

Philippians 2:5-9 PM

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[0 : 00] Heavenly Father, would you open our hearts to hear your word this evening, in Christ's name. Amen. Amen. Hello everyone. Hello, hello. It's nice to see you all. If you don't know me, my name is Aaron. Come and say hi afterwards.

So this is our first week of Advent. And this year in Advent, we are going to try and wrap our heads and our hearts around the idea of the Incarnation.

The Incarnation is the fancy Christian word which describes the idea of God becoming human. And in this first week, we're looking at Philippians 2.

And if the Bible was a mountain range, then these words would be some of the highest peaks. Do you notice?

When describing the Incarnation, it doesn't just say, God became a baby. God becomes a baby. Baby Jesus. We don't just get the facts. In Philippians, we get a window into the mind of Jesus.

[1 : 07] What was he thinking when he did this? Leaving heaven. Going to the cross. The passage tells us what Jesus did, but it also gives us sort of an insight into Jesus' mindset.

So let's get into it. And you should know, this is not a three-point sermon. I'm just going to walk through the text here and see what God has for us. Okay, so we'll start in verse 6.

We're going to skip verse 5. We're going to come back to it. Verse 6. Though he was in the form of God. Okay, what does that mean? So Paul, the writer of this data, he could have just said, Jesus is God.

Jesus is God. But he doesn't. It's not a very elegant phrase, Jesus is God, anyway. And also, that could just mean anything, right? It could be like, Jesus is God.

I'm God. The waterfall is God. The trees are God. You know, it could, yeah. He says, though he was in the form of God, which is much more helpful to us.

[2 : 05] Because it's saying, and it's sort of, this is an odd thing to say. But what it's saying in saying that, it's saying is, Jesus is the same substance. This is odd, but it's like saying Jesus is the same substance as God.

Which is a way of saying, he is as much God as God is God. So Jesus was not 50% man, 50% God. He was fully God, fully human.

He wasn't, and this would be like a Pacific Northwest thing to say. It wasn't saying he was 99% man with a spark of the divine. He was both and. He was God incarnate.

Incarnate. In, meaning in, right? Incarnate, meaning flesh. God and flesh.

Totally God. 100% God. And that, first part of verse 6, sets up the rest of the verse. Even though Jesus is as much God as God.

[3 : 04] Even though Jesus is God. He did not count equality with God to be grasped. That's the second part of it.

Even though he was God. He did not count equality with God as a thing to be grasped. Okay, what does that mean, grasp? Grasp. It could be. I saw some scholars translate it in some different ways.

And I thought one of the coolest ways was grasped, translated exploited. Even though Jesus was God, he didn't exploit that.

He didn't exploit his Godness. Specifically, he didn't use his status as God to get out of doing stuff that was really difficult. He didn't use it as a reason to avoid suffering.

He didn't say, look, I am God. Like, I understand we've got a plan. And it's great. And it's great. But I'm God. And that really sounds terrible.

[4 : 08] So I'm just going to kick this down to middle management. I'll get something. Let's get somebody else to do that part. The born and the death.

He didn't exploit. He didn't hold on to that and say, I don't need to do that because, you know, I'm God. Jesus willingly chose the humiliation of becoming a child and suffering, even though he was God.

And he did it because he loves us. He became human for us. Which is kind of the opposite of how we do life sometimes.

We grasp at power. We cling to our rights. Put ourselves first. Like, even the best of us. Even the best of us do this sometimes.

And it's always been the way. You think about Adam and Eve. Their first big decision. You know, they get offered their apple. And the snake says, you eat this apple. You'd be like God. And they're like, they're all in. They took it.

[5 : 11] And they lost their relationship with their creator. Because they grasped at power. And they lost who they were meant to be. Jesus goes in the opposite direction to that.

He chooses a way of weakness. So we can gain what we lost back. Okay, that's verses. Let's get into verses 7 and 8.

Let's summarize that. He didn't exploit his godness. To avoid the incarnation. And then verse 7 and 8. Kind of just unpacks that some more.

It talks about Christ's journey and his mindset. Going from here to way down here. Verse 7 and 8. But he emptied himself. 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 death on the cross. So this astonishing humility.

[6 : 11] I've heard it being described as like Jesus walking down a staircase. Step by step. So he's in heaven. Step by step. Off the throne.

Step by step down. Becomes human. Step by step down. Not just any human. Like a baby. Step by step down. In this nowhere town. In the middle of nowhere. Step by step. And you think. Well it'll be alright.

Because he'll grow up and he'll be a man. And it'll be cool. But no, no. Step by step. He does grow up. But he dies an early death. Step by step. Down, down, down. An unjust death.

And not just any death. He doesn't have a heart attack. He dies the death of crucifixion. Which was the worst way the Romans could think of killing someone. So Christ's journey of humility is just astonishing, isn't it?

We're kind of familiar with it though. So it's. Can you imagine Elon Musk, right? Gets fired and loses all his money. And he gets a job, you know, cleaning the bathrooms at the Tesla factory.

[7 : 09] That would be humbling. But that's nothing. That's nothing compared to the journey Christ undertook. Willingly.

Christ. This God, man, becomes just like a cursed, beaten, mocked person on a cross.

The creator of the universe goes all the way to the bottom for us. Okay. So what have we learned so far? Jesus. Humble in heaven. Didn't use his godness to get out of anything.

He was humble in the incarnation. Pam, a human child. Humble in his death on the cross. And it was all his own doing. And this is important. It says here he humbled himself. So it's not like this was done to him.

And the humility was forced on him. Pilate didn't humble him. The torturers didn't humble him. He humbled himself. He let this happen to himself.

[8 : 07] And again, this is not like a weird thing for God to do. This is not God being odd. This is not God being different. This is not abnormal God.

This is an expression of what it means to be God. This is what being God-like looks like. It looks like this. It looks like humility.

It looks like service. Okay. Let's move to verse 9. Therefore, so we're turning a corner right now.

Therefore, God highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name.

So that at that name of Jesus, every knee should bow in heaven and earth and under the earth.

And every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. So there's this down, down, down, down movement.

And then boom, this upward movement. Therefore, God highly exalted him. Down, down, down.

And then highly exalted him. And the original language, which is Greek, would literally mean hyper exalted.

[9 : 07] Hyper exalted. If you know catapults. Catapults. I watched Lord of the Rings with my son the other day. The extended version. The final. The third one. Four and a half hours.

Something like that. But there's great scenes with these catapults. And anyway, the catapults. You know a catapult that gets ratcheted down, down, down, down, down, down, down, down. And then boom, it explodes and launches something.

That's hyper exaltation. This is what God does to Jesus. He raises Jesus from the dead. But not just raises him from the dead. Are you good? No, he raises him from the dead and gives him a name that is above every name.

And says at some point, everyone will recognize that. Everyone will believe that. Every knee will bow. And every tongue will confess that. Every name above every name. Every knee.

Every tongue. God the Father. Jesus lifts up to the highest place in authority. And this idea, I think, should be very confronting to us.

[10 : 09] Should be very confronting to us. Because it means there is an authority in the universe that is above everything else. This person, Jesus. That we all have to give an account to.

For how we've lived our lives. There is no individual. There is no culture. There is no country. There is no family that is outside Christ's authority.

So the yoga instructor in my neighborhood. The corporate banker in New York. The subsistence farmer in Eritrea. The barista in Sydney. They all owe allegiance to Christ whether they recognize it or not.

This is good to remember. When Jesus comes into your life, you're not inviting just a friend. You're not inviting a therapist into your heart.

You're not inviting a conversation partner into your life. You're inviting the king of the universe.

Which means we hold nothing back from him. There's no area of our life that's off limits.

[11 : 09] And you might know the story. I think I've told it before. But in the crusades. When the knights would go off to war to be baptized. Do you know the story? I do not. It's a great story. So in the crusades.

You listening Zella? In the crusades. When the knights would go off to war. They would baptize them. Full immersion. In their armor. With their weapons.

So they would take them down into the water. And baptize them. But here's the thing. They would hold their right hand with the sword. Out of the water. That wouldn't get baptized.

It's like a trick. I don't know what they were thinking. But it's like. You've got my whole life Lord. But obviously not this. Because I'm going to do terrible things with this.

Like I'm going to do my own thing with this. Right? I mean it's crazy. It's a true story. But at least. At least they're kind of being honest. It was like.

[12 : 09] Imagine if we got baptized. Imagine you're baptized as an adult. And it was full immersion. And you go down in the water. But you hold up your iPhone. You've got my whole life. Obviously what I do with this is none of your business.

You hold up your CV. Keep it out of the water. Because the people at work knew that you were a Christian. And you were public about that. Because that could kind of. You know. Maybe that wouldn't be good for you.

Or you hold up a photo of your boyfriend or your girlfriend. You've got my whole life Lord. Obviously I'm going to do whatever I want over with this business over here. Look if Jesus is king.

It's all our life. It's all our life. Highly exalted. That's very confronting I think. But it's also very comforting though as well isn't it. Because the one that we just described.

Who rules over all things. Who went to extraordinary lengths to be with us. Is the most gracious. And most lovely person we could ever imagine.

[13 : 16] And this person is somebody who knows what it is to be lied to. Who knows what it is to be mocked and treated badly. He knows your life. He knows your stuff.

And he wants to share. He wants to share that pain with you. Now. To finish up. I want to ask you this question. What do we do with all of this?

This is the so what? Like so what? Like that was interesting. All of that was interesting wasn't it?

That was interesting. Go home. You tell your mates. That was quite interesting.

Theological. Christ humiliated beyond our imagination. You know. Exalted beyond our imagination.

This human God. Man. Rules the universe. What do we look like? So what? What do we do with this? Well let's go back to verse 5. Verse 5. I said we skip it.

[14:14] We're going to come back to it. Verse 5. So what does Paul say immediately before all this stuff? He says have this mind among yourselves which is yours in Christ.

You can have this mind. So what Paul has just described. Paul says have that mind. Think like that. Live like that. Be like him.

When Paul wrote this letter 2,000 years ago. It was about 20 years after the crucifixion. He had a very practical reason for bringing up this amazing sort of bit of theology here.

And the reason was this. He was writing to this church in Philippi. They had a very common problem. And the problem was they didn't get on with each other. There were factions. There was backstabbing.

There was drama. And into that Paul presents them with Christ's staggering humility. And as he's saying this about Jesus.

[15:15] They, we, are not supposed to sort of listen to that as this kind of like. This is not meant to be like this intellectual curiosity. This theologically fascinating thing that's hard to wrap your head around.

It's not this thing that's out there that we ponder and philosophize over. He, Paul presents us to us because it's supposed to change us.

It's supposed to change the way we think. Paul brings this example of Jesus before us because when we see the selflessness of Christ. The Holy Spirit is to use that to take an axe to our self-interest and our selfishness.

Look at the cross, Paul says. Who's up there? It's God. And he came all the way down to your level. But he didn't stop there. He kept going all the way down. Down, down, down. Far below your status to end up a criminal on the cross.

And the world's advice to you is no. Put yourself at the center of everything. Put what makes you happy at the center of everything. And the Christian alternative is so radically different.

[16:24] It's no. Have the mind of Christ. Have a life of selfless, purposeful sacrifice. And just to clarify before we finish up here. The Christian call.

The Christian call here is not. You're not being asked to give up joy. You're not being asked to give up fun and happiness. I mean, if that's your attitude. If that's what you think is going on here.

If you think that God's plan for your life is to rip you off. To take the fun out of your life. To take the enjoyment out of it. If that's what you think. Of course you're going to do everything you can to keep control of your life.

And that's going to cause problems for you. But this is the mindset of Christ. The mindset of Christ is this. And I think it's. Part of it is.

We don't want to. We don't want the Holy Spirit to do that to us. Because we're scared. We're too scared to be humble. We're too scared to live a life of sacrifice. To be a servant. But just remember the kind of the boom.

[17:24] The hyper exaltation. God honors his servants. God honors servants. I was at Synod last week. Which is like Anglican annual general meeting. And it was brilliant. And there was a pastor there.

Fellow clergy guy. From way, way, way out east. Called Darrell. And he announced that he's becoming a missionary bishop to Madagascar.

And he's going to be made bishop. And he's going to go over there for five years. And then raise up a local person to be bishop. Because right now there's no one there that can be a bishop. And in my heart. Sinfully.

I thought, oh gee. Come on mate. I just wondered in the back of my mind. Thinking. Is he like just one of those dudes. That's kind of always wanted a purple shirt.

And he will just take any opportunity he can get. And he's just kind of going to go for it. Even though it's a completely bonkers idea. That's what I thought. I haven't told him this. But that's what I thought. But then I heard him speak.

[18:22] And he talked about why he's doing it. And I needed to repent. I mean he is leaving. He's leaving his home. He's got a lovely home. He is the rector. He's in charge of a thriving church.

A thriving church. To move to the other side of the world. Madagascar is the eighth poorest country in the world. The bishop's house. You think. Oh but still.

He'll get looked after. No. He won't. The bishop's house literally has fallen down. He's going to be living literally in a shack. And there's no pay. He doesn't get paid.

He's living on his savings. He's married. He's got kids. And he recently visited there. To get to know the people. And he met this guy in charge of the children's ministry.

For the diocese. And he said. Oh what can I do for you? Like I'm coming over. What can I do for you? You're in charge of all the children in this diocese. So lots and lots of children. And the guy said. Do you think you could find us some balloons?

[19 : 21] Would love some balloons. That's all he asked for was balloons. Because the children. They learn in dirt under a tree. Because it would be great to have some colour. And he was talking about this deacon who came to him.

His face was all swollen up. And he looked in his mouth. And it was all infected and stuff. And the guy said to him. Bishop can you. So all the language is all translated. He said. Bishop can I go to the dentist?

And the bishop said. You don't have to ask me. If you can go to the dentist. And then the guy just stood there. And the translator said. Look he can't afford it. Can you. He needs some money. How much? 20 bucks. Daryl gave him 20 bucks.

He went after the dentist. And then Daryl said to the translator. What would happen if I hadn't gone to the dentist? He goes. Pretty good chance he would have died of sepsis. So that's the environment he's going into. That's the world he's entering.

So becoming a bishop sounds pretty cool. But this journey here will be brutal. But it's the Jesus way. Friends. Don't be afraid to be humble.

[20 : 21] Don't be afraid to live a life of service. God. His plan is not to rip you off. God honors his servants. Trust him to do that. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.