

The True Spirit of Christmas

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Preacher: Joshua Winters

[0 : 00] Well, this morning is the last Sunday before Christmas, as I mentioned earlier, and on Friday evening we had a bit of a Christmas celebration here at the church, and we talked about the wonder and the mystery of the story of Jesus' birth, and we reflected on how God gave his son and how he came in the midst of the unexpected.

If you haven't got around to reading the Christmas story yet this year, I would encourage you to do that this week. Just encourage you to make it part of how you celebrate this year. Maybe some of you already have that tradition, but it doesn't have to be anything fancy. It's something that you could do on your own, or something that you could do with your kids. You could simply pray and just ask God to open your heart and then open up to Matthew 1 and 2 or Luke 1 and 2.

Maybe you do it with a cup of hot chocolate or a cup of coffee. Maybe, if you have the kids with you, maybe you ask them what they think about the story and have a little reflection moment as a family about it.

But yeah, I just encourage you to do that this year. This morning, we want to look at what happened that day, 2,000 years ago, from a bit of a different angle.

[1 : 20] We've already talked about how the child in the manger was and is the son of God. We've already talked about how he was and is the Messiah, a king, and how someday he will return to reign.

But this morning, we want to look at another wonderful reality of just who this child was and is and how he came to lie in that manger. In Paul's letter to the Philippians, he writes with a lot of passion and heart to the church of Philippi.

And for a moment in his letter, he comes to speak to them about their relationships with each other. We know from reading the letter that there has been conflict and disagreement in the church.

And so Paul writes to urge them to change their minds toward one another, to come to a different attitude than some of them have been having. Let's read together what he wrote.

Philippians chapter 2, starting in verse 1. Therefore, if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in the same love.

[2 : 52] In spirit and of one mind. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit.

Rather, in humility, value others above yourselves. Not looking to your own interests, but each of you to the interests of the others.

In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus, who being in very nature, God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage.

Rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death.

Even death on a cross. This is a marvelous passage. Paul starts with his words of encouragement and reminder.

[4 : 08] And then he gives a few words of instruction. And then he gives an example of the kind of attitude and mindset that he is urging them to have. And the example is Jesus.

In verse 5, he says, in your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus. And then Paul tells us a little bit about the mindset of Jesus.

Verse 6. Jesus, who being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage.

Rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. So Paul starts by reminding us of just who Jesus was before he came into our world. Who being in very nature God. Before the manger. Even before he came to be conceived in Mary's womb.

[5 : 19] He was in very nature God. Divine. Divine. Divine. And even to unpack this statement alone suggests that we really need to look back at all the scriptures.

And be reminded of what does it mean to be God. It means to be the Almighty One. The Creator. The Sustainer of all things. To be righteous. Holy. Just. Good. Loving.

Faithful. One who always keeps his promises. It means to have the highest rank above all. To be the one who knows all things.

The one who can do as he pleases. It means to be the glorious one. Beautiful. Perfect. In all of who he is.

[6 : 21] This is who God has revealed himself to be. Jesus Christ. Existed in his very nature. Or form. Or form.

As this one God. But while that was true. It says that he did not consider equality with God.

Something to be used to his own advantage. So. So he had equality with God. But he did not consider that equality that he had. As something to be used to his own advantage.

He had the rights. And the privileges. That go. With. Being. In very nature. God. He had the glory. And yet.

He considered. He thought. He chose. To do something. Completely. Unnecessary. For him to do. What did he choose to do?

[7 : 20] He chose. To make himself. Nothing. I believe that's a figure of speech. Meant to describe how.

Jesus. Went. From. Being. And having. Everything. To by comparison. Now being. And having. Nothing. It's the difference between.

Heaven. And earth. It's the difference between. Creator. And creature. He made himself. Nothing. By taking. The very nature. Of a servant. Being made in human likeness. So. Paul tells us two ways. That he made himself.

Nothing. The first one. By taking the very nature. Of a servant. God. Is the master. Of all.

[8 : 19] All. And his creatures. Whether it's angels. Or us. We're right. To serve him. Because he is the master. Of all. He's the creator. Of all.

The owner. Of all. But now we read. That Jesus. Though he was God. Though he was. The master. Of all. He took up. The very nature.

He truly became. A servant. The one. The one. That rightly. Deserves. All service. Became.

One. Of the servants. And it's difficult. For us. To feel the weight. Of this. Especially. In our modern days. Where. We hear so much. The truth.

That. We're. We're all. Equal. With one another. Another. But there used to be days. When things. Were very different. Where you had the king. Of the land. You had the servants.

[9 : 13] Of the king. And it was. The servants. Duty. To serve the king. And it was the king's. Privilege. And right. As royalty. To be served.

By the servant. And you would never. Find a king. In those days. Washing his own dishes. That was the duty. Of the servants. I mean.

Can you imagine it. For a moment. A king. Stepping down. Off of his throne. Taking off his. His royal. Garb. Setting down his. Crown. And his scepter.

And then walking down. Into the castle kitchen. Rolling up his sleeves. And saying. To one of the servants. You take the night off. I'm going to take care. Of the dishes tonight. It's unimaginable.

You can almost hear. The loyal servant. Saying. Please my lord. Let the king. Not dirty his clothes. I'm happy to serve. My king. It wouldn't be right.

[10 : 06] It wouldn't be fitting. For you to do such a thing. How much more. Not right. Or fitting. Is it.

For God. Who is truly deserving. Of all of our service. To stoop down. Beneath. Us. And become a servant.

Of us. And serve us. He made himself. Nothing. By taking the very nature. Of a servant. The second.

Way. That he made himself. Nothing. Paul says. Is by being made. In human likeness. He made himself. Nothing. By being made.

In human likeness. Is. Let those words. Sink in for a moment. I think you are probably. Hearing them right. Compared. To who God is. We are nothing.

[11:06] That's how great. How glorious. How powerful. He is. To go from being. In very nature. God. To being made. In human likeness.

Is. Is. Figuratively speaking. Like. Going from having. And being. Everything. To having. And being. Nothing. It's not just a little step down.

It's a massive. Step down. We're talking about the one. Who spoke the whole. Universe. Into being. The universe. That we haven't even found. The end of yet.

We know it's incredibly. Massive. The one that spoke. That into being. Was made. Into one of those. Tiny. Little. Two-legged walkers.

On that one little planet. That's like the size of a pinhead. In the ocean. Of the cosmos. That's the difference.

[12:05] Between God. And man. Creator. And creature. Paul says. Being made in human likeness.

And we have to be a little careful here. That we don't take that to mean. That he only appeared to be like us. Other passages throughout the New Testament. Make it clear that. He really did become a human being.

As Paul said. In Colossians. Chapter 2. Verse 9. For in him. In Christ. All the fullness. Of deity. Dwells.

In bodily form. Nobody in Jesus' day. Thought he was less than human. In fact. The problem was. That his opponents. Saw him as merely human.

Just like everyone else. And the reason they did. Is because he. He was human. The word became flesh. And lived among us. As John.

[13:03] Said in his gospel. And this is a mystery. How could this be? How could Jesus be both God and man. At the same time. But Paul tells us.

That it was a step down. For Jesus. From having and being everything. To now having and being. Nothing.

We might consider those words. That Jesus prayed. On the eve of his betrayal. Father. Glorify me. In your presence.

With the glory. I had with you. Before the world began. In some mysterious way. That we don't fully understand. Coming down from heaven.

And being made in human likeness. Meant that Jesus did not have. The same glory. As he had before he came. He was still God.

[14:02] But his glory was now veiled. Begled. By his humanity. It was still there. In some measure. It shone through.

At different moments. For people to see. As John said. We saw his glory. But as he walked the earth. He did not have. The full splendor. Of what he had in heaven.

Before he came down. And he chose. To not exercise. His divine rights. Rights. And privileges. And instead. Live. As a human being. As a human being. Ought to live. In submission to God. In submission. To his mother and father.

In submission. To the governing authorities. Of his day. Paying taxes. And such. Church. The one who had the rights. Privileges.

[14:58] And freedom. Of being. God. Chose to lay down. His rights. Privileges. And freedom. To become one of us. And to serve us.

And this is amazing. A lot of the songs. That we sing. Have the name. Emmanuel. Which means. God with us.

In them. But Emmanuel. Doesn't just mean. God is with us. In the sense. That he's. He's thinking about us. Or. That he's. Working behind the scenes.

For us. On our behalf. It means. God. Himself. Actually. With us. Here. Among us. In the person. Of Christ. And not just. Among us. But. As. One of us. Here.

[15:54] To live. With us. To share. In what we are. As human beings. It's amazing. But what I couldn't. Get away from. Is. I reflected on.

On these words. Of Paul. Is that we. We get more. Than just a description. Of what. Jesus did. At Christmas. This is amazing. This huge. Step down. From.

The glory. Of heaven. To. The nothingness. Of being. Made. In human likeness. And becoming. A servant. But we get more.

Than that. We get a description. Of why. He did it. We get a description. Of what his. Attitude. And. His. Mindset. Was. In all of it.

He made. This massive trip. From the glory. Of. Of. Heaven. To the nothingness. Of being. A human. And a servant. Out of love.

[16:50] For you. And for me. And this is where. It all comes back. To what Paul. Started with. Says.

Do nothing. Out of selfish ambition. Or vain conceit. Rather. In. Humility. Value others.

Above yourselves. Not looking. To your own. Interests. But each of you. To the interests. Of the others. This is the very. Mindset. And attitude. That Jesus had.

Which brought him. From heaven's glory. To the squalor. Of a stable. And if there was ever. Anyone who had the right. To.

Put his own interests. Ahead of others. It's God. It's Jesus. Even to uphold. His own glory. Is right.

[17:45] It's good. That's who he is. And yet. Jesus chose. To look to our interests. To our. Great. Need. And amazingly.

To treat us. His creatures. As more important. Than himself. Talk about humility.

And what gets me. In this passage. As we've been reading. Is that he did this. Not because he had to. He didn't come down.

Begrudgingly. We don't hear Jesus. Complaining all the way. To the cross. About how good he had it. Compared to now. No. He chose this. Willingly.

Out of love. To give up his divine rights. And freedom. And privileges. And eventually. His very life. On that cross. To save us.

[18:45] That's the true spirit. Of Christmas. That's the spirit. The mindset. The attitude. Of the Christ. Whose birth.

We celebrate. At Christmas. And so. May God give us grace. And power. So that that.

Can be our attitude. This Christmas. Our mindset. What can we do. In this strange. Christmas week ahead. To bless others.

To meet the needs. Of others. It may cost us something. But as with Jesus. So with us. Love will pay that personal cost.

For the sake of another. Mother. Maybe it's making a few phone calls. Checking in on somebody. Who lives alone. Maybe it's helping someone.

[19:43] In your family. Who hasn't got all the tech stuff. Figured out. To connect with some distant relatives. Online. Maybe it's dropping off a meal. For someone. Maybe it's.

Going for a walk around town. With someone. Who's feeling. Down or discouraged. Maybe it's.

Even driving an hour or two. Just to see someone you love. At the front door.

And take a few minutes. To say hi. Ask how they're doing. What's going on. In the lives of the people. That you know. This Christmas.

How's all this. Stuff that's been going on. In our world. Affecting them. What might you. Be willing to give up. In order to meet. Their need. Father in heaven.

We ask that you would. Press. This wonderful truth. Of who Jesus is. And what he has done. For us. Into our hearts. And show us.

[20:46] Give us wisdom. Give us guidance. Help us to see. The needs of others. Around us. This Christmas. And show us. What we have to give.

Help us to be willing to. Get over ourselves. In some cases. Or to. To give up. Something. In some cases. To pass on.

Our own. Comfort. In order to. Show your love. We ask this in. Christ's name. Amen. Amen.

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

[21:43] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.