

Philippians 2:7-8 "The Jesus Who Is Like Us - Human"

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[0 : 00] You are listening to a message from Southwood Presbyterian Church in Huntsville, Alabama. Our passion is to experience and express grace. Join us.

Will, if I didn't love you so much and care about Southwood, I would offer James Parker and the band a million dollars to come to Rock Hill, South Carolina. And I'm not exaggerating. That was wonderful. It was just wonderful to be back and worshiping here.

And let me just make a couple of remarks. I'll be brief, and then I really just want to preach and talk about the one we have gathered to worship.

Barney, where are you? I know I heard you earlier. Ah, right there. I got to say this to Barney.

Barney, you'll remember this, but when I first came to Southwood, every once in a while I have a question.

So I'd call Barney, and Barney would say, yeah, da-da-da-da-da. And yeah, thanks, Barney. That's what I needed. And then I would, every time near the end of the conversation, I'd say, Barney, thank you for giving me such a great church.

[1 : 10] You remember that? And you'd say, finally, after I did that a number of times, I'd say, Mike, you don't have to tell me that anymore. I get it. Thank you. And really, I mean, it was just such a dear church, dear congregation to be a part of.

And then, you know, humanly speaking, I'm not supposed to do this, don't want to do this.

Ralph, kill. You know, humanly speaking, between Barney and me, there was, I think, almost a year and a half. Is that right, Ralph? Close to that? Well, humanly speaking, Ralph really kept this congregation together.

And when I got here, Ralph realized pretty quickly I didn't have an administrative bone in my body. And so he just did what needed to be done.

And there's so much more I could say. But, you know, when I first got here, I was, I really still saw myself as a real estate developer who had gone to seminary.

[2 : 10] And that's the truth. And I was learning to be a pastor. And learned a lot. I'm not going to cry. From you, Ralph, thank you.

Gosh, I'm going to say a few more words. And Will told me to take my time. So I'm going to take my time. Six hours later, we'll have dinner on the grounds.

Ken Leggett, where are you? I know you're somewhere around. Ken! I've just never seen a more vital youth ministry.

It was tremendous. You're one of the craziest youth ministers I've ever known. But, perhaps the best I've ever seen.

You're great. And I love you and still love getting together with you on the porch at the beach anytime we can. Nancy McCrite.

[3 : 17] What a dear. You know, you probably recognized pretty quickly, too, after I got here, that I didn't know anything about running a children's ministry. And I didn't need to.

You knew everything about it. And I could say so much about you. You're joy. You're just, you're full of joy. You're fun to be with. The kids obviously saw that.

And one of the things that I treasure about you is that you did something very few people can do.

And you got to a place in the ministry where you just said, I think it's time for someone else to come and to lead the ministry.

And after you told me that 150 times, I decided I better believe you. I didn't want to believe you. But I said, maybe I should just say okay. And then we called somebody to lead the ministry, but we

asked you to stay.

And you did. And boy, the ministry would not have been the same without you. It's just dear to see you. Now, y'all don't know this about Will Spink, but when we were considering calling an assistant pastor and we realized that Will might be available, he was finishing at Covenant Seminary, somebody asked me about him.

[4 : 39] And just looking at him and learning about him, I said, that's the kind of person you just want to get on the team and he'll find his way. And he has. And he's, y'all are really blessed to have Will here as your senior pastor.

I could say so much, but I could say, I'm not going to talk anymore because I will cry, but I will say this. Whew. It's just so dear.

To be back with people that we still love and still feel loved by. So we're here. That's enough crying. We're going to preach. Let's look at Philipians chapter 2.

You'll find that on page 981 in the Bibles that we have for you in the pews. When Wesley graduated from college, one of the gifts that we gave him was a book called Love Does by Bob Goff.

So it's older now. But in that book, he asks the question that I want to begin to help us think about where we're going. And the question was this, have you ever been stalked before?

[6 : 04] And then he describes how creepy it is to be stalked, which we certainly understand. But then he confesses that at one point in his life, he was a stalker.

Pretty significant confession. And he said, like other stalkers, I learned a lot of facts about this person, studied those facts intently, and got a lot of pictures that I put up on the wall and studied those pictures as well.

But I never really got to know that person, just like stalkers typically do. They never really get to know the person. They just get to know a lot about the person. And then Bob, in his wonderful way, said the person I used to stalk was Jesus.

And he said, I was in a Bible study, but it seems to me that all we did in that Bible study was learn a lot of facts about Jesus, but never really got to know Him, never really began to enjoy Him and delight in Him and love Him.

And then in his humorous way, he says, you know, so what is it about equating Bible study with getting to know God anyway?

[7 : 25] And he said, you know, if I have people I care about, I don't want to just learn facts about them, how bad would that be? And if I'm going to get married, I don't want to just study the person.

I want to take her out for a ride on a Ferris wheel or go sailing or go fishing, do something. And then he says, you know, and after all, there's a word for men who just kind of study the person that they're interested in but never take the initiative to get to know that person.

They're called bachelors. Now, just so you're not worried about Bob Goff or me, he is in a Bible study, but the Bible study now is very different from what he was in before.

Yes, he's learning more and more about Jesus. It's his life's ambition. But he's also getting to know Jesus, to delight in Jesus, to spend time with Jesus, to love Jesus.

And I would say the older I get, I think the more focused my life becomes. I want it to be about knowing Jesus better.

[8 : 34] I mean, that's why he came to earth. John 1, 14, and the word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.

And then in Hebrews 2, we're told that he actually shared in our humanity. He did so much for us so that we could really get to know him, not just learn about him.

The passage I want to read from today is Philipians 2, and I'm going to be reading it from the message. And let me just say up front, this is not going to be a typical sermon.

I'm not going to just work my way through this passage. I'm going to share bits and pieces from a number of passages to make one big point. But let me start with Philipians 2, verse 7, reading from the message.

I rarely do that, but every once in a while, Eugene Peterson has just captured so well the meaning of a passage. When the time came, he, Jesus, set aside the privileges of deity and took on the status of a slave, became human.

[9 : 49] Having become human, he stayed human. It was an incredibly humbling process. He didn't claim special privileges. Instead, he lived a selfless, obedient life and then died a selfless, obedient death.

And the worst kind of death at that, a crucifixion. Would you join me in prayer? Father, how dear it is to us that you have sent your Son to earth that we might truly get to know you and to love you and to enjoy you and to walk with you.

Would you help us take a step forward in that process even now, we ask in Jesus' name. Amen. I'm a church historian, so I like to go back to the past and think about some of the great men and women who have really set the stage for us, people that we stand on the shoulders of.

And one of those is the great British pastor in the 19th century, Charles Haddon Spurgeon. And at one point, he made this interesting distinction about worship.

He said in worship, you know, we worship one God, but that God is both transcendent, He is above us, He's beyond us, He is in many ways different from us, and yet He's also imminent.

[11:10] He is the one who draws near, especially, of course, in the person of Christ who came to live among us. And then later, the Spirit of God who actually dwells in us.

And this is what he said, though, that I thought was actually pretty helpful. He said, you know, when I'm in worship and I'm singing about the great transcendent God that I worship, I find my heart admiring Him, but it's only when that same transcendent God draws near that I find my heart being warmed.

perhaps Spurgeon makes too sharp a distinction there, but I think there is a truth that until God came near in the person of Jesus Christ, I think it was very difficult for us really to know Him, to love Him, to enjoy Him, and to walk in relationship with Him.

What I want to do for our time together is talk about the God who drew near, who actually became human.

Because even though we can state in our creeds and even though we can say, yes, we believe that God is in the person of Jesus, both divine and human, and I don't really think we've thought much about the Jesus who is human.

[12:45] I think we have a hard time, quite frankly, believing that He was as much like us in ways, in some ways, that are kind of really interesting. This is what I think we, I think we think maybe He kind of cheated.

You know, this is God after all, and I love the way one person put this. He said, when we read what we would call Jesus' more human moments, we feel like Jesus was sort of cheating.

You know, with a nod and a wink, we know that really what's happened is Einstein has dropped in on a first grade math class taking the test as the genius, but just pretending not to be the genius, or Mozart playing a measure in the kindergarten flute choir.

I mean, really, this is the Son of God that we're talking about, the second member of the Trinity.

This is Jesus. Now, let me take it another step further and just say, here's where I think we really get mixed up and have a hard time understanding just how human Jesus was.

Matthew 8, very common part of Scripture that's known to many of us. It's a story that has been preached on many, many times, but I read it anew recently, saw things in it that I hadn't been able to figure out before, and it's the story of a centurion, a soldier, a leader of soldiers who comes to Jesus.

[14:11] Jesus has begun to heal people, and the centurion goes up to Jesus and asks him to heal his servant back home, and Jesus says, yes, I'll do it. I'll go home with you, and the centurion says, no, no, you don't need to go under my roof.

You don't need to come home with me. You just say the word, and my servant will be healed. And then, we read these words, when Jesus heard this, he was astonished.

You know what that word can mean? It can mean surprised. It can mean caught off guard. I think, when we read that, we think of, well, he was deeply impressed by the man's faith, but surely not caught off guard.

Let me give you another story before I circle back around. Another place in Scripture, Luke 8.

Jesus, again, has begun his healing ministry already.

A woman comes up from behind, a woman who has been very, very ill. No doctor has been able to help her, and she touches the garment, the fringe of Jesus' garment.

[15:19] And do you remember what Jesus then asks? Who touched me? Now, did he really not know who touched him?

I mean, again, he's the son of God. God is omniscient. He is all-knowing. He knows things even before they happen. Well, let me answer both of these questions. Was Jesus surprised by the

centurion's faith?

Was he caught off guard? Yes, he was. He did not expect it. And he did not know who touched him. It wasn't just a, the setting up of a teaching moment. It was a question Jesus asked so that someone would help him know who touched him.

Well, how can that be? The answer is found in the Philippians passage that we read a moment ago. [16:28] And there we're told that Jesus set aside the privileges of deity or in the ESV, he made himself nothing when he became human. But here's where that's been taken wrong.

Some have said, well, that means he really did lay aside his deity altogether. That is not the truth. Instead, it means that Christ chose at times in his life not to use some of the divine abilities that were available to him.

And so, yes, did he have divine knowledge within reach of him? Of course he did. But he chose not to use that at times. And so, this is what's true.

This is what we have to acknowledge. There were times in the life of Jesus on this earth when he shared the ignorance of the people around him. He didn't know who touched him.

He was surprised by the centurion's faith. And so, here's the point. Jesus really was human. Jesus had to learn to walk. The Word of God had to learn to talk.

[17:34] You know, he who calls the stars by name had to learn the name of everything. Just like you and I did. This is a cup. That's a tree. We've got grandchildren.

They're perfect. They're amazingly perfect. And they're having to learn. Every, you know, cow, what does the cow say? Moo. What does the cat say?

Meow. I mean, that's the stage we're in. Well, Jesus had to learn just like that. Baby Jesus did not come into the world with the vocabulary of dictionary.com.

And that's the God that I want to know. He's the God who would become small for my sake.

He's the God who would squeeze himself into the shape of a seven-pound, four-ounce baby boy. I don't know how much he weighed, but that's what I weighed, so I'm sure it was seven pounds, four ounces. I want to know the God who would refuse the privileges of deity, the God who would become like me for me.

[18:43] But again, I think until we grasp just how human he is, it's very difficult to enjoy a very personal relationship with Christ.

And I think one of the things that theologians have done to kind of hurt that or harm that is to throw out this big word called impassibility. And impassibility, it means something like God is not capable of emotions like joy or like grief.

He's not even capable then of being affected by us. Now, they're trying to protect the God who does not change, but they've gone too far, and that is not what Scripture says.

Even before God becomes human, you see in the Old Testament so many places where you see how God's heart is affected by us.

Hosea 11 is one of those famous outbursts of God where he cries out to his people, how can I give you up? I mean, his heart is broken over his people because they continue to sin, and yet he cannot give up on them.

[19:52] How can I hand you over? My heart is changed within me. All my compassion is aroused. There is something in God even before he becomes a man that accords with our human emotions.

He is deeply affected by us, and that becomes patently clear when God becomes man. I mean, just think of one example. You get a sense of the humanity of Christ when his cousin, John the Baptist, is beheaded by Herod, and we read these words in Matthew 14.

He withdrew after he learned, he had to be told that John the Baptist had been beheaded, he withdrew by boat privately to a solitary place.

Now, why is that? Well, I agree with the person who put it this way. The man who has unceasingly offered himself to others needs to get away.

He needs room to grieve just as you would. And then he goes on to say about Jesus. I cannot say this more emphatically. Life affected Jesus.

[21:04] And Jesus is just so much more like us than we might have imagined. And I love him all the more for it. So, when I hurt, one of the things I have learned is that Christ hurts for me and with me.

And when I enjoy the good pleasures of his good creation, he takes great delight in my delight of the good gifts he's given.

And when I'm discouraged, he's the one who, through his spirit, comes alongside to cheer me up. And more importantly than all of that, when in my sin and have no way out, I'm reminded that he was unwilling for me to be swallowed up by my own folly.

And so he took on the unimaginable horror of a cross. And here's, again, where you have to see just how human it was for him in the moment when he went to the cross for us.

He did so all by himself. There was no one there for him in the midst of his pain as he is always there for us in the midst of our pain. And again, let me go back to history.

[22 : 25] Robert Murray McShane, wonderful old Scottish pastor in the 1800s, early 19th century. He does such a good job of sharing how alone our Savior was on the cross.

He said, Jesus, was without any comfort from God. Now think about that. His father, whom he had known for all eternity in perfect relationship, now he could find no feeling that God even loved him or cared about him, no feeling that he had any compassion for him, no feeling that God supported him.

I mean, God was his light before, and now there was nothing for Christ on the cross but darkness. He was without God. He was as if he had no God and all that God had been to him before has now been taken from him.

He had the feeling, as McShane goes on to say, of the person condemned when the judge says, depart from me, you who shall be punished with everlasting destruction.

He felt that God had said the same to him. And so when we hear those words, those dreadful, terrible words on the cross, when Christ cries out to his Father, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

[23 : 52] He was forsaken in that moment and he felt the weight of it. But the answer to the why is that he did that for us, he did that for me, he did that for you.

And see, that's the Jesus that I love and delight in. That's the Jesus I speak to as I read through the Psalms or the Jesus I cry to when I can find comfort nowhere else.

This is the Jesus I turn to when I'm weak. This is the Jesus I look to for wisdom when I'm unsure.

And this is the Jesus that I thank when I'm filled with joy. See, this is the Jesus who wants to be known by you and enjoyed by you.

He is real and He wants to become real to you and He will if He will stop stalking Him.

It is not enough to know about Him. You need to get to know Him. I'll finish with this if you're thinking, well, how do I do that?

[25 : 00] there are so many ways and so many people here could tell you ways that have helped them but I want to tell you the one thing that has been my mainstay for decades and it's something I learned in college and it's what's kept me in a real relationship with Jesus.

It's the Psalms. The Psalms has become my prayer book. It became my prayer book in college and I think one of the things if you've never read through the Psalms just start at the beginning and work your way through.

What you're going to see is that the authors of those Psalms express every emotion you have ever been through or will ever go through.

there is joy there is pain there is grief there is anger even at God there is questioning of God which gives us permission to be real with our real God by the way.

But the thing you're going to learn as you see as you read these Psalms is that the authors knew their God it was a real person speaking with a real God who eventually became one of us so that we could get to know Him and love Him and enjoy Him.

[26 : 23] Yes, learn the facts about Jesus the whole Bible is about Jesus in one way or another but turn those facts into prayers and joy and fellowship and relationship with the living God.

If you want to get to know God go to the Psalms meet with Him He will meet with you and you will learn to love Him and trust Him and enjoy Him.

Would you pray with me? Again, all I can say is thank you that you would become one of us so that we could know you like we know someone else.

Of course, you're different and yet in many ways you're the same. Jesus, thank you that you're here with us that you take great delight in us that you enjoy us that you enjoy spending time with us.

Lord, forgive our stalking and would you turn our stalking into fellowship. We pray in your name.

Amen.

[27 : 49] Amen. Mike, thank you for pointing us to Jesus and knowing Him. When we were thinking about this service my first thought is there's so much to do this Sunday we shouldn't do the Lord's Supper.

immediately after that my thought was how can we not do the Lord's Supper together celebrate together what Mike was just describing to us that what we celebrate here is God coming to meet with us giving Himself for us.

This is the defining chapter in Southwood's history not anything that's happened in the last 30 years. This moment where the Son of God became man and went to a cross for us so that we could have relationship with Him and so that we would be His bride forever because He loved us.

This is what we celebrate. This is actually the thing that unites all of us. Past members of Southwood current members future members of Southwood and people who've never set foot in these doors who know and trust their Savior and so how could we not celebrate that together? Remember what Jesus said to His disciples. Paul tells us this way I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you that the Lord Jesus the night He was betrayed took bread and He broke it and gave it to His disciples as I am ministering in His name give this bread to you.

[29 : 24] Jesus said take eat this is my body broken for you do this in remembrance of me and in the same way He took the cup saying this cup is the new covenant in my blood shed for many for the forgiveness of sins drink from it all of you.

This is our joy and privilege to celebrate. If you know Jesus not not in the way of know about Him but in the way Mike was talking about where your heart's beginning to love Him where you're desperate for Him where there's no one else that can fulfill you whether you're a member of this church or not come celebrate Him with us.

If that's not who you are if you think I know a lot of things about Jesus or maybe I'm learning some things but I don't really know who He is I don't know Him don't come to this table but do know you can come we'd love to pray with you there's nothing that any of us here at this church would rather get to share with you than Jesus we'd love to talk with you about Him you can come this morning as we come to these tables and we'll just pray with you and we'd be delighted to be able to do that let's pray and we'll come celebrate together Jesus thank you for giving yourself so that we could know you for showing us the glory of God in human flesh thank you for this bread and juice would you set them apart from their common use for a sacred purpose this morning would be strengthened in our faith that we might know and taste and see that you are good and we might truly know our Savior we ask in His name for more information visit us online at southwood.org you you you

Thank you.

Thank you.

[32 : 49] Thank you.