

The King Enthroned

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[0 : 0 0] I want to add my welcome to Dan's. Great to see you here on this Easter Sunday and invite you to turn back a page in your bulletin to page 7 to the little paragraph from Philippians chapter 2, which we're going to look at.

And most Easter's, we look at one of the number of resurrection accounts from the Gospels, but I don't think there could be a more helpful or wonderful passage in all of the Scriptures to tell us the significance of Easter than this little paragraph in Philippians 2.

And we need it. Most of the things we hear today, we haven't got a clue really what the significance is. I mean, in the last couple of weeks, we've heard about a black hole. Does anyone understand that? See me later.

You know, we don't understand Brexit. We don't understand the fire in Notre Dame from all sorts of perspectives. And this passage is breathtaking in its scope. It begins before Jesus became a human in eternity past.

And then it talks about a little bit about his career from birth to death. And then it speaks about Jesus, what he has been doing since his resurrection and what he'll do for eternity to come.

[1 : 2 0] It is like a mountain peak in the Scriptures from which we can see all sorts of things. And although a lot of it's beyond our understanding, so much is clear and simple. And I think it's so helpful to us because it is written for a very practical reason.

It's written by the Apostle Paul about 20 years after Jesus rose from the dead, which incidentally just shows what early Christians believed about Jesus. And it's written about a very common problem in the church at Philippi.

And that is, we just don't know how to love each other. We do know how to love each other. It's just we can't pull it off. We're so full of selfishness.

A lot of our loving others really is about meeting my own needs. And in the church at Philippi, there were people holding grudges against each other. This side of the church didn't like that side of it. You know, the sort of thing. One group liked one type of music. And they were all refusing to be reconciled. And it's in this common, ordinary context that the Apostle opens this vast vista into Jesus' staggering humility.

[2 : 3 3] In fact, the sentence before this one in verse 5, he says, Look, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being of full accord and of one mind.

And we can't do it. And then he says in verse 5, if you look down at the beginning of that paragraph, Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus.

And so as he goes and speaks about Jesus and this massive career, it's not for entertainment or curiosity, but it's to change our lives. It's to give us a new mind.

You know, at Easter we celebrate the death and resurrection of Jesus, not just as events out there, but as events in here, which have the power to transform us at the deepest level.

So when we began the service, we said together, Alleluia, Christ is risen. The Lord is risen indeed. Alleluia. That's not just out there. And if it stays out there, it won't mean anything in here.

[3 : 3 8] And the lovely thing is that there's a particular intimacy in this passage because Paul doesn't just list the facts or the to-dos, as a leader said. He doesn't just list the facts.

But we have the privilege of entering into the mind of Jesus Christ himself. What was Jesus thinking to leave heaven to come to earth? What was he thinking to give himself on the cross?

What has Jesus done in response? This is what we're told. And the apostle makes three points about Jesus in this passage. Number one, Jesus is God. Number two, Jesus is God and man.

Number three, Jesus is God and man for everyone. And it's so very helpful because if you take one of those away, you don't have full Christian faith.

So Christian faith is not a nebulous spiritual niceness, but it's the specific trust in this person, Jesus, that he is God, that he is God and man, and that he is God and man for all.

[4 : 45] And I'm very conscious as we look at this passage that we're on holy ground and we will come to the glory of God in the very last phrase there. So let's look at these three points just briefly together.

Number one, Jesus is God. Verse five, have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus. He's speaking about the man, Jesus Christ, who grew up in Galilee, who was crucified in Jerusalem.

Verse six, this is no ordinary man. He existed before he was born as a baby in eternity past, before the world was created, before he ever entered into the stream of humanity, Jesus Christ was.

Look at how Paul says it in verse six, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, et cetera.

So Jesus existed before the world began and before he became the baby in Bethlehem in the form of God. And this means two things.

[5 : 52] The first thing it means is that he is fully and completely in the essential nature and quality of God. We use the word form in English to speak about outward appearances.

But in the original, the word means both the inward reality and the outward reality. In other words, Jesus was forever fully God.

Jesus was of the substance and essence and nature and character of God before he entered the world. And some people say, why doesn't Paul just say Jesus was God? And the reason is because that can mean all sorts of things to all sorts of people.

When I was at university, I studied Hinduism. And the Hindu professor told us one day that he was God and the class was God. And then as when he turned to me and said that I was God, I knew that we were in big trouble.

He meant something completely different about this. But here the apostle puts it in a way that could not be clearer or stronger. It's not just that Jesus has God-like qualities. It's not that just he's connected to the divine.

[6 : 59] He has the very nature of God. That's the first thing it means. But secondly, it also means that he is the outward representation of God.

Precisely because he is in the nature of God. That might be helpful for me here to just push the pause button and say, The Bible teaches that there is one God in three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

They are co-eternal, co-equal, all sharing the same Godness. But each of the persons in the Trinity takes a unique role. God the Father is the source of salvation and love.

And God the Son is the perfect image and representation of God the Father. Not just after he was born, nor just for our salvation, but eternally in the past.

Jesus is the glorious radiance of God. The exact representation of his being forever in the past. And here is Paul's point in verse 6.

[8 : 07] Though he was in the form of God, he did not count equality with God as something to hold on to, as something to be grasped, as something to be exploited.

The first video recording of me is when I was two and a half years old. And I was a very good child. However, we were on a ship sailing from Africa to Australia at that time. It's a silent clip. And there's another boy who's exactly the same age as I am. And there's a stool between us.

And we both want the stool because we can both stand on the stool like a kind of a throne and be king of the world. We were early with that. We both grab it at the same moment and start pulling. It's a titanic struggle between the two of us as to who has the firmer grasp. He pulls, I pull, he pulls back. And when it looks like I'm about to lose the stool, I bring my arm back and I punch him in the face.

[9 : 08] LAUGHTER It is the most natural human thing to do. Just think what a brilliant picture that is of us. We all want to stand on the stool and we grasp what is ours and what is not ours with all our might.

And anyone who stands in our way will punch them in the face. Now, we do it much more sneakily and sophisticatedly than that, don't we? But it's the same attitude. But here is Jesus, perfectly and fully God, in the position of power and rule and safety.

He did not grasp, he didn't hold on to it, but he willingly let go so that he could become human for us. He doesn't exploit his position. He uses all of his godness for us.

It's exactly the opposite of the way we put life together as human beings. Right from the start, when Adam and Eve were in the Garden of Eden, first created, their first big decision was to grasp at equality with God.

They wanted to become like God. And every day when we don't love God with all our heart, mind, soul and strength, we too are trying to grasp and be like God. And every time we don't love each other as we ought to, we grasp at being like God too.

[10 : 28] But Jesus does the reverse. He's completely equal with God. He doesn't hold on to it for himself, but he lets go of his glory and enters into humanity to bring us back into God's glory.

This is the first point. Jesus is God. It's part of what we celebrate today. We worship Jesus just as we worship God himself.

They both partake of the same divine nature. We worship Jesus not just because of his miracles or his teaching, nor just because of his death and resurrection, but because of his person.

He is God. And because he's God, he's the only one who can really change us. That's the first point. But the second point is this. Jesus is God and man.

God who became man. What was he thinking to become a baby? Well, look back at verse 6. He didn't count equality with God a thing to be grasped. Verse 7.

[11 : 28] But he emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of man. From the highest height, the Son of God takes on human flesh and becomes a human being.

He doesn't empty himself of anything. He empties himself into the form of a servant, into the humanity of the person of Jesus Christ.

And when he does that, he doesn't stop being God. But at that first Christmas, he also becomes human. So Jesus is unique. He is both God and man, two natures, one person.

And if you read the Gospels from time to time, that glory peeks through. You know, when the angels appear at his birth and his resurrection. Or when he stills the storm or heals people.

Or when he tells us that if we trust him, he can give us eternal life. I loved it when a leader was speaking and she said she had this sense that Jesus was pursuing her.

[12 : 31] That's part of this. You see, God could not come closer to us than when Jesus became a human. He assumes our nature, which means we can know God.

It also means he understands you and he understands me. He knows exactly what we're going through. You know, have you been lied to or misunderstood or have you been betrayed?

Jesus has been lied to and misunderstood and deeply betrayed. Have you been treated unjustly, even violently? So has Jesus. Are you facing death?

He faced death. And what does he do with this humanity once he becomes a human? Well, he could have used his power to rule.

But now after becoming a human, he humbles himself. He goes all the way to the bottom to give his life on the cross. He comes to give, not because he needed us, but because we needed him.

[13 : 34] Look how Paul says it in verse 8, please, down there at the passage. Being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death.

And, you know, you can almost hear Paul's strain, even death on a cross. So he skips over Jesus' teaching and his miracles. And he homes in on with a one supreme demonstration of Jesus' humanity and his humility, his death.

So because taking death onto himself, Jesus takes the one thing into himself that has no power over him. He did not have to die. Jesus is the source of life. He had life and immortality and eternal life in himself.

And his life was completely sinless, spotless and pure. Death had no claim on him. But as the God-man, he chose to enter into death and to defeat death for us.

Because in Jesus Christ, we see God's death-defying love. That's why what makes someone a Christian is not turning over a new leaf or following all the rules or becoming a, you know, creedal, saying, hymn singing type of person.

[14 : 48] It's faith in the person of Jesus Christ, the God-man who gave himself for us. This is love. This is what love is. It's not the smooshy feeling or the wobbly knees.

Although, can I say, as a new grandfather, it's good to have the smooshy, wobbly knees. Jesus shows us what love truly is.

It's acting for the good of another by serving and sacrificing yourself. Jesus shows how great is love for us by giving himself over to death. God so loved the world that he gave his only son.

For whoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life. It means that Jesus alone can bring us to God. It means that Jesus alone can pour out the love of God into our hearts.

This is very important. As Alita said again, in fact, Alita, you preached my sermon for me. You did a very good job on that. But you know what it's like when you're in a relationship with someone and they just don't understand you?

[15 : 54] Because we're complicated. And you come to the end of your resources. And when we know we cannot really love that other person, we just don't have it in us.

What we need to do is we need to go to Christ and he pours the love of God into us. The love that drove him from heaven into the cross. Jesus is the strength of our source.

Sorry, he is the source of our strength and our love and our forgiveness and grace. Apart from Jesus, we can do nothing. He's the fountain.

And when you begin to trust him, he gives you a new heart. He gives you a new mind. He gives you a new life. And you start to become like him. And that is what we are enjoying today.

The fact that Jesus is God and Jesus is the God-man. And finally, thirdly, Jesus is God and man for all people.

[16 : 51] Jesus' story didn't finish 2,000 years ago. It's been going on for the last 2,000 years since his resurrection. It's going on this morning. But instead of saying Jesus rose from the dead, the apostle tells us the point of the resurrection.

And in verse 9, he invents a new word. If you look down at verse 9, it says, Therefore, God has highly exalted him. That's a new word. It's nowhere else in Greek. It's super exalted.

It's hyper exalted Jesus. So that the point of the resurrection is not just that Jesus was raised bodily from the grave or just that there's life after death for us.

It's that God has lifted Jesus to the highest place and given all authority into his hands. This is a massive statement by God of what is ultimately important.

You know, what's ultimately important is not Notre Dame or black holes or Brexit. They're important. Nor is it the things that we spend so much time and anxiety over.

[17 : 53] What's ultimately important is this one person, Jesus Christ, whom God has appointed to be the center and the pivot and over all things. And what does that mean?

I mean, at one level, it just means that God hates pride and arrogance and loves humility shown in sacrifice and serving. But Paul spells what it means that Jesus is God and man for all people.

So just look back at verse 9, halfway through. God bestowed on him the name that is above every name. First, every. So that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow.

Second one, in heaven and on earth and under the earth. And every tongue, third one, confess that Jesus is Lord to the glory of God the Father. Now, I hope you're with me because this is enormously confronting and comforting and clarifying.

It's confronting because it means that every single one of us will have to give an account to Jesus Christ and answer for what we've done with our lives. If he is God, man for all, just as Jesus didn't stop being God when he became incarnate, so he did not stop being man when he was exalted.

[19 : 08] So now God has appointed the God-man, Jesus Christ, over all things in heaven with him. And that's why it's impossible to just like Jesus.

I have a kind of job when people ask me what I do. It's always difficult to be truthful. But when you are, people often say something like, I like Jesus, but I don't like the church.

And there's plenty not to like about the church. But the problem is, you can't just like Jesus. He's either God or he's not. He either rules or he doesn't.

He's either everything to you or he's nothing. He is above every name. Every knee will bow. Every tongue confess. There are no exceptions. This is the confronting thing.

There's going to come a day when every single being who's ever lived, angels, demons, humans, will bow before Christ and confess him Lord. We all answer to him. And on that day, there are many who are going to do it unwillingly, with deep hatred and resentment toward God.

[20 : 12] But to those who've bowed the knee and confessed Jesus in this life now, we do it with joy and gladness and relief and pleasure. And I have to ask you this question, which will it be for you?

When we come to that day and we are before his throne, are you someone who will bow joyfully because you've bowed the knee and confessed him Lord in this life?

Some people say that if Jesus had all this authority now, where is it? I mean, if he could clean up the mess and the corruption in the world, why are there still drug cartels? And why is there still terrorism?

And why are there still children who die? And God has never given us a complete answer to this question. But he does tell us that the main reason why is his own grace and mercy, because he's holding back the day of judgment so that as many people as possible have the opportunity to come to faith in Jesus Christ and come and confess him as Lord.

It's very confronting. But secondly, it's deeply comforting. If Jesus is the name highest over all, then the one who rules all things is kinder and more gracious and more humble and more lovely than you and I could possibly imagine.

[21 : 29] I mean, the state of life on the West Coast here is one of permanently being overwhelmed. I'm not just talking about information and our captivity to screens, the constant fear of missing out, that compulsive voice that says you have to be a perfect person or a perfect parent or you have to have more or you have to schedule your happiness.

Or when a relationship goes south and you've been let down and your hopes have been dashed and there's something you just can't get over. There's a sense of being overwhelmed.

It can be love or pain or grief. If Jesus Christ is over all, bring it to him. He understands your experience.

He's given himself for you. He understands exactly the temptations and weaknesses. And now that he has all authority in heaven and earth, he wants to place you on his shoulder like a lamb and to share the weight of what you're going through with him.

And when that happens, he begins to change you. He loves it when we approach him in humility, when we don't have all the answers. And when we enter into relation with him, he shares his heart and he shares his mind and he begins to remake us to be a bit like him so that we begin to count other people more important than ourselves.

[22 : 50] And as we grow to know him, he changes us and we begin to look out for the interests of others. It's confronting, it's comforting, and very finally, finishing with this, it's very clarifying.

Do you see the last little phrase, to the glory of God the Father? What that means is to glorify God is to recognize and serve Jesus as the God-man, the one who loved you and gave himself for you, who now rules all things.

In fact, you can turn it the opposite way and say, God is not glorified until we come to serve and trust in Jesus Christ. It's not general. It's not an abstract, hazy trust in God.

It's these two things. It is to confess Jesus with your lips as Lord, not just once but ongoingly. It's to put your trust in him as Lord. And secondly, it's to bow the knee.

That means our life belongs to him. Everything in our lives belong to him. He controls our plans and our choices and our hopes. And because he shared his very self with us, he will share now his mind and his heart and his love and all good things, including his Father and eternal life.

[24 : 07] And that's what Easter is. That's what it means. It's seeing all the glory and honor of God in the face of Jesus Christ, in his person. It's looking to him as our hope and our joy and our life.

Since Jesus himself is God over all, blessed forever. Amen.