

The Melody Of God's Love For You

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[0 : 00] If I can just make one personal comment.

It's, you know, speaking in front of other adults is very intimidating. And even before ministering God's word, just watching you declare he is holy, holy, holy.

Joining your voices to those of the angels. There's no better preparation. There's no better way to steal my own fears. And invite you to do just that, even through the sermon, Lord willing.

Our sermon text today is one of the most glorious passages of the entire Bible. It's Philippians chapter 2, verses 5 through 11.

I'll read this for us today. Believing it's God's inspired, inerrant, infallible, clear, authoritative, and trustworthy word.

[1 : 06] It's the word of God for the people of God. Philippians 2, starting at verse 5. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.

Who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men.

And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient to the point of death. Even the death of the cross.

Therefore, God also has highly exalted him, and given him the name, which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

The word of God. Thanks be to God. You may be seated. You may be seated. Lord, we ask, like beggars lifting our empty hands up to you, that you will once again give us the gift of faith.

[2 : 55] You pour out faith into your people, so that we can grab a hold of you, and truly have you, and know you. We thank you, Lord, for how you are not silent, but how you do speak through your word, by the ministry of your Holy Spirit.

Lord, there may be some here who are blind, and don't have this gift of faith. We join our prayers to those of Christ, and we ask that your Holy Spirit will blow like the wind, give new birth, open our eyes to behold Christ.

And Lord, we ask, nothing else except that you, God, by the power of the Holy Spirit, will set Christ forth before your people today, that we can see him with eyes of faith, and enjoy him together, we ask.

Amen. Music activates more parts of the brain than any other function.

Babies have an innate sense of rhythm, and respond to music, even before they can talk. Music can help people with brain injuries, regain movement and speech.

[4 : 15] Well, we know that heaven is filled with music. Music is another gift from God. God has hardwired his creation, his image bearers, to respond in these powerful ways to music.

The Bible is full of songs. Philippians 2, 5 through 11, it has hymn-like musical features.

Scholars have studied it, diagrammed it, and understood that it's exalted, lyrical, quasi-credal language, makes it undeniable.

The rhythm of this passage, combined with poetic tension, they observe. It includes repetition, and Hebraic-sounding parallelism. Let's look at an example here.

Look at verse 7. He emptied himself. In verse 8, there's the parallelism. He humbled himself. So it's saying the same idea, but adding more to it. Verse 7 says, born in human likeness, then he adds to that, appeared in human shape.

[5 : 24] Adding on to that, clarifying the meaning. Our best guess is that this passage was sung with a melody among the early congregations, or at least used as a musical chant, a way of getting

this truth about God in Christ into the people of God.

Like we use our public profession of our faith, or these creeds that we read together in one voice, and it just becomes incorporated as part of our worship. That's most likely what we have in front of us as our sermon text today.

So because that's what this passage brings us, beloved congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, my invitation to you, to all of us today, is to enjoy it.

Enjoy the melody of God's abounding love for you in this passage. A powerful musical piece has many movements to it. It carries us along on a journey.

So I see in this sermon text seven movements, but they all have this returning melody of the abounding love of God in Christ. Movement number one. The melody of God's abounding love, it culminates as it began with His glory.

[6 : 45] The melody of God's abounding love culminates as it began with His glory. I had to look this up. What is it called when a classical piece of music starts with a melody and then ends with that same melody?

And according to the internet, it's called rondo form or circular form. A famous example Fuhr Elisa by Beethoven goes da-da-da-da-da-da-da-da-da and that same melody is going to be that hook. It keeps bringing it and that's exactly that same peaceful melody at the beginning is the last thing you're left hearing at the end. So let me try to show you this truth in these two verses.

Verse 6 and then verse 11. Verse 6 reads, He who being in the form of God did not consider it robbery to be equal with God.

This is how it was in the beginning. God the Son was in the form of God. That word is best understood in English as sharing God's defining characteristics.

[7 : 56] The Son of God was equal with God. Sharing God's defining characteristics as co-equal with the Father and glory. And this is how it shall be forever.

Look at verse 11. The culmination of Christ's completed work in verse 11 is the glory of God the Father. The word glory can have two meanings in the New Testament.

It can refer to God's essential glory. The essential glory of who God is. His intrinsic worth. How do we perceive the essential glory of God?

It's only through the ministry of the Holy Spirit by faith. This is what we declare in Psalm 8, for example. O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is your name in all the earth who have set your glory above the heavens.

It's not something we can visibly see, but by faith we know you are excellent. Your name is glorious. It's your essential glory. That word in Greek is doxa.

[9 : 04] Doxa, you can know where that sounds familiar like we sing a doxology. We sing of God's essential glory. His defining characteristics. We praise Him for that. The second type or second meaning of the term glory is the visible glory of God.

How God manifests Himself to our senses that we can see and possibly hear or smell with our physical senses. We can perceive the visible glory of God's goodness, beauty, and majesty.

God creates in this earth in time and space a manifestation of His glory. And He does this in the Bible. In the Old Testament, the Hebrew word for this visible glory was Shekinah.

The Shekinah glory of God. That's what fills the temple. That's what the people see and tremble before. When Isaiah gets this vision of God and He falls down on His face, God had manifested in a visible way His glory to Isaiah.

Moses had encountered this. Remember when Moses came down from the mountain, his face was still glowing because he had been in the physical presence of God's Shekinah visible, manifested glory.

[10 : 19] glory. Well, our passage in verse 6 and verse 11 says, the holy God, the Son, He shares both of these types of glory with God the Father.

In heaven, before creation, at least before the earth, there's God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. One essence, one divine being in three persons.

Jesus Christ, before man, is made in the image of God. He shares God's essential glory and He shares God's visible glory.

And after the angels are created, all the angels, even before Lucifer is cast down like we read in Isaiah 14, all of the spiritual beings behold the visible glory of God the Son with the Father and the Spirit.

and they sing His praise. We get an example of another song that's sung in heaven in Revelation 7, 12. Amen.

[11 : 26] Blessing and glory and wisdom. Can you even imagine what this would sound like coming from angels to God? Thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever.

Amen. That's how it was in the beginning. God the Son receiving all the glory because of His essence because He shares that visible glory with God the Father and God the Spirit.

Well, in this moving passage we read how our Lord Jesus Christ did not regard being equal with God as something to be used for His own advantage but instead He set it aside.

He laid that visible glory aside. Never gave up His essential glory being truly God truly divine but the visible glory He took off and He put it aside and He did this for the sake of the souls that He came to save.

He set aside His visible glory for you and for me. Why did God do this? It's because God is love.

[12 : 39] That's what He tells us in 1 John 4 verse 16 says, Church, you need to know and believe that God loves you. You want proof?

Look to Christ. Enjoy the melody of God's love for you. The melody of God's love abounding for you it culminates just as it began with His glory.

The second movement hear the ancient refrain of how God's love abounds for you from eternity past. It's not an attitude that God had to change and take on.

He doesn't change. This has been His disposition toward you all along. In verse 6 once again He says He did not consider it robbery to be equal with God.

Well that term can be translated as robbery and what it's getting at is to greedily grasp at something. Why did Christ not consider it robbery or something He had to greedily grasp at to be equal with God?

[13 : 44] It's because He already had that. It's not something He had to take for Himself. He already possessed it. And it's not something He had to continue greedily holding on to because no one can take that glory that co-equality with God away from Christ.

He had it all along. Moises Silva commented that the divine pre-existent God the Son did not regard the advantage of His deity as grounds to avoid the incarnation.

On the contrary He was willing always willing all along to regard Himself as nothing by taking on human form.

See, Christ was always willing from eternity past to set aside all of His rights and privileges to make Himself low by adding onto His divine nature man's flesh for you and for me.

In our parallelism we see two phrases. He says being equal with God this means Christ is truly God always has been always will be truly God and taking the form of a slave in human likeness truly man truly God truly man Christ was always God's Son there are two verbs in the passage in Isaiah 9 born and given Isaiah 9 6 says for to us a child is born to us a son is given Jesus did not have to be born to be God's Son James Montgomery Boyce commented as God's Son Christ was given not born the divine nature of Christ had no beginning but to us He was born His human nature does date back to the incarnation in Bethlehem brought into this earth through Mary

[15 : 48] Boyce continues he said the incarnation was not an end in itself why did Christ take on a flesh he said God became like us in order that we would become like Him He has a mission and Christ is the one through whom this mission will be accomplished it's through the work of Christ that we hear this ancient refrain from eternity past God has always loved you in Christ it's the only way it's possible is if it's through the person and the love of God shown to us in Jesus so that you and I can know and believe that God loves us he loves us because God is love we can hear once again this ancient melody this refrain of God's abounding love for us from eternity past I think to appreciate the movement of Christ from His glory to the lowest depths we need to see the contrast the contrast comes from the greedy self-promotion of Lucifer or Satan in music it's called dissonance where there are notes that are not harmonious they don't go together it feels off it's not pleasant and to appreciate the beautiful melody of Christ's movement to come and be our Savior we have to first hear that dissonance of Satan what does this have to do with our sermon text look at verse 5 verse 5 is the exhortation to the church let the mind of

Christ be in you what's the opposite of the mind of Christ or what's our default mind before we can have the mind of Christ under the curse of Adam and the sin our default state is to have the mind of

Satan unless you are in Christ that's how you will always think that's the bent of our flesh even after we're saved and justified in this world and in this body our bent is to have the mind of Satan so feel the dissonance this is pagan thinking Ralph read it for us in Isaiah 14 Lucifer has said in his heart I will ascend into heaven I will be exalted on my throne above the stars of God I will also sit on the mount of the congregation I will ascend above the heights of the clouds I will be like the most high yet you shall be brought down to Sheol to the lowest depths of the pit oh how you are fallen from heaven oh

Lucifer son of the morning how you are cut down to the ground you who weakened the nations do you see how Satan follows the exact opposite pattern of our Lord Jesus Christ Satan is proud grasping for glory for himself God is love abandoning the glory that is rightfully his 1st John 3 8 says that the devil has sinned from the beginning and for this purpose the son of God was manifested that he might destroy the works of the devil do you feel the dissonance of Satan's greedy self promotion he calls the church to have the mind of Christ in you the only way that can happen is we put our eyes and our mind on Christ and let Christ fill our mind once again well the fourth movement in this passage is in verses 7 and 8

I invite you to fall with each drop an octave so to speak as Christ reversed the work of Satan this is what he came to do verse 7 says that our Lord Jesus Christ made himself of no reputation taking the form of a bond servant coming in the likeness of man and being found in appearance as a man what this means is that anyone who would have looked at Jesus Christ in the flesh would have said that's a regular man that's what it means he was a lowly man he was a slave what does a slave do you obey your master and who is Christ master on earth on his mission to save it was his father he came to obey God that's why he humbled himself and became obedient not to death death is not the master of God but he became obedient unto death or to the point of death out of obedience to his father father you notice how on this downward movement

Jesus is the subject he is the one doing these things he is the actor all of the verbs are connected to Christ's action he emptied himself he humbled himself he became obedient to the point of death and he did all of this to the glory of God the father that's why God the son made himself a nobody to bring glory to God no one forced him no creature that the creator made could humble God he had to do it himself no angel in heaven no man on earth no demon in hell could make Jesus low but he is the one who emptied himself that phrase is a graphic expression of the completeness of his self renunciation if

[21 : 44] Satan was a self promoter Christ was self renouncing putting aside everything he could have held on to and he became obedient to the point of death Hebrews 5 8 explains that although he was God's son he learned obedience through what he suffered Romans 5 19 also clarifies by this one God man's obedience Jesus Christ the many are made righteous so Satan was pushing himself up and Christ pushed himself low Satan lacked any essential glory in himself but Christ shared God's essence and holy glory from the very beginning Satan coveted God's manifested glory Satan wanted to have that visible glory that belonged to God and

Christ on the other hand possessed it but chose to lay it down to bring even more glory to God Satan exalted himself and Christ humbled himself Satan was then made low by God and Christ was exalted by God Satan will bathe in a lake of fire torment and agony for all eternity that's what his self promotion got him but for all eternity Christ will bathe with joy in God's manifested visible glory and he will receive all the worship due his name Satan wants you to worship him that's what he tempted Jesus with that's what he wanted to get in tempting Christ and either Satan or Christ must be your Lord and mine there's no middle ground if we had been left on our own we are hopeless under the bondage of

Satan but our Lord Jesus Christ made himself lower and lower and lower to reverse the work of the devil verse eight ends and if you diagram these verses which means you take every group of words every clause and you organize them you see three three three and then the second half of this movement has another set of three three three but in the middle is this awkward group of words that break up the rhythm they don't fit this poetic pattern there's been a lot of PhDs in theology written about this exact passage with that question in mind I was most helped by the observation that the rhythm sets a cadence as you read this what do you do with those last words at the end of verse eight the cadence gets broken up so my encouragement to us is let's slow down and let's soak up the love of

God abounding for you in Christ's death on a cross see verse eight ends with those words added on not just any death but even the death of the cross the cross is the crown of Christ's humiliation the cross is a picture of the high cost for Christ to accomplish his mission Hebrews 2:9 says so you who believe may live by God's grace God the son who became man and tasted death he tasted death on a cross what is the cross to you it's likely that the cross was one of the biggest stumbling blocks for Paul it's foolishness to the

Greeks and to the Hebrews you know a man who dies on a cross is cursed so surely everyone following Christ this man who died on a cross have to be wrong and this is the cross became the meeting point for Paul and his creator to show you Paul you're right someone must be cursed for your sin and it will be God himself taking the curse that you deserve if a man like Paul can encounter his creator at the cross because of God himself making himself so low such a slave to save him then of course someone like you and me can meet God at the cross as well Jesus endured the cross for the joy set before him it's the melody of his abounding love this is why he went to the cross and died when he was spat on this is why he turned his face again to those who spat on him because of the abounding love of

[27:09] God when his back was unjustly beaten and scourged and opened up and bloody this is why he turned his back once again to take more whipping that he did not deserve because I deserve it and you deserve it it's because of the abounding love of God for the joy the melody of his gospel that will bring him even more glory that's why he hung on the cross just like he made himself low he is the one who gave up his spirit and died and his blood is dripping as a picture of the washing that you and I need so we can be in the presence of the holy holy holy God there's no other way our sin is against an eternal infinite God our life's not enough to pay all that we owe him it had to be the life of an infinite

God himself in our place and you and I are mere creatures why would we even dream of being in God's presence we have bodies like animals we're not even visible visibly beautiful like the angels how could we dream of being in his presence how arrogant of us to think that way well that's why God the creator took on the exact replacement body that you and I need that he can be a true mediator between God and man there's no other way for us to be in the presence of God except by the work of Christ and the emblem of that work which is the cross do you know Christ through the cross 2nd Corinthians 8:9 invites you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ that though he was rich yet for your sake he became poor so that you by his poverty might be rich soak up the love of God abounding for you in the cross of Jesus Christ well the sixth movement is a crescendo it's a climbing back up feel the crescendo of God's love in lifting up his son now as your savior and mine feel the crescendo of God's love in lifting up his son as your savior and mine a crescendo is like when you're watching a musical or a score of a powerful movie and it's building toward that great climax and you hear the rumbling and you feel it getting a little bit higher and higher and higher and it lifts you up with it that's what Paul does in the verses that follow starting at verse 9 he uses a turning point word he says even the death on the cross therefore God also has highly exalted him the father saw the finished work of his son and the covenant of redemption is now accomplished the promises the father made to the son in psalm 110 and psalm 2 obey me and

I'll make the nations your footstool now the father is pleased to deliver on our behalf all that he promised to his son and he gives his son exactly what God the son asked him John 17:1 through 5 Jesus praying he says father the hour has come glorify your son that the son may glorify you you have given him authority over all flesh to give eternal life to all whom you have given him I glorified you on earth having accomplished the work now father glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed John Chrysostom commented no one could have honored God the father more than God the son and the degree of his exaltation corresponds to the depth of his humility you want to see how that is in verse 90 goes on to say

God gave him the name which is above every name that at the name of Jesus at the name of Jesus the cosmos quake and all creatures will proclaim Jesus Christ is Lord verse 11 when it comes to humanity being a bond servant a slave is as low of a category as you can get pushed down all the way down and then stomp down a bit further that's what Christ did to himself he put himself way down there but in the back half of this passage God is the subject God is the one acting now elevating lifting him up in the name Lord is the highest title that anyone could receive Lord is the divine title that in the Roman Empire could only be used for Caesar himself picture

[32 : 43] Caesar Augustus in glory but now it's the wicked Nero and as the Caesar would go through one of his cities there would be a big parade and everyone was expected to bow their knee to Caesar Lord and call him that worshipping the deity of the Caesar the Roman emperor but to the church that has the full counsel of God the word Lord in the Old Testament it means God it means Yahweh so for Jesus Christ the one who took the form of a man and a slave and died a cursed death he is now called Yahweh he's called Lord God that's the name given to the God man Jesus Christ Moises Silva again commented it's clear that to Paul the worship of Jesus Christ does not compromise Israel's monotheistic faith on the contrary

Jesus Christ is given the name of the one Lord Yahweh to the glory of God the Father not taking any glory away from God the Father this is how the Father is glorified Yahweh the God of the people of Israel and the Holy Testament is glorified by calling Jesus Christ God in Isaiah 9 that same passage continues that the government shall be upon his shoulder and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor Mighty God Everlasting Father He's co-equal with the Father and Prince of Peace this is our Lord Jesus the word Lord is also used in 1 Corinthians 16 22 but it's given in the Aramean the other common language of the Israelites at this time in history and the word has two parts the first word is

Maran which means Lord and the second word is Athah which means coming Maranatha the Lord coming 1 Thessalonians 4 tells us Jesus is returning and he uses the word Jesus twice at the beginning but the more he starts setting his eyes on the church's eyes on the return of Christ he switches now he refers to him as Lord and his return and he says comfort one another with the love of

God in Jesus Christ our coming Lord do you feel that crescendo with Paul of God's love in lifting up his son as your savior and mine the final movement is let the grand finale of God's loving masterpiece stir your soul with hope verses 10 and 11 are a grand finale to this glorious hymn of the church let this loving masterpiece of God stir your soul with hope in verse 10 he writes that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow see up to this point in our text everything has already happened in history you get to verse 10 that every knee will bow that's not happened yet but it will he's quoting psalm 2 psalm 2 is quoted 27 times in the new testament and it tells of the father with the son ruling over all that he created laughing at his enemies because no one can even come close to competing with his glory and power but every knee will bow of those in heaven these are the angels declaring in the words of revelation 11 17 we give you thanks oh lord god almighty the one who is and who was and who is to come because you have taken your great power and reigned and of those on earth that's mankind jude 24 and 25 the church declares and we join our voices we say now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy to god our savior who alone is wise be glory and majesty and dominion and power both now and forever more all those on earth declare his glory and the final category are those under the earth when jesus took on a body and came on this rescue mission in matthew 8 28 through 30 we read how two demon possessed men cried out at him what do we have to do with you son of god did you come here to torment us before the time they know that time is coming and they know that jesus though everyone else looks at him and says he's a man they know he is the son of god and he will torment them in eternal fire of judgment upon his second coming in verse 11 that every tongue should confess that jesus christ is lord to the glory of god the father let this stir your soul with hope we have this promise in first corinthians 3 18 that we all with unveiled face will behold the glory of the lord his visible glory will be revealed to us we will see him not only with eyes of faith but we will see him clothed in his majesty his goodness will be visible and perceptible to us in our transformed bodies and in the meantime first second corinthians 3 18 says that we the church are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another this is how our redemption will culminate as it was in the beginning so it shall be forever except now we are with

God glory be to our God three in one church I invite you to sing with your voices sing with your prayers let's sing with our lives the glorious melody of his abounding love for us in Christ may his spirit help us to do that for his glory amen let's pray Lord you are holy holy holy what else is there for us to say to fond LI ult