need to do, church. This is how you will be unified with one another. No, as I mentioned, he gives us this blueprint. He turns to the mind of Christ.

And so we may think, well, this doesn't really sound like really practical advice, just looking to Christ. We may want to come to the Bible and say, God, what are we supposed to do in certain situations? We may not always think the Bible is very practical.

Look, I'm struggling with my relationship with my spouse. Where's the verse about that? My kid is being rebellious. How am I supposed to respond to this? I have conflict with a friend. Where's the verse for that?

But we'll recognize in our passage today the practical nature of these verses. How practical it is that we turn to Jesus.

Paul tells us to have the mind of Christ. And when he says this, it's that we may have an understanding of who Christ is. An understanding of and being able to recognize what he has done for us and the implications of Christ's actions in our lives.

[6 : 03] And so the call then is to look to Jesus. If we want unity in the church, Paul tells us to look to Jesus. If we want to resolve conflict with a friend or a spouse, we are called to look to Jesus.

If we see trouble brewing in our home, in our community, the call is to look to Jesus.

And so that's what we're going to spend our time considering today. What does it mean to have the mind of Christ? It's a very rich, theologically deep passage. It's a passage that for me is rather intimidating to preach as we consider the nature and the work of Christ.

But as we consider it, I hope that we are able to get a glimpse of the majesty and the beauty of our Savior. And so two points that I really want us to think about today as we consider the mind of Christ.

First, the condensation. I knew I was going to mess this up. And I'll blame it on the jet lag of having returned from the States a few days ago. I knew I was going to say condensation of Christ.

[7 : 14] The condescension of Christ. And if I say it again wrong, just give me grace. Maybe I should just switch and say the humility of Christ. The condescension of Christ and also the exaltation of Christ.

And so as we consider our first point, the humiliation of Christ. What does this mean? Oftentimes when we think of someone being condescending to someone else, we think that as being a negative thing, right?

You have this mind of superiority. You look down on someone else. You want to belittle them. But when we think of condescending in theological terms, in the terms that is used here in our passage, it doesn't have a negative connotation.

It really describes the beauty of the gospel to us. And so as we've done somewhat recently, I mean, I think it's important to be able to look back at catechisms.

We recognize that catechisms can be important in helping us understand our faith. They summarize our faith for us. And so if we turn to the Westminster Shorter Catechism, a question is posed, wherein did Christ's humiliation consist?

[8 : 21] And this is the answer. Christ's humiliation consisted in his being born and that in a low condition made under the law, undergoing the miseries of this life, the wrath of God and the curse of death on the cross, in being buried and continuing under the power of death for a time.

And so when we think about the humiliation of Christ, this is what it means. The creator became a creature. The king of glory came off of his throne to live among his creation.

And so when we think about this act, you may think, well, an illustration for us. Have you ever been to the Grand Canyon or seen pictures of the Grand Canyon? Even though I'm from the States, I've not been there myself, but I've had family and friends that have traveled there.

And one of the unique things they say about the Grand Canyon is not only is how just massive it is and how hard to gauge just how big and how deep it goes, but the uniqueness about when you go hiking there, you don't start by hiking up.

You start by hiking down. And so you go down from the rim into these valleys, into this canyon. And the problem is that it can fool people often because when you hike up, you recognize, you can kind of see above you and see how far you have to go and when you've got to turn around.

[9 : 44] When you hike down, people don't often recognize how difficult this journey is going to be. And so they don't go with enough water. They don't go with enough food or the right footwear. They don't recognize that the further down you go, the hotter it's going to get, the worse the conditions are going to become.

Oftentimes, it can be flash flooding and you're down there stuck at the bottom. You're not going to be able to get back up. Or you've hiked for such a long time, you don't realize the time it's going to take to get back to the top. And so oftentimes, these conditions are not appreciated.

Well, this condescension of Christ, we recognize in a very familiar manner that Christ begins at the top. Christ is on his throne in all his glory.

And it's Christ that comes down, down, down to us. It says in verse 6 that Jesus, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped.

And so this language, being in the form of God, it doesn't mean that Jesus was like God or that he was similar to God. It means that he possessed the essential nature and attributes of God.

[10 : 53] And so it's just like it says in the Gospel of John at the very beginning. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. Jesus is the visible expression of God himself.

One commentator put it this way I liked. He said that the form or the essence of Jesus is reality in manifestation. And so this reality, then, is our starting point as we consider Christ's humiliation.

Over the course of history, there's been plenty of people who have admired the man of Jesus, who have thought he's a wonderful teacher. He's a wonderful example to us.

He's a wonderful prophet. Even some that say he's the Son of God, but yet do not believe that he is the Creator, that he was created, that he must be still subordinate to God.

But that's not what the Bible says if we look at Jesus' own testimony. In John 5, verse 18, it says that the Jewish leaders wanted to kill him because he was calling God his Father, making himself equal with God.

[11 : 56] If we consider right before Jesus' crucifixion, at his trial when he's brought before Pilate, and Pilate asks him, are you the Son of God? What's his response?

He responds in the affirmative, you have said so. Paul makes this point elsewhere in some of his letters. In Colossians 1, verse 15, he says that Christ is the image of the invisible God.

In him, the fullness of God was pleased to dwell. The author of Hebrews says similarly in chapter 1, verse 3, Jesus is the radiance of the glory of God, the exact imprint of his nature.

And so yet, we see here that even though Jesus is fully God, it says he did not account equality with God a thing to be grasped.

And so this means that even though he was equal with God, even though he was God, he didn't try to selfishly exploit his position. He didn't try to lord over us.

[12 : 55] He didn't try to see how much comfort he could keep for himself as he sat on his throne. He was using his divine privilege for the good of his creation. And so this is why Paul can say in 2 Corinthians 8, verse 9, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich.

And so Christ used his power and his privilege as a means of service to you and me. And so that leads us then to chapter 7, or excuse me, verse 7, where he says he emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of man.

Now when we think of emptying something out, we think that usually you may think of like a bucket, being the water inside the bucket being poured out. Or if you're in my house, a box of Legos being poured on the floor.

And you pray that you don't step on those Legos as the kids fail to pick them up, as it usually happens. But when you think about pouring something out, the contents of that bucket, you think, is gone.

And so you wonder, what does it mean here that Christ emptied himself out? Did Christ lose part of his identity when he became man? No, that's not what he's saying. Christ did not lose his identity. Yes, he did set aside his comfort and his glory, but he does not lose his attributes that he has as God.

[14:17] Paul says that he was born in the likeness of man. And so in his humiliation, Christ adds something to his character. The nature of humanity.

But that humanity doesn't diminish his divinity. He is fully God and fully man. He is 100% divine, yet 100% human. And so this is this divine math that's hard for us to understand.

It's hard to explain. But we know it to be true. It's this divinity and humanity that's a necessary condition for our salvation.

Because if we turn to Romans 8 and these first few verses, which are very, very dense theologically, this is what Paul says there. There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

For the law of the spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. For God has done what the law weakened by the flesh could not do. By sending his own son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled.

[15:26] And so we see that even though Christ was fully man, he was still without sin. And as a result, he could fulfill the law. He could pay the penalty for our sins through his perfect sacrifice on the cross.

And it was because this man was also fully God that he could reconcile man to himself. So as 100% God and 100% man, he becomes 100% our Savior.

And so this leads us then to verse 8. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

So this infinite condescension that's described here, do we really grasp how severe and how significant this is?

That God, Jesus, who was fully God, went down, down, down to earth to such an extent that his divinity was not even recognized. We remember when he began his ministry, he's preaching in the synagogue in his hometown.

[16:30] And people are like, isn't that that carpenter guy? His identity completely concealed. Charles Spurgeon, who is an English minister from the 1800s, in one of his sermons, he creatively imagines Christ's humiliation from the perspective of angels.

And this is what he said in one of his sermons. He says, Oh, how surprised the angels were when they were first informed that Jesus Christ, the Prince of light and majesty, intended to shroud himself in clay and become a babe and live and die.

We know not how it was first mentioned to the angels, but when the rumors first began to get afloat among the sacred hosts, you may imagine what strange wonderment there was.

What? Is it true that he whose crown was all adorned in stars may lay aside that crown? What? Was it certain that he, about whose shoulders was cast the purple of the universe, would become a man dressed in a peasant's garments?

Could it be true that he who was everlasting and immortal would one day be nailed to a cross? Oh, can you conceive the yet increasing wonder of the heavenly hosts when the deed was actually done, when they saw the tiara taken off, when they saw him unbind his girdle of stars and cast away his sandals of gold?

[17:55] Can you conceive it? And when he said to them, I do not disdain the womb of the virgin. I'm going down to earth to become a man. And so far down does Jesus fall that he is born of a poor virgin in a stable.

He's raised as a child, as a refugee in Egypt. He's raised as a peasant. He's employed as a carpenter. When he begins his ministry, he's rejected in his hometown.

He's despised by the religious leaders of his own faith. He travels on foot, often without food or water or shelter. And yet it says that his life is marked by total obedience.

Obedience that ultimately leads him to the cross. And so Paul makes this point to say, this is not just Jesus' fate. He doesn't just come to earth or not sent to earth by the Father to be put on this unavoidable, irreversible path toward the cross.

No, Jesus still had the power of decision. Jesus had the power to avoid suffering. And yet he chose freely and willingly to go to the cross, to give his life as a ransom for many.

[19:07] And so this is what the prophet Isaiah talked about. God speaking through Isaiah in Isaiah 53. Familiar words to us all, I'm sure.

For he was despised and rejected by man, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And as one from whom men hide their faces, he was despised and we esteemed him not.

Surely he bore our griefs and carried our sorrows, yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions. He was crushed for our iniquities.

Upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace and with his wounds we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray. We have turned everyone to his own way. And the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

This is the mind of Christ. The Holy Son of God abandoning his power, giving up his eternal glory, taking on the full wrath of God, enduring death in order to rescue sinful rebels like you and me.

[20 : 14] And so the question is, do you know this love? Do you recognize the need for the cross? For there is no other way for us to live in fellowship with the Father.

There is no other way for our sins to be forgiven, except by the blood of Jesus. And the wonderful thing about this gospel message is that it doesn't end here.

It doesn't end with the humiliation of Christ. It continues through the exaltation of Christ. And so that brings us to our second point.

As we look at the exaltation of Christ, look to verse 9. So you've probably heard stories of, they're called rag to riches, right?

It's a common theme. It's a common, almost a genre of itself when we think about movies or books or stories of different kinds. Rags to riches. Someone who is poor and destitute, and yet through some twist of fate, through some effort of their own, they achieve success, whether financially or security to some degree.

[21 : 36] And so we may think, well, this kind of sounds like what Jesus did. He pulled himself from the grave to be exalted from rags to riches. But we see that this is very different.

What Paul presents for us here, the truth of the gospel, shows something different here. Because first of all, these characters, these stories that experience these rags to riches, they haven't placed themselves willingly in shame and ruin.

This is what Christ did here. That's what we see in these first few verses. It is Jesus who brings himself low to begin with. But secondly, in these rags to riches stories, oftentimes it's the character that musters up the courage or has the effort in and of themselves to bring themselves to a place of promise and success.

And so they get the praise. They get the adulation. They get the pat on the back to say, look how far you've come. But again, that's not what we see here. Because although these first verses talk about Christ bringing himself low, verses 9 through 11, they focus on the work of God the Father on behalf of the Son.

It is God who highly exalts his Son. It is God who bestows on the Son every name, or that name that is above every name. It is Jesus who is exalted by the Father.

[22 : 52] And so if you're familiar with this story, if you're familiar with the gospel, this may not mean much to you because you know the story. But think about it to Paul in his context of speaking to this New Testament church, what this means, how he's connecting the dots between Old Testament prophecy and who this man Jesus is, and what he means for this New Testament church.

If we go back to the book of Isaiah again, God speaks frequently through the prophet Isaiah, talking of his own exaltation. Look at just a few of these verses.

Isaiah chapter 1, verses 11. The Lord alone will be exalted. Isaiah 30, 18. The Lord exalted himself to show mercy to you. Isaiah 33, 10. Now I will arise, says the Lord.

Now I will lift myself up. Now I will be exalted. Even in the passage that Blair read for us, Isaiah 45, God says, There is no other God besides me, a righteous God and Savior.

There is none beside me. And so the question then, if Paul is saying that God exalted his son Jesus, but Isaiah, in this book of Isaiah, God says he's exalting himself, how do we reconcile those two statements, other than to recognize that Jesus is God?

[24 : 06] This is what Paul is clearly saying to us here. And he's making the point of the significance of Jesus' name. We know that the name Jesus, it's a Hebrew name, Yeshua.

The meaning of that name, the Lord saves. And so when Paul says, every knee will bow and every tongue confess, those lines are taken straight from Isaiah 45 that we read earlier.

And it's Paul who inserts those words that Jesus is Lord. And so if we go back to the Greek too, we know that the Greek word for Lord is Kyrios.

Jesus is Lord. The Greek translation of the Old Testament, though the Old Testament was written in Hebrew, it was translated in Greek. We know that the proper name for God in Hebrew is Yahweh. When it's translated in Greek, we see this word Kyrios, Lord. Even in English, when you see the capital L, capital O, capital R, capital D in the Old Testament, we know that's the proper name for God, Yahweh.

[25 : 10] And so this play on words that Paul is doing, whether it's in the Hebrew or the Greek or the English, we see his point here, that Jesus is God. Jesus is Yahweh. And so we looked at the Westminster Shorter Catechism for what it means when we talk about Christ's humiliation.

What also does it mean then when we talk about Christ's exaltation? Look at this question. Wherein consists Christ's exaltation? Christ's exaltation consists in his rising again from the dead on the third day and ascending up into heaven and sitting at the right hand of God the Father and in coming to judge the world at the last day.

Christ's exaltation is his resurrection, his ascension, and his return. And so this is what Paul is looking forward to. He recognizes the resurrection and the ascension has already happened. We're now in this time of waiting for the return of Christ. This is what he's already talked about in chapter one of his letter, the day of the Lord. He says, when every knee will bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth.

And so we see just how comprehensive this worship is going to be. Includes everyone, past and present, in heaven and on earth and even in hell.

[26 : 30] There will be open acknowledgement that Jesus is the one true God. So for those of us who are believers, we have the opportunity to bow the knee to the one true Savior. But recognize that even those who are not believers, even those who have never recognized Jesus as Savior, will bow the knee in terror in recognizing how they have rejected the one true God.

And so what then does Paul say is the ultimate purpose of this exaltation? That is to come at the day of Christ. It is the glory of God the Father.

This is where all creation points. This is why Jesus came. This is the chief end of man, to glorify God. And so this is what Paul urges.

Even when he's thinking about unity within the church, this is what he wants to see, both now and in the future, is the glory of God. And so as believers, we can be reminded and encouraged that Christ is coming again.

And we can live in such a way that we can anticipate his return. And for those who don't know Christ, may this serve as an invitation that you acknowledge Jesus as Lord because he is your sole means of salvation.

[27 : 51] It is through his blood that you are healed. It is his love and grace that is offered to you. And so when you think about this marvelous message then of who Christ is, this is the gospel message.

What in the world does this do, have to do with the unity of the church? How do we bring this back to what Paul originally started talking about? You may think, this is just a little too deep. This is a little too complex.

All this doctrine and theology, does it really matter to me? Can I just love God? Can I just appreciate the gospel without worrying about all this Christology? But the precise point of the matter is that Jesus Christ is the gospel.

And if we fail to understand who Jesus is, then we fail to comprehend the gospel. It is the gospel that is central to our lives.

There is no more practical way to learn humility than to understand the humility of Christ. There is no better way for us to be of one mind with one another, as Paul says, if we are not of one mind with Christ.

[29 : 00] It is humility of Christ that must serve as an impetus for us. It is the blueprint, as we talked about, for us to follow. We understand that this infinite humiliation of Christ to save sinners like you and me, when we understand this, how in the world can we possibly hold a grudge toward one another?

How can we remain conceited and self-important when we acknowledge that the God of the universe subjected himself to the miseries of this human life and to the wrath of God?

If God can infinitely humble himself for our sake, can we not display humility toward one another? The reality is, though, that we can't.

On our own strength, we will fail. We talk about Christ as a blueprint. We are going to fail to live up to that blueprint. And so while it's good to see Christ as our example, as we've talked about, Christ is so much more than our example.

Christ is our Savior because we don't measure up. We need someone to forgive us. We need someone to cleanse us. And so that's my question for you today.

[30 : 16] Where in your life do you need forgiveness? Where do we need the light of the gospel to expose sin in our lives? Especially related to this topic of unity that Paul is talking about.

Is there someone that you have hurt that you need to ask forgiveness for? Is there someone who has hurt you that you are withholding forgiveness from? Are you seeking your own comforts, your own pleasures, your own security, rather than caring for those of others?

Are you allowing pride to cause disunity within the body? If so, the answer then is to look to Christ as our example and as our Savior.

May we be empowered by the Spirit of Christ to pursue unity in the church, to pursue humility in our own lives. And may we look forward with eagerness to Christ's return when Christ will be ultimately exalted and when God will receive all the glory.

Let's pray. O Lord, we long for the day when you will be high and exalted, when all lips will profess that you are Lord, when every knee will bow at your throne.

[31 : 39] And so may we live now in that eager anticipation. May we put on the mind of Christ, recognizing his infinite humiliation for our sake.

May we live lives of gratitude, Lord. God, make us humble like Jesus. And where we fail, may we rely on the strength of Jesus.

May we rely on your grace to forgive us and to cleanse us. Lord, we desire to see unity within our church for the glory of God. We pray this in Jesus' name.

Amen. Will you stand with me once more for our last hymn, Come Behold the Wondrous Mystery. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[32 : 40] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.