

The Cradle, The Cross & The Crown - Philippians 2:5-11

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[0 : 00] If I will not have opportunity to express to you Merry Christmas before the day is out, I pray that we all would have a Christ centered Christmas.

I am grateful for all who have hosted today. Thank you, Melissa and Devin and Choir and children, Heather, for all who had a hand in today to help us to remember Christ's birth.

I want to begin the message today with just an interesting little story. And this year and on May 27th, 2021, an event happened that by and large caught no attention in really much world news or you had to look for this event.

It was kind of a non thing that happened for most individuals, but for one nation in particular, this thing that occurred meant the world. And what it was was a formal apology by the president of France to the people of Rwanda, asking them to forgive France for the deeds that led up and their part and the contribution to the genocide in 1994.

All of Rwanda had been waiting for a formal apology for 800,000 people to a million people were killed in 90 days and France was complicit in it.

[1 : 33] Rwanda waited and waited for that. And many, many years later, finally Rwanda had a formal apology from the nation of France.

I think of Christmas as that kind of event that the whole world was waiting for this event to happen, for Christ to come in the form of man being born among us to ultimately die and forgive sin.

The whole world was waiting. And yet in this little backwoods town of Bethlehem and Southern Judea, it almost went unnoticed if it weren't for an angel announcing to some shepherds, he's over there, go see him.

And if it weren't for the angel announcing to Joseph and Mary, yeah, Mary, you're gonna have a child and it's gonna be the Christ child and you should name him Jesus.

And if it weren't for the special announcements to some special people and some magi showing up, it almost was a non-event in world history on the day of Christ's birth. And yet the whole world should have been waiting for that day.

[2 : 46] And it was almost missed. And I pray that today for many in America, for many around the world, Christmas is hard to understand.

What's the big deal about a child who was born 2,000 years ago in a little dusty town in Israel? And so it could be very much missed today just as it was 2,000 years ago.

So let us be reminded. And yet, like the nation of Rwanda, what's almost hard to, what brings the apology by the president of France to light is when you understand the history.

That apology was due to their participation in the genocide in 1994. How did France participate in this genocide? And how did these two peoples, the Tutsis and the Hutus, come to want to have tension between them?

Well, you have to go back to the end of World War I. At the end of World War I, the League of Nations took the nation of Rwanda from Germany because they didn't seem to be good landlords at that time in world history.

[4 : 02] At the conclusion of World War I, League of Nations stepped in and said, okay, we're gonna give this nation this land, both Burundi and Rwanda, we're gonna give that nation of land to Belgium. And then Belgium became the steward and the colonite.

I forget the word, this is great. Anyway. Oh, this is embarrassing. Belgium became the steward of Rwanda, of the people of Rwanda, and they favored one group of people, the Hutus, over the Tutsis, and they became into positions of power.

And so you can see this is now fraught. If you're a Hutu, you have positions of power. You're in the government. You're in the school districts. You're in positions of power. If you're a Tutsi, I'm sorry about that.

And so that set an animosity between these two people. And so all of a sudden you get to 1994, the genocide, and you understand now why, how France played a part in that, and then you get this apology, and all makes more sense.

How that was all set up for this event, for this an apology. And I feel that way about Christmas, of Christ's birth, that if we don't have a grand narrative to understand why this child being born with very few people who humanly understood it at the time, was so significant and important.

[5 : 26] Why was that so? So today what I wanna do is speak to the grand narrative, or the meta-narrative of scripture, to help us understand why that event, Christ being born in Bethlehem, 2000 years ago, was such a big deal.

So let's look at this today. And if you have your Bible with you, we're gonna look at a text in Philippians chapter two, five through 11.

It is not much of a Christmas passage, and people don't often read this on Christmas morning, but we will today. And we will see how this helps us understand the grand narrative for us to appreciate Christmas.

Philippians chapter two, we're gonna begin reading in verse five. We're gonna finish in verse 11, five through 11. Philippians two, five through 11.

Have this mind among yourselves, which is also 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 he 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 becoming obedient to the point of death, even the death on the cross.

[6 : 53] Therefore God highly exalted him, and bestowed upon him a name above every name, so that at the name of Jesus, every knee will bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue will confess, Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

When we understand, and this passage draws it out, the big narrative, there are three events that are absolutely important to understanding Christ's work.

He was born, we're gonna call that the cradle. He ultimately died on the cross, we're gonna call that the cross, and he will ultimately one day come and rule and reign over the earth, and he will wear a crown.

He is the undisputed king of kings and Lord of lords. And so I'm gonna have these three stations that I'm going to reference, and they're all here in this text, but before we can understand this text, I want us to understand Paul's heart.

He was the author of this book of Philippians, and Paul's heart, he says, I want you to understand, I want verse five for us to have this mind among yourselves, that which also is in Christ Jesus.

[8 : 05] And so he's gonna be saying, I want you to have this heart, this mind of humility to be purposed to not think more highly than ourselves and we ought to, and to be selfless.

And I'm gonna portray to you Christ as the example of this, and then he tells us how Christ demonstrated this self-giving, this selflessness, this humility of Christ.

And it's common, Paul does this oftentimes, to hold up Christ as the ultimate example of something he wants to communicate. For example, in 2 Corinthians, we have Christ being held up as the ultimate generous giver.

And so Paul then appeals based on the Christ, be generous. He calls the people to be generous because of Christ. Here he's saying, I want us to be selfless and self-giving. And if I want you to portray an example of that, let me portray, let me remind us of Christ.

And he holds Christ up as this example. So that's where we begin. But the grand narrative doesn't start 2,000 years ago. The grand narrative starts with God, in the beginning, God.

[9 : 17] He is eternal, he has always existed. So if we start with the grand narrative, let's go all the way back to the very beginning, and we begin with God.

Psalms 90 says this, before the mountains were brought, or ever you were formed in this earth, in this world, from everlasting to everlasting, you are God.

The Psalmist writes in Psalm 90, he is from everlasting, he's eternal, he has no beginning, he has no end, he is God, eternal. Then God creates, at some point in time, God then says, I'm gonna create.

And in six days, he created all that was. Pastor Jay sometimes has difficulty remembering the names of his seven children. God, it says this, it says this about God.

It says this about God in Psalm 147, he determines the numbers of the stars, and he gives them all their names. God knows the trillions and trillions and trillions of stars, I know them each by name.

[10:28] That's who God is. He's from everlasting to everlasting, and he created all things, and he knows all the stars by name. Then God created mankind on the sixth day.

I'm hitting some high points of the grand narrative. Then God creates on the sixth day. God said, let us make mankind in our own image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air in the sky, over the livestock, over the wild animals, over all creatures that move on the ground.

He created humans in his image, setting humanity apart from all of his creation, distinct from all other animals. He set them apart as a vice-regent, if you will, exercising authority over all the earth, exercising care, exercising God's authority, exercising God's standards, exercising God's purposes over all the earth.

That's what mankind has been given, this beautiful responsibility. And he says, let us make man in our own image, in his own image, we are to represent him in every way.

This is what gives humanity dignity at conception. This is what gives human life dignity after birth.

This is what gives human life dignity, who are bedridden, those who are disabled, those who are infirmed, those who are diseased, those who are able-bodied, those who are of different ethnicities and races, those who are old, those who are young.

[12:00] It does not matter. All of human life has this innate value dignity, and worth because we've been made in the image of God. And that is even after sin entered the world.

After sin entered the world, it says this, whoever sheds the blood of a man by a man's blood, his blood shall be shed. And then here's the reason for that.

If someone sheds a man's blood, kills a man, by man's hand that man should be killed. Why? In the Old Testament, it says this, for God has made him in his own image. So even after sin entered the world, there is this image bearing aspect of humanity that gives all of human life incredible value dignity and worth.

Now there's an aspect of an image of God that has been marred because of sin. And that is we no longer relate to the Lord with righteousness and holiness.

Now we relate to him not in perfection, not in perfection, but through our corruption. And yet we still have it.

[13:11] After that, when Adam and Eve sinned in the garden and Eve was deceived by the serpent, she ate from the tree and God explicit them, told them not to, that image of God was marred.

They were driven out of the garden of Eden and due to their sin, ever since then, all of humanity has been cursed by this sin nature. We were born in sin, condemned before God, hopeless.

And what about Satan? Speaking to Satan, God informed him that he would bruise the heel of the descendant of Eve, but that descendant of Eve would ultimately bruise Satan's head.

So a divine drama was set for two purposes. All of humanity was waiting. Who would it be that would be born as a descendant of Eve?

Who would ultimately atone for sin and forgive sin that plagued humanity? Who would it be?

Second, who would it be that who Satan would bruise his heel?

[14:19] But who would it be that would bruise Satan's head? All of humanity waited and waited since being kicked out of the garden and sin, they waited.

And that is what makes the manger seen, the cradle, Jesus being born so important, all of a sudden, that's who it is.

This is him, Jesus Christ. All history stood watching. So then it says this, remember Paul wants us to have this attitude, read with me beginning in verse six.

Who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God, a thing to be grasped, but he emptied himself by taking a form of servant, being born in the likeness of men and being found in human form and will stop right there.

This passage has us, causes us to look at the nativity scene of Jesus being born to Mary. Here's what the angels said to the shepherds on the day that Jesus was born.

[15 : 32] The angel informing the shepherd says this, today in the town of David, a savior has been born to you. He is the Messiah, the Lord. This is the sign to you.

You will find a baby wrapped in cloth lying in a manger. Hey shepherds. This is the sign that this savior has been born to you. This is the sign that the Messiah has come.

You'll find him in the town of David Bethlehem, just over there, go over the hill and you'll find him. You'll see this baby wrapped in a swaddling clothes and lying in a manger. That's him.

That's him. How did, but remember Paul's point, he says to the Philippians, and for us, have this mind being you, which is also in Christ Jesus, this selflessness, this self-giving aspect of who we are to be.

How did this manger scene inform us of his selflessness? How did this demonstrate Jesus's humility and self-giving?

[16 : 40] Jesus's divine pre-existence before his birth, he did not regard his deity the advantage and by the grounds to avoid his incarnation.

Jesus did not avoid condescending to earth and being born to human. On the contrary, he was willing to regard himself as nothing by taking on human form, the divine taking on the form of a human and taking on, if you will, humanity.

Jesus refused to make a selfless choice with respect to his divinity. Precisely because he was in the form of God, the God of Spirit, he reckoned equality with God, not in a matter of getting, but in a manner of giving.

And oh, that every one of us in authority, whether, however you want to categorize that authority, if we would use our authority, not forgetting, but forgetting, wouldn't you like world leaders around this world to use their authority not to get, but to give?

And that is Jesus Christ and he's appealing to us, say, would you be like Christ in this manner? The text tells us how this occurred.

[17 : 59] It says he emptied himself, taking on the form of man. He emptied the totality of his being in the form of God. The totality of his being into human form.

So imagine this. It's not like you have a jar and you want to empty it into humanity, let's assume, that you just empty the contents of the jar.

That's God's divinity, if you will, into this human form, this baby. It's not that image. It's the whole jar and all the contents. All of God's divinity is in human form.

So he is the God, man, Jesus Christ. He is fully God and fully man. And that's how he emptied himself into humanity, fully God, fully man.

He poured all of himself out into humanity. How does this cradle demonstrate Jesus' humility? Jesus did not consider his divinity, that is his Godness, the fact that he was God as a means of giving, getting, but as a means of self-giving.

[19 : 13] And we too have this privilege to use our lives to be self-giving. He is our example in that. But the grand narrative doesn't stop there.

That's the manger scene and the text continues. Read with me in 8B. That baby, child, grew up in form and wisdom.

And 33 years later, he died on the cross. So the text reads, 8B, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on the cross.

Remember, all the world is waiting. Who is it that is going to crush Satan's head? Who is it that will atone for sin?

That baby grew up and died on the cross, the text tells us. He humbled himself, becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on the cross. So the second station that we're going to look at right now is the cross.

[20 : 22] God's wrath towards sin demanded a perfect sacrifice. And there's a verse in Mark that reads this, Mark 10, 44, for even the Son of Man, that is Jesus Christ, did not come to be served but to serve and give his life a ransom for many.

The ransom indicates a payment that has been exchanged in Christ's death, the sacrifice of his life, accomplished several things, several elements and several dynamics.

What is the first one? That a payment was made. Jesus' perfect life satisfied God's wrath against sin that was directed upon all of humanity because we were all born in sin.

And because we were descendants, all of us, of Adam. Secondly, Jesus' sacrifice was vicarious and substituted was vicarious and substitutionary.

That is, someone else died on our behalf. Jesus died on our behalf. The verse reads in 2 Corinthians 5, 21, reads this, He, that is the Father, made him the Son.

[21 : 32] He made him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in him. Jesus' sacrifice was vicarious and substitutionary.

While Jesus had never sinned, he became sin and received its punishment. In return, we received the merits of Christ, his righteousness, his sinlessness.

In simple terms, he became sin. He took our sin and gave us his righteousness to all who believe in him.

Thirdly, Jesus' death means that salvation is possible. Eternal destiny may now be altered. One's eternal destiny may now be altered.

Before Christ's death, the wages of sin with death, eternal separation God was only one's only hope, option. When Christ paid the penalty of sin in his righteousness, sin and death, he paid the penalty of sin, being eternally separated from God, now salvation is possible.

[22 : 44] He is no longer counts our sin against us to those who have believed. And that commonly memorized verse is very appropriate now.

For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him may not perish without eternal life.

The whole world was waiting. Who would atone for sin? Who's going to crush Satan's head? Who's going to do that? The world almost missed him.

He grew up, 33 years later, he died on a cross to atone for sin.

And today, if you are here and you say, Scott, I don't know. I don't know if I know the Lord. I don't know if I have believed in Jesus.

[23 : 42] In his life, his sinless life, his death for sin, and his resurrection from the grave, I don't know. And you would like to talk to someone about that. I would ask that you see me or one of the other pastors that will be down front today.

We would love to share this with you to make it clear. So what is it required of us to enjoy a relationship with God and having certainty to spend eternity with Him?

Ephesians 2, 8, and 9 make it clear and answer the question. It says, For by grace you have been saved through faith. For this is not of your own doing. It is a gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one will may boast.

So this salvation is available to us, but it says not available through works. What are some common works that many individuals are confused that they can be saved by?

They can be saved by their sin, or they can know God through what means of works. Some think good deeds, but they cannot save you. Being better than your neighbor cannot save you.

[24 : 48] Going to church cannot save you. A mental ascent to the fact that God exists does not save you. What saves you, it says by God's grace.

His unmerited favor is by which you are saved. What is God's unmerited favor that He would take upon Himself the wrath of God on sin on Himself?

He would, in that sense, it should have been me that died on that cross. It should have been me that took God's wrath, but He did that in a substitutionary way to say, I'll take it.

And in exchange, I received His righteousness for those who believe. So it is by grace. That is His unmerited favor that we have been given.

But we access that unmerited favor that God's grace through faith, saying, Lord, I believe. I believe by faith that through your sinless life, your death for sin and your resurrection overcoming sin and death, atone for my sin.

[25 : 56] Thank you. And one's faith in His grace, His unmerited favor, what He did, is the means by which one is saved.

So how is this cross an example to us of Christ's selflessness and self-giving? I hope it's painfully obvious. He took the wrath of God towards sin upon Himself, and He died so that others may live.

I pray that the cross serves as an example to us as a means by which we can take encouragement and say, oh, Lord, help me, live selflessly as you did.

Thirdly, in verse 9 through 11, we find the final station, the crown. Read with me in verse 9 through 11.

Therefore God, having completed His work on the cross, therefore God, having highly exalted Him and bestowed upon Him the name that is above every name. So the name of Jesus, every knee will

bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of the Father.

[27 : 14] Jesus humbled Himself being born of a man. Jesus humbled Himself dying on the cross for sin. And now the Father exalts Him.

And now the Father lifts Him up. The Father highly exalted Him, giving Him a name that is above every name. What I find interesting in the narrative story about Jesus' birth is this.

Gabriel comes to Mary, the mother of Jesus, and he says to her, don't be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God. You will become pregnant and give birth to a son and name Him Jesus.

And name Him Jesus. It's interesting that this phrase, and name Him Jesus, is found there.

Because it's that name that is above every name, that the Father says, I give...

so that the name of Jesus, every knee will bow, and every tongue confess that He is Lord. There's something about this name, and it's interesting to me that Gabriel tells Mary, you don't have the right to name your child.

[28 : 19] Name Him Jesus. And here's... I'm trying to overcome a little hurt right now. I'll tell you why. Eight days ago, Walton and Bethany had their firstborn son.

I offered a name. I offered the name Scott. I know some people by that name, and I have this strong affinity toward that name for some reason.

But they chose William Amos Castreva. And they didn't choose Scott. So I'm a little hurt, but here's the beautiful part of it.

Here's what the Lord revealed to me this week, that it helps me overcome my hurt. It's very appropriate for people to name their children.

Here's why. By naming something or someone, you're describing, I have authority over this person.

I don't have authority over Walton and Bethany's child.

[29 : 22] They do. And they named their child. Why did Mary and Joseph not name the child? They don't have authority over this child.

This child is the king of kings and Lord of lords. Ultimately, yes, they'll have authority as the parents of this child, and Jesus will have to honor them as their parents.

Yes, he did that. But that child is not, has ultimately authority over their life. He is Jesus. He is God.

And so Gabriel says, Mary, he's not yours to name.

Name him Jesus. And it's that name. It's that name. That every knee will bow someday, and every tongue will confess, he is Lord, the undisputed king of the universe.

He is the undisputed king. Everyone will acknowledge his lordship, his authority over all things.

[30 : 39] He is the undisputed king. Some will confess and bend their knee willingly, some unwillingly, some voluntarily, some forced, some joyfully, some begrudgingly, whether they are in heaven, on earth, or under the earth.

Everyone will do it. Everyone will do it. Because he's not coming in the future.

He's not coming as a baby. He's not coming to die on the cross. He's coming king. And he has a crown, and he's the undisputed king.

He is Lord of lords. He's the king of kings. And everyone will recognize him as such. And that, if you will, is the apex moment that climaxes the end of times that we then we go into eternity, into the future with him, for those who are in Christ.

And so, when we think about this grand narrative, this is the grand narrative. And we're going to paint the grand narrative that this passage portrays in these three stations, the cradle, the cross, and the crown.

[31 : 58] But we had to begin in the garden. We had to begin first with God, before all of creation. Then we get to the garden. And we understand why this child being born was so important.

Who was it that would atone for sin? This child, was Jesus. And who is it that will crush Satan's head? And in the future, when he returns, and the events surrounding this time, is when that event will happen.

So all the world awaited for this day. And so that's why it's fitting of the songs that we sing during Christmas. Let me just choose one first stanza.

Why was this so significant? We would be dead in our sins if this event did not occur. And so when Jesus was born, people who have written songs, they say things like this, Joy to the world!

The Lord has come! Let the earth receive her King. Let every heart prepare him room, and let heaven and nature sing.

[33 : 09] Because we now understand fully who this child was. So let us not be like those in Bethlehem, and all of Israel, and all over the world, who largely missed who this was.

And today, let's worship him. Let's say thank you, Lord, for being born in a manger, dying on the cross for sin, forgiving sin for those who believe, and who will one day return as King, the undisputed King.

Let's have a very Christ-centered Christmas, and let's pray. Father, thank you so much. For a day that we set aside to remember your birth, thank you for a day where we can truly sing Joy to the world!

The Lord has come. Let us be courageous individuals who speak of that name, where one day every knee will bow by that name, and every tongue will confess, Jesus Christ, you are Lord.

And I pray we as a church would be incredible witnesses and testifiers of your great name, and the greatness of who you are.

[34 : 46] Lord, we love you. Thank you for this day and for the joy of remembering your birth.

Amen.