

How Jesus comes to us!

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- [0 : 0 0] Joshua Bell is a Grammy award-winning and world-renowned classical violinist. And he'd be used to performing in some of the greatest venues in the world. And one day the Washington Post newspaper got in touch with him to conduct an experiment.
- And here was the experiment. And they would dress him in normal clothes, jeans, shirt, cap. And they would send him down to the metro station in Washington, D.C. And they would have him perform some of the most difficult compositions possible.
- And he would play for about 40 minutes. He would play on a 1713 Stradivarius violin that was worth \$3.5 million. And 1,100 people at least passed him by and heard him play these amazing compositions.
- How many do you think stopped to hear Joshua Bell listen? The answer is seven. Seven out of at least 1,100.
- And did any of these seven people offer their applause? They're like, you must be a professional training musician. No, they just stopped for a moment. And then there was the sound of the underground trains and they walked on by.
- [1 : 1 4] And the Washington Post called it a test of people's perceptions and priorities. And reflecting on the experience itself, the violinist said, it was such a strange feeling that people were ignoring me.
- And it was a great experiment. And it's one that reveals not only the business of life, how we, you know, especially city life in America, you know, just go from one thing to the next.
- And the same for ourselves. We live in a rural town or a big city. But just also how important and deceiving appearances can be. Just as we thought with the kids a few weeks ago, that it's important not to judge a book by its cover.
- That if you don't have the appearance of a master classical musician, if you're not playing in a massive venue, if you're not commanding large fees for people to see you perform, then maybe actually you're not the real deal.
- And of course we can apply this to every area in our lives. If we were getting a code for something in our house, someone's putting in, I don't know, double glazing or something, some heaters, we want to check out Google.
- [2 : 1 7] What's the reputation of those people? Or we might go local. Because these local people are trusted and they've had a well-established business, they've not just been around for six months, they've maybe had a family business that goes back 70 years or something or beyond.
- And then maybe we wouldn't come to church and, well, what if a speaker's got reverend attached to his or her title? Does that make them better? What about if we prayed and we didn't use the Lord's Prayer at the end of the prayer?
- Does that make it an acceptable prayer? What if we were to say that we're a confessional church, but we don't really use the Apostles' Creed? Or what if we were to say that we're a Presbyterian church, but we don't really refer to the Westminster Confession of Faith?

Or what if we end the service without the threefold Amen, which we don't do here, but it's done in a number of churches? Or what if we sing these modern songs that have repeated choruses? Is it true worship?

Does it have the form and the appearance, you get my drift? And we apply it to all sorts of different ways of life. In today's passage, we read that Jesus came into the world in the appearance of a human being.

[3 : 23] But he didn't use his divinity to his advantage. But instead he made himself low and he prioritized our needs above his own and he humbled himself even unto death on a cross in order that God the Father would be glorified.

And as we just saw with the kids, that as a result of this, that Jesus would be lifted, and he is lifted to the highest place, and that we stand to receive and experience all of the benefits that he has come into the world and died for.

That we are, as Paul says time and time again, over 95 times throughout his lecture, that we are in Christ. That we are in Christ. That we can know our joy being to the max, being to the full, as we live our lives with Jesus in our hearts, as we love one another, as he has loved us first, as we look out to the interests of each other, and that we, as it says in the passage this morning, can even have the same self-sacrificial mindset that Jesus had, and it's all through what he has done for us first.

And so this is where we're going to go today, to see how Jesus came for us, how he went low for us, and how God made him high for us. And it may be today that we would be humble, that God would choose to do this for us, in order that we would stand to receive the many benefits that his own precious son has, and that we would gaze upon him ever more deeply, and fix our eyes upon him ever more beautifully.

So the background and the situation and the context with Paul's letter to the Philippians are that he's in prison, in Rome he's under house arrest, he's writing this letter amidst some concerns in the local churches in the area, some folks are disagreeing with one another, they're not getting on as well as they would like, there's also false teachers on the prowl, so that's the situation for Paul.

[5 : 10] And in answer to those concerns, and what is at the very heart of this letter, Philippians, it's Paul's burning passion for the centrality of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

And he encourages the Philippians to stand together, to stand firm for the sake of the gospel. And at the end of chapter one, he says, well whatever happens to you, whatever happens in your lives, conduct yourselves in a manner that's worthy of the gospel of Christ.

And so this brings us into chapter two, in the beginning of chapter two, which is the practical connection of how the gospel shapes our thinking, and then going into verse five, how Christ took on the ultimate example and is the ultimate mindset for us to look towards.

So verses one to four are really, just one long sentence in the traditional Greek, and verse one focuses on the if, so Paul says that if you have any encouragement, if you have any, if you have this, and then he goes on to speak about five benefits that our believers can know in their relationship with Jesus, where he says, then go and do, then go and do likewise.

So it's all about the conduct of the Christian life. And so the ifs are these questions in verse one, it's really a question saying, well therefore, if you have any encouragement, which is encouragement, it's an act of emboldening one another, it's an act of lifting one another up, if you can know this encouragement in your midst, in your church, is it through your shared belief and relationship in Christ?

[6 : 46] And then he says, if you can experience comfort, whether that's in comfort and encouraging and consoling someone, whether, is it from Christian love, which Paul describes in 1 Corinthians 13 as being the greatest thing that we can ever pursue.

So if you can experience comfort, is it from the place of Christian love? He then says, if you as Christian believers can experience fellowship, what we know as fellowship, or what he writes as participation in the ESV, together in and through the same Holy Spirit that has brought you new life, do you realize this fellowship with Jesus, with the Holy Spirit, is because you can be in close relationship with him?

Do you demonstrate genuine affection and love and concern for each other through your relationship with Christ? Do you show sympathy, mercy, compassion, and care for one another as a result of who you are in Christ?

So this is verse 1 really. It's, therefore, if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, these are the questions that Paul's asking.

And what he's really getting at is saying that every answer to those questions is a resounding yes, yes and amen. All of these are benefits, natural benefits, supernatural benefits through the gospel which will promote unity in your midst together in the gospel.

[8 : 14] And then Paul moves on to verse 2 to 4 where he says that, how do you go and do this? Then go and do it, Paul says, and you can only do this by having the right mindset.

He says, so have this mindset that will lead to your joy and will lead to your joy being fulfilled. Or as we might know it from the shorter catechism, that man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever.

That the chief end of life, the goal of life is to know the joy of the Lord and to enjoy God and just who he is and what he's done for us and how we respond to that.

So Paul in verses 2 to 4 gives six different ways that this joy through a Christian mind should be expressed. He says, firstly, be of the same mind together.

Secondly, he says, have the same love. Thirdly, he says, work together with one mind and purpose. Fourth point is, don't be selfish or try to impress each other.

[9 : 13] Fifth, count others as more significant than yourself. And then lastly, look to the interests of others as well as your own. So that's verses 2 to 4. What Paul's saying is how you can put into practice what is already yours in Christ.

So there's, if you know this, if you know encouragement from Christ, and now it's a, then, this is the things that you can do. Be of the same mind, have the same love, work together, don't be selfish or try to impress each other.

Count others as more significant than yourselves and look to the interests of others as well as your own. And then he goes on to give the example of how Christ is the ultimate model of that.

Remember hearing a story about the tennis player, Andre Agassi, who's obviously one of the greatest tennis players who's ever lived. But in truth, he hated the sport.

Andre Agassi hated tennis. And it was his father's dream that he would be a tennis player. His father didn't fulfill that ambition so his son would fulfill it for him.

[10 : 19] And that caused great strain and, you know, alienation between their relationship. And he applied heavy pressure on the young Agassi to be a professional tennis player from a young age.

And in turn, Agassi, as a young boy, wanted to impress his dad, who was, you know, heavy-handed, pardon the pun, tennis speaking. But at the end of Agassi's autobiography, Open, there's a moving scene before Agassi's last professional match at the 2006 US Open.

And it goes like this. I'm hobbling through the lobby of the Four Seasons the next morning when a man steps out of the shadows and he grabs my arm. Quit, he says.

What? It's my father, or at least a ghost of my father. He looks ashen. He looks as if he hasn't slept in weeks. Pops, what are you talking about?

Just clear, son. Go home. You did it. It's over. Finally, he'd reached the peak of the Agassi and now his father had said to him, you know what?

[11 : 29] It's not worth it. And what did Agassi say then at the end of his autobiography? I've had the privilege of getting to the very top and I have the privilege of telling people that when you get there, it's not enough.

And doesn't this speak to our culture of today, isn't it, that our culture of ambition is that there are two speeds, either win at all costs or quit. But the culture of the kingdom of God is so very different because those of us who are in Christ, who have a relationship with Jesus, we've never got to worry about impressing God.

We've never got to come before God and say, well look at me and look at how scoffly I've just read the Bible. Look at how eloquently my prayers have come across. Look at me, God, and look at how well I'm doing.

He's our Heavenly Father first and foremost who loves us. And in all of our service, all of our devotion to him, all of the things that we can do nothing, no method or technique will teach us how to be a good Christian.

Because we often come back to this place of, well, does God actually love me? Is he really there?

[12 : 40] And is he actually real at all? But what do we often find ourselves coming back to? Or where do we find ourselves beginning? beginning? Beginning is very simply looking to Jesus himself and saying that Jesus Christ is enough, that he is enough for us, that we don't deserve him, but that in him we can find all of the satisfaction we can for life.

In him we can find all the encouragement we need for every life, for every season of life. We can find all the comfort sufficient for each and every day. we can know all of the love and affection for ourselves and for each other.

We can know all the sympathy and fellowship of the Holy Spirit because of who we are in Jesus. And that because we are in Christ, we stand to receive, not as a result of anything we've done, but because of what he has done, because of who he is, the many benefits that he came into the world for.

And so Jesus didn't just show us how to live, but he also came to show us how to think. And that in Christ the Lord we see all of the advantages of being humble for his sake.

That the ultimate model for Christian love, Christian living, Christian unity, Christian example for living is found in Jesus. And this is where we move on to verses 5 to 11.

[14 : 03] That if the beginning point for us is looking to Jesus for all of our security in life and in our relationship with him, then Jesus is the ultimate model for living this out. And where Paul takes this a step further in the remaining verses.

He writes in verse 5 about the Philippians relationships with one another as believers. And he says that they should have the same mindset as Christ Jesus. And what he really means is, he says that this is already yours because you know Jesus.

That you can have his mind in your midst in all that you do. It's already yours because you believe in Jesus. It's already a benefit that the Father has bestowed upon you through your belief in Jesus. And then in the next three verses Paul takes us on this beautiful journey through a hymn.

It's a hymn actually. It's through the inner workings of the mind of Jesus. So in verse 6 we see what Jesus did not do. That he was in very nature God.

He did not. He did not consider his equality with God as something to be used to his advantages. He didn't see his divine privileges as his own right to say I'm going to take them and I'm going to use them selfishly.

[15 : 15] So this is what Jesus did not do. And then in verses 7 to 8 we see what Jesus did do. That he made himself nothing. He took on the very nature of a servant that being found in human likeness in appearance as a man.

He humbled himself even becoming obedient to death on a cross. But firstly as we come there as we see these verses 6 to 8 the question comes up first and foremost the most important question.

Who is Jesus? Who is Jesus? Why should we believe in him? Why should we trust in him? And we see this answer for us at the beginning of verse 6 that being in very nature God that Jesus is God he's God in human flesh.

He is you know we sing at Christmas time God of God light of light very God the God and not created will come all you faithful. We sing that and we know the of these words that Jesus is in God that even though he was God in all of his majesty he didn't consider that status as something that he would cling on to but he gave up his divine rights and he emptied himself.

Jesus says that he emptied himself of his divine rights that he could have and as Jesus emptied himself it doesn't mean that he then became sub-God but actually that he added to himself that Jesus came into the world in human flesh and he was adding his humanity to him by being both fully God and fully man.

[16 : 40] And that's what theologians call the hypostatic union that Jesus became fully human fully God he is fully man fully God. Jesus both emptied himself of his privileges that he could take on by coming into the world but that he chose to humble himself and he chose to take on the form of a human being and more than that that he took on the form of a servant a slave that was added was that he became less if that makes sense.

That Jesus became less by adding to who he was that he chose to become a servant that he chose. And it means that in other words that if we were to walk past Jesus in the street you know 2000 years ago there would be nothing standing out of Jesus physically that he wouldn't have this divine aura that we would say oh it's Jesus you know he became nothing he became a servant and he revealed himself through his actions through his words through his teaching through his deeds through his miraculous deeds and what we see is that Jesus' appearance matched his true essence that in humbling himself in this form and that he did so in full obedience to God that there was the attraction that where people wondered this is truly God because he walks among us.

There is no one like this man there is something different than to every other human being that exists around us in our communities. He is utterly different even though he's a carpenter's lad even though he's calling fishermen to be walked with him even though he's hanging out with the tax collectors there's something about him his appearance matched his true essence that he became nothing yet he was adding to himself and becoming all the more attractive by saying the way to live is by going low, low, low and there's no one who ever went as low as Jesus because he went through all his life and sacrificially obeyed his father and died a shameful scornful humiliating criminal's death on the cross the ultimate act of becoming nothing.

The world has yet to see what God could do with one man totally resigned to him. that was a sentence that was part of a sermon that changed the life of a man called D.L.

Moody and D.L. Moody was the guy who changed the world. He was arguably the most well-known evangelist in the late 1800s and people came from all over the world to attend his Bible conferences in Massachusetts and one year a large group of pastors from Europe were among the attendees and they were given rooms in the dormitories of the Bible school and as was the custom in Europe at the time they would leave their shoes outside the door and they would expect them to be cleaned and polished by the servants during the night.

[19 : 35] That was just the custom of the time. But there were no servants in the American dorms but Moody walked through the dorm halls and he was praying for his guests late at night walking through the halls and he saw the shoes outside the rooms and he realised what had happened and he mentioned the problem to a few of his students but none of them offered to help and so without another word the great evangelist gathered up his shoes one by one took them back to his own room and he began to clean and polish each pair.

He told no one about what he did but a friend interrupted him in the middle of shining one of his shoes, helped him finish the task and later told others in the story that I did.

And so despite the fame and the praise that were heaped upon his life and his blessings that he received from God, D.L. Moody would always know that the hallmark of Christian living was by being a servant.

And it's only in seeing Jesus' humility and meekness that we can respond ourselves in humility. It's only in seeing who Jesus is, being utterly majestic yet willing to give up those rights and to become utterly meek.

You know, we make a lot of Jesus' divinity that he's truly God. But sometimes Jesus' humanity that he really, really gave up so much for us can go to the background.

[21 : 03] But as we see Jesus becoming utterly meek for us, it's then that we can say, wow, because he's done this for me, I want to give my whole life to him.

And it's that as we see Jesus' sacrificial death for us, that we can offer our whole lives as a living sacrifice. And so there's one thing I hope to get across today, if I can, it's that Jesus came for us in humility, and he died for us in humility, and that our call is to share in that humility by gazing upon him and seeing him do the rest.

In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Jesus Christ. Servants of the living Christ. I wonder what this looks like for you and me at present, maybe if we've been on the road as Christians for a long time.

I wonder if we're recently discovering it, or if we're exploring the Christian faith, what does it look like to recognize Jesus as a servant, and then to say, how can I serve?

I wonder, has the beauty and kindness of the meekness of Jesus resonated with our hearts, or is there something that we need to discover or rediscover afresh today? And so we're not finished, though.

[22 : 14] We almost are, but we have just a little bit to go from verse 9 to 11. That because if we stopped at the descent and the humility of Jesus, it's not the full picture, is it?

Because then we've got to go to the exaltation that put Jesus in his rightful place. In verses 9 to 11, that Paul goes on to describe that even though Jesus was pierced for our transgressions, he was bruised and crushed for our iniquities, that God's response to Jesus' mind in obeying him and giving up his divine rights in order that we might experience forgiveness from him, from God, is that God bestowed on him, gave him the name that is above every other name, a name that every knee will one day bow before and every tongue will confess everywhere all over the world will recognize who Jesus is.

Every knee and every tongue will bow and confess whether they like it or not one day. And for us, the response is whether we're going to trust in Jesus and recognize that he is God, Messiah, Saviour, Lord, King, and that he has a great plan for our lives.

And so we've heard this morning from the Apostle Paul, being the world famous Apostle, yet who described himself as the chief of sinners, said he had a lot to learn, and that was written at the end of his life.

We've heard from Joshua Bell, the world-class violin player, but who was unheard and who was mistaken for his appearance in the New York subway. We've heard from Andre Agassi, the world-famous tennis player, who was unloved and undesired, yet at top and the pinnacle of his game.

[23 : 54] And we've heard from D.L. Moody, the world-famous evangelist, but still a humble and broken man. And most of all, we've heard from Jesus, and we've heard about Jesus, that he took on the lowest place, and yet now he's been exalted and given the name above every other, that at the name of Jesus will every knee will bow and every tongue confess all over the place, all over the world, in heaven, under the earth, on earth itself.

And so what about little old me and you in response to that? And I wonder if I was honest with myself, the easiest thing to do, to come into a church service, the hearer would say that's, oh, that's sound teaching, oh, that's good.

And then we can walk out and say, well, okay, what's next? And nothing's really affected us. And maybe we've done that, and we have all my hand.

I've done that too when I've gone to church. And maybe we've done that enough that we've convinced ourselves that we really do know Jesus when, in fact, we've been skirting around the edges of the cross for quite some time, but we've not come bowing the knee before Jesus.

And according to the Bible, according to the Christian faith, that the consequences of doing that, of knowing about Jesus, but not actually saying, Jesus, you have my life, you have my all, you have my all, you know, I think, the consequences of that are very severe.

[25 : 25] It's that we will bow at the end of time, either when we're called home or Jesus comes before then, and we will bow, and we will confess that he's Lord, but if we've not trusted in him, then we'll be apart from him for eternity.

But on the other side, the implications of God's kind offer to us through Jesus, through his perfect death, so his perfect life, his sacrificial death, and his miracle work in resurrection from the dead are utterly life-transforming.

And that if we walk in the benefits that Jesus has made available for us, if we're among the great throng that will confess that Jesus is Lord and say, yes, Jesus is King, Jesus is Lord over my life, that together we'll say, as his bride, as his church said, we'll be greatly ambitious whilst at the same time being humble.

That's what D.L. Moody did. D.L. Moody, how many people came to faith through his ministry? That's where the Apostle Paul, how many people came to faith through his ministry? That's why he could be so humble, yet so utterly ambitious, because the gospel of Christ had worked in their hearts.

So in view of the amazing love that Christ has for us and what he's done on our behalf, can we have that same mind and share that same mind among us, that we can answer a resounding yes-naming, that we can embolden and encourage and lift up one another, that we can experience Christ's comfort, consoling one another, that we can walk in step with the Holy Spirit, that we can demonstrate affection, love and concern through our relationship with Jesus, that we can show sympathy to each other as a result of who we are in Christ.

[27 : 16] He's with us by his spirit and he promises that he'll never leave us, that the God who became low for us in Jesus is the God who has become high for us.

How did Jesus come for us? Through humility. How does God lift him high for us? Through exaltation. How does God offer us to respond? Humility, awe and reverence of who Jesus is, what he's done for us through his life, death and resurrection, that we might offer our lives a fullness of worship and surrender each and every day.

Let's pray we flee together. Jesus, we thank you that you offer us the most amazing life possible. But if we bow the knee before you and say that Jesus Christ is Lord and confess it with our hearts and our minds, then we'll be saved.

And so Lord, we want to make this very real right now. you can offer this to any one of us, no matter what age and stage of life, no matter if we've been to church once or a thousand times.

If we've overlooked this, if we've missed this, that you would help us to discover or rediscover the centrality of the person of Jesus, his perfect life, his sacrificial death and his miracle working resurrection from the dead.

[28 : 42] And Lord, that one day he will return and every knee will bow, every tongue will confess that he is Lord. But until then, his glorious church will proclaim the good news that he offers to a lost and broken world.

And so we pray, Lord, that by your Holy Spirit, that you would come and minister to our hearts, that you would work among us, that you would help us to not be ashamed of the gospel of Christ, to not be ashamed of speaking about him or speaking of him freely and openly, of not being afraid to offer our service to him.

But first and foremost, that we would recognize before we do anything for him, that he has done everything for us. And all of the benefits that he came into the world and paid the price for are available for us.

So help us to receive that in our lives, to walk that out, and to trust in Jesus as our Lord and Savior. In his name we pray. Okay.