

Philippians 2:5-9 AM

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[0 : 00] Let's pray as we stand. We've heard the word of our God will stand forever, though the grass withers and the flowers fade.

So, Almighty God, give us grace, now in the time of this mortal life, in which your Son, Jesus Christ, came to visit us in great humility.

Father, may we see Jesus in your word, and may you give us faith. To accept him. In his name we pray, amen. You can be seated.

Well, here we are. December 1st. It's the beginning of Advent. Christmas is in a little over three weeks. How's your anxiety?

Advent is the season where we are preparing for God to come and be with us. Historically, this is supposed to be the season of silence and stillness, of slowing down, of contemplation and prayer prayer, to prepare our hearts for God's arrival on earth.

[1 : 20] But the description I just gave you could not be further from our current December reality. This is the busiest time of year. The holidays have become the season of capitalism, consumerism, materialism.

It's for many a festival of idolatry, drunkenness, and gluttony. We gain weight. We covet things we don't need.

We spend money we don't have. We get into fights with the people we love most, and we've been longing to see all year. The secular holiday is frantic, and loud, and godless, and exhausting.

And unfortunately, sometimes it's just as busy in here. The church office right now is as frenzied as Santa's workshop. So where's your head at this December?

What are you thinking about? What are you worrying about? What are you fixated upon? What's keeping you up at night, or waking you up too early in the morning?

[2 : 30] If you are already feeling weary and heavy laden preparing for Christmas, the word of God this morning is for you. God promises blessing to those of us who feel spiritually poor.

He promises rest to the restless and weary. He promises light and life to those who are dwelling in deep darkness. And he does all of this by speaking to us through his word to reveal who he is.

I'll be looking this morning at Philippians 2, a passage we just heard, and it'll put us in the right frame of mind to prepare for God with us. It's at the bottom of page 9 in your bulletin.

It's on page 980 in the black or blue Bible in front of you, and it'd be very helpful if you followed along. Our passage begins at verse 5 with a command.

This is your command for Advent. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Jesus Christ. It means think this way.

[3 : 40] Be of one mind together. Change your thinking. Get your head in line with Christ, who is our head. This passage illuminates for us the mind of Jesus.

It brings us into the mind of Christ, into Jesus' psyche. And having gone into his mind, it tells us then to share his mind, to share his thinking.

And that's what we need to do today at the beginning of Advent. We need to enter into the mind of Christ. We're told many things about Jesus in this passage. David Short once told me there's more written on this passage than any other passage in the New Testament.

But I just want to focus on the word form. Form. F-O-R-M. Form. Form means what something objectively is.

A form is something's essence. It's its identity. So if I asked you, what is this? Zoom in from the camera.

[4 : 48] What is this? What would you say? What's a shoe? This is not a glove. This is not a sandwich. It's a shoe. Well, how do you know it's a shoe?

You've never worn it. You've never held it. You didn't make it. But you see it, and instantly, all of you can say with absolute certainty that this, indeed, is a shoe.

And you know it's a shoe because of its form. It's in the form of a shoe. It looks like a shoe.

Unfortunately for Ruth, it smells like a shoe.

It functions as a shoe. It feels like a shoe. This thing is in the form of a shoe because that's what it is. Pause for dramatic effect as I put my shoe back on.

You are in the form of a human, which means you are human. You could believe you're a tree or a mermaid or a coat rack, but that doesn't change what you actually are.

[5 : 50] You are in the form of a human. You are human. It's your essence. It's your objective reality. Philippians tells us Jesus' form, his essence, who he inherently, objectively is.

This is not about who we believe Jesus is. This is not about who we hope that he is. It's about who he actually is. Jesus has three different forms in Philippians 2, and these forms of Jesus will challenge and change your thinking as you approach Christmas and beyond.

because knowing who Jesus is has the power to transform your life, to change your purpose and how you live, and even to affect your eternity.

Because the three forms of Jesus reveal to us who God is, and they reveal to us what God is like and why he has come to be with us and what the future of all of us will hold.

So let's look at the three forms of Jesus. The first is in Philippians 2, verse 6, bottom of page 9. It says he was in the form of God.

[7 : 07] This is not hard to explain, but it's impossible to fully grasp. Jesus was in the form of God. He was God. The unseen, almighty, unlimited, all-surpassing God of the universe, Yahweh, the creator of us all.

Jesus shares his form, his essence, his identity. It's an outrageous claim. Jesus was in the form of God.

Therefore, he is God. This is what the Bible says. This belief is the reason the author of these words, Paul, is in a Roman prison.

It's why the church he's writing to in northern Greece is being persecuted. For these people, this fact, that Jesus is God, is the most important thing in the world.

It's worth losing everything else in life to know this and to share it. Jesus is in the form of God. In the beginning was Jesus, and Jesus was with God, and Jesus was God.

[8 : 15] All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that has been made. In Jesus was life, and that life was the light of all humanity.

So, if you are already lost in the festive fog of materialism and distraction and demands and noise, this first point hits you like a lightning bolt.

It's a spotlight that immediately illuminates everything and shows us that every other thing about this season is a mist, a passing vapor, a distraction that has no importance in light of this reality.

Jesus was in the form of God. Jesus is God. That's what we believe. That's what the gospel reveals, that God himself has come to us and is coming again.

And this is why Christmas matters. There's a second form of Jesus in our passage. It's in verse 8. It says he was found in human form.

[9 : 19] So, Jesus, who is equal to God in the form of God, empties himself into the form of man. Jesus pours out all of his divinity into a human form.

God becomes a man. God incarnates. This is what we mean when we sing veiled in flesh the Godhead see, hail the incarnate deity, pleased as a man with men to dwell.

Jesus, our Emmanuel. There's no analogy, no metaphor, no words to fully articulate or describe this reality.

Jesus is in the form of God, all-powerful, almighty, all-knowing, all-seeing. Nothing threatens him. No one challenges him.

He needs nothing. He has made everything. He has no beginning and he will know no end. He is holy, holy, holy, the Lord God almighty.

[10 : 25] And yet, instead of hoarding his divine status and power, grasping at equality with God, Jesus instead empties himself to take the form of a human being.

This is the central claim of Christmas and of the Christian faith, the incarnation of the Son of God. Jesus was in the form of God and yet came to earth in the form of man.

The one who filled all creation now empties himself out into it. Let's keep reading, starting again at the top, verse five. Have this mind among yourselves, which is 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 emptied himself, taking the form of a servant and being born in the likeness of men and found in human form.

There's a third form Jesus takes. Did you catch it? He's in the form of God. He empties himself into the form of man and now more than that, he takes the form of a servant.

The word servant is too gentle a translation. It's too churchy. It's too polite. The original word is slave. Jesus empties himself not just to become a man, but keeps descending to become our slave. [11:52] It's shocking. This is what God is like. He's unlike any other God you have ever heard of. He's unlike any human ruler or leader or boss.

Jesus uses his status and his power to empty himself out, to become a servant of all. Jesus believes it's better to give than to receive.

It's better to serve than to be served. And have this mind among yourselves, we are told, which is yours in Jesus Christ. Being found in human form, he humbled himself.

I want you to notice, Jesus is doing all of this to himself, willingly. Jesus is in control of his incarnation. We're told he empties himself in verse 7.

He humbles himself in verse 8. No one is forcing him to do this. He's not a victim. He's in charge and he does it all willingly.

[12:57] Jesus, in the form of God, emptied himself, humbled himself. In the incarnation, we're shown the humility of God. C.S. Lewis wrote in Mere Christianity, humility is not thinking less of yourself.

It is thinking of yourself less. Humility is not devaluing yourself. It's being selfless as you value others and live to serve them.

This is what Jesus did in the incarnation. He considers others above himself, even though he is God. So Jesus goes from form of God to form of man to form of slave.

Get whiplash in this passage. But now he descends even further than any of us could ever imagine. Verse 8. He humbles himself by becoming obedient to the point of death.

death, even death on a cross. The heights of heaven to earth to the depths of death. From form of God to form of man to form of a slave, willingly, actively, humbling himself, emptying himself to be executed, descending into death.

[14:11] death. This is the claim of the incarnation. You may have noticed on stage it looks a little different if you're in the room. We don't have a screen behind us today.

And there was no short conversation on whether we should have a screen or not, let me tell you. But the reason we don't want a screen is because we want to remind everyone why we're here. We live under the cross of Christ.

And so we see the cross. We see Jesus willingly laying himself down, humbling himself, pouring himself out unto death.

There's an obvious question I think many of you are probably wondering. And the question is this. Why? Why would God do this?

No other religion is silly enough to claim such a ridiculous thing. God makes himself become a man and makes himself a slave. God humbles himself to be killed in the most shameful, grotesque, horrific way ever devised.

[15:14] Why would he do this? The answer is given in one little word that you probably missed in the middle of verse 8. It says, he humbled himself by becoming obedient.

Jesus humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Jesus died to obey a command that he had received.

He left the glories of heaven. He emptied himself. He humbled himself. He allowed himself to be tortured and executed because he was being obedient. Jesus, in his incarnation and humiliation and death, was being obedient to his father's will.

God the father sent his son to die and Jesus obeyed. Have this mind amongst yourselves.

Think about this this advent. God sent God sent his only son to die to take upon himself the sin of the world, your sin, my sin, and to bear the punishment for it in our place.

[16:27] And God's son unflinchingly obeys. He empties himself, humbles himself unto death.

Jesus comes to be with us in order to die for us. And he does this out of love and obedience to his

father and out of love for us.

This is the first thing we should remember about the incarnation. It's the unimaginable humility of God. Christianity is about what God has done, not about what you must do.

God has done everything for us. He's emptied himself, humbled himself, taken the form of a slave and a man and offered himself to die.

This is what God is like. Not some angry, unpredictable old man in a cloud holding a lightning bolt. That's Zeus. He's not real.

The real God leaves heaven for us to rescue us. He lays down his life for us to save us, to invite us to enjoy eternal life with him forever.

[17:39] This is God. He's unlike any God any man has ever devised. Have this mind among yourselves which is yours in Jesus Christ.

This is not where our passage ends because this is not where Jesus' story ends. Our passage ends by pointing forward into the future, telling us what will happen because of what Jesus has done.

Look at verse 9. Therefore, because Jesus has done this, God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

This is what we need to be thinking about as we prepare for God with us. God has come already in Jesus Christ in humility and obscurity and God will come again as Jesus returns in power and glory. So if you do not know Jesus this advent, I want to invite you to come and see him. Come and behold him.

[19:00] starting this Wednesday, I'll be leading three evening sessions called Come and See where we will talk about the most important questions of life around purpose and truth and hope and identity.

We're going to meet in a warm, comfortable, safe space where curiosity and skepticism and expressing your own opinions without fearing judgment is welcomed and encouraged.

We'll talk about these issues and then we'll come and see Jesus. We'll turn to him and see how he answers the biggest questions of life.

Running this course is the best part of my job and you are all invited to come. It's free starting this Wednesday. So the information to sign up is at the back of your bulletin under the announcements. It's also on our website in the events section. Sign up soon. Maybe today would be great because I'm going to send out an email telling you where we're meeting tomorrow. For all of us, don't let December destroy you.

[20:07] Don't get forced on the merry-go-round of this season's demands and distractions. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Jesus Christ.

Consider Jesus. Consider his humility. Consider who he is and his descent for us and celebrate that he will come again.

Amen.