

When our first child went in for his 2 year appointment, the doctor gave us some paperwork about what we should expect as new parents. It just showed that there is at least one doctrine that can be proved through experience: original sin. The paper had several subheadings with expectations under each one. The first was “emotional development.” We should expect our toddler to get upset and impatient easily. Usually when they don’t get their own way, Shows anger by crying or striking out. Usually when they don’t get their own way. Gets frustrated when not understood. Usually because you are not understanding what it is that they want at that exact moment. Wants own way. May assert self by saying “no.” Usually when you ask them to do something they do not want to do, cuz after all, you’re not the boss of me. Goes back to acting like a baby at times. When not treated as sovereign. Is upset when daily routine changes. Cuz they want to control all things. Has sharp mood changes. Under Social Development, it says – among other things – Does not share. Because my stuff is my stuff. Claims everything is “mine”. May scratch, hit bite, and push other children. Under Mental Development, it says, “likes to “do-it-myself.” Because they think they are better than you at all things – even though they can’t yet spell their own names. “Cannot be reasoned with much of the time.”

You see, one of humanity’s fundamental problems is that we are turned in on the self. That’s how Augustine defined the sin nature: being curved in on the self, coming right from the prophet Isaiah, we have all gone astray, each one turning his own way. Cranmer’s BCP defines sin this way: “the seeking of our own will instead of the will of God, thus distorting our relationship with God, with other people, and with all creation.” We are self-focused, self-centered, self-promoters. That is why we need Philippians 2. To turn our eyes from inward, to upward toward Christ then outward toward others.

What have we seen in Advent so far? Week one we looked at Phil 2:1-4 and Paul’s call for the church to have the same mindset, which is doing nothing from selfish ambition or vain conceit but looking to the interests of others and putting them before us. JOY: Jesus Others Yourself. Last week, Cooper walked us through the first part of the “Christ hymn.” If you weren’t here, I mentioned that these verses existed before the letter to the Philippians was written. It gives us a glimpse that from its earliest days, the church rightly viewed Jesus as God. Contrary to popular false scholarship, the church didn’t tack that on later.

Cooper unpacked the Christology of the verses: who Jesus is: the God-man. The Son of God incarnate. There is just too much here for one week, and we’re just brushing the surface. He did a phenomenal job showing us from the Text of Scripture and the Texts of history (the Creeds) that Jesus is the Divine Son. This is where creeds and confessions are so important and helpful. We are not the first Christians to think deeply about these matters. We ought to know more about the Apostles Creed, the Nicene Creed, and the Chalcedon statement. This Spring on Wednesday nights, we will be walking through the Apostles Creed.

The leaders of the church all came together to combat false teaching and clearly articulate what the Scriptures teach. Speaking of false teachers, it would not be a proper SS advent if I didn’t remind you that Arius was one such false teacher. He denied the deity of Christ. He spread his heresy through song, because the best way to transmit truth is through song lyrics. His jingle was “There was a time when the Son was not.” Jolly St. Nick wasn’t so jolly when you started denying the deity of Jesus, so at the Council of Nicaea he puts Arius on the naughty list by punching him in the mouth. **PICS** / So the Holy Spirit has a history and we do well to stand upon these great ecumenical creeds. How does Nicaea put it: We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ . . . God from God, Light from Light, very God from very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father.”

So Cooper focused on the theology in the Text and I want to zoom in on the practical application. How can we have the same mindset? How can we be selfless when our natural bent is selfish. Paul puts forward an example. The example of Jesus. The mindset of the Messiah. **Phil 2:1-8** (921 - This is the Word of the Lord).

What is the antidote to self-centered living? Behold your God. Remember what he said in v. 3? *In humility*, put others before yourselves. And what is humility? CJM: “humility is honestly assessing ourselves in light of God’s holiness and our sinfulness.” To get humility, we must truly know ourselves and know God. John Calvin is notable for many things, chief of which is his magisterial and influential theology book known as the *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (which, by the way is much more readable than you’d think). The very first sentence says, “Nearly all the wisdom we possess, that is to say, true and sound wisdom, consist of two parts: the knowledge of God and of ourselves.” So, to have the mindset we need to look to God; more specifically, look to the Son of God:

5 - Church, have the same mindset. Have the mindset of Jesus among yourselves. The NIV says, “In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus.” Have this mindset, which was also in Christ Jesus. Take on the mindset that he had toward one another. Take on the mind of Christ. He had said we need to have the same mindset and now he tells us more about that mindset. Be like Jesus. He gave us the exhortation; he now gives the supreme example of self-giving love.

We are to imitate Christ, to be like him. As always with NT ethics, we are *not* to imitate him to try and gain God’s love but because we already have God’s love through believing in Jesus. Union with Christ by faith leads to the imitation of Christ in life. Here is how Luther put it: “It is not imitation that makes sons; it is adoption that makes imitators.” That order matters so much. That order was the reason for the Protestant Reformation. Let me run that back.

What is the mindset of Jesus? **6** - Though he had rights, he gave them up for the good of others. What were his rights? “Though he was in the form of God.” Equal with God. Jesus is the Son of God incarnate. He is of the same essence. “Consubstantial with the Father.” The word the early church used was *homoousios*: *homo* = same, *ousios* = nature – the same nature. The word for form here in v.6 (*morphe*) was the same as essence (*ousia*) in Classical Greek. / Btw, the early church went to war with false teachers over this word. In fact, over one letter: iota. It is like our lower case i. Was Jesus *homoousios* (same essence) or *homoiousios* (similar essence). The difference makes or breaks our salvation. Praise God for Athanasius and other bishops who came together to write the Nicene Creed and the Athanasian creed.

Though he was in the form of God, he did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage. He could have used his deity to selfish ends. He didn’t. He gave them up. He didn’t grasp for rights or privilege. The word means something to be selfishly exploited.¹ Here we have an allusion to Adam. Remember the Garden? He wanted equality with God. The serpent hissed, “you will be like God. You can rule yourself and you can define what is right or wrong for you.” Adam grasped for equality with God for his own advantage and the human race was ruined. Jesus is the Last Adam, the second man. Unlike the first Adam, the Last Adam had equality with God, yet he doesn’t use it on himself. The Last Adam repeats and reverses Adam’s story.

Rather than use his deity to selfish ends, he emptied himself. He made himself nothing. How? *By* adding a human nature. Subtraction by addition. This doesn’t make sense to finite minds, but for the Son of God to take on a human nature is an emptying, a subtraction. For example, my family experiences a subtraction by addition every road trip. We subtract from the value of our van by what we add to it after 8 hours on the road with 7 people in it. Or if you have ever flown on an overnight flight and walk through to the terminal the next day. The place looks like a war zone. Garbage and crumbs and blankets everywhere. Subtraction by addition. /

¹ Harmon, 209.

This all assumes that the Son of God existed prior to the incarnation. The Son always was and assumed a human form in the 1st C.

Jesus emptied himself by taking the form of a man. But it also says he took the form of a slave - **7**. He took the lowest status possible, that of a slave (Isa 53:11-12), which Aristotle called nothing more than a living tool. / I think Paul is alluding to John 13. You remember that? Jesus is on his way to the cross. These are final days. What message does he want to leave his disciples with? Last words are lasting words. What does Jesus do? He performed the duties of a domestic slave, who would wash the feet of people entering a home. The Midrash taught that no Hebrew, even a slave, could be commanded to wash feet. (**John 13:1-17**).

Jesus took the form of a slave, and in so doing gives us an example of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus. It means servanthood. It means giving up rights for the sake of self-giving love.

8 – Being found in human form. Verse 6 says the Son was in the form of God and he takes on human form. Right here we have 2 nature Christology. Chalcedon is right. The Athanasian Creed puts it this way: “That we believe and confess that our Lord Jesus Christ, God's Son, is both God and human, equally. He is God from the essence of the Father, begotten before time; and he is human from the essence of his mother, born in time; completely God, completely human.” In 451, Chalcedon said, “Truly God and truly man, of a reasonable soul and body; consubstantial with the Father according to the Godhead, and consubstantial with us according to the Manhood.” Truly God truly man.

But not only does God take on a human body, he humbles himself by becoming obedient to death, even crucifixion. As Coop mentioned last week, crucifixion was known as the “slave’s punishment.” It was the most excruciating form of execution. That’s where we get that very word “excruciating:” *ex cruc* – from the cross. Cicero said Roman citizens shouldn’t even speak of it. It was meant to shame the criminal. They were hung up naked alongside the road. They would live for days some times. It was meant to shame the guilty but also to deter crimes. Must’ve been quite effective as people walked by rows of crucified criminals. Don’t mess with Rome or you’ll end up like this.

Even death on a cross. He was crucified for us. In our place condemned he stood. Punished to take away our sins. Absorbing the wrath of God on our behalf. God becoming man and dying for us and our salvation. Incarnation and atonement. Glorious words that point to glorious truths. But why does Paul put all this Christology and atonement here in this Christ hymn? Is it just to teach us doctrine? Yes and no. It does teach us doctrine, which is why we are preaching two sermons on it, but in context, Paul is showing us how to live.

Theologians speak of various theories of the atonement. They are trying to get at the mechanics of the mystery of the cross. How does the cross save? What does it do? What is its relation to other doctrines? So you have the PSA, the Moral Government view, the Christus Victor theory, and the Christus Exemplar theory. I think there is truth in all of them. You need all the clubs in the golf bag to play a good game (so I’m told – I’ve never swung a golf club in my entire 40 years). And Phil 2 clearly gives some biblical basis for the *Christus Exemplar* view, but we must get it right. Over the years, there has been a lot of goofiness like St. Francis living a wandering life of poverty in the Middle Ages or even worse today: Roman Catholics in the Philippines having themselves nailed to a cross.

And sadly, this theory has been largely hijacked by theological liberals who deny the wrath of God. What is the need for the cross in their view, nothing to do with wrath anger, our God would never, but it merely shows us how to live selfless lives.

[Btw, this exercise shows us that all Christian truth goes together. Theology is not like a bag of marbles, separate and disconnected issues. Rather it is like a fabric. If you pull out a thread on one end, you're going to damage it in another place. If you deny the wrath of God, you'll have to rework your doctrine of atonement. In other words, if you get God wrong, you'll get man wrong, and get Christ and his cross wrong.]

But keeping the whole Bible together, Jesus does forgive our sins and make us right with God, *and* he gives us an example of how to live. The cross, it turns out, is both the source of our salvation and the shape of the Christian life. Calvary is both the provision of our salvation as well as the pattern of Christian living. Expiation *and* example. Propitiation *and* paradigm. We are to live *cruciform* lives: cross-shaped. Giving of self for the good of others.

Have the same mindset, which is putting others above yourselves. Have the same mindset, which Jesus had: giving of self for the good of others. Putting aside our rights that others may benefit. This mindset of Jesus, cruciform living is super important for NT ethics, for how we are to live as Christians. Some have called this pattern in Phil 2 Paul's "master story," with good reason. One Philippians scholar writes, "2:5-11 is a current that runs throughout Philippians, sometimes breaking forth into plain sight but often lurking beneath the surface, carrying the discourse along."² I would expand that beyond just Philippians to the whole NT. This Jesus mindset of: although A (status/rights), not B (selfishness), but C (selflessness) – all based on the example of the crucified Jesus.³ You have a negative, then an adversative, then the positive. Look at **3-4**.

Christians are called to reenact the story of self-giving love in our own circumstances in a host of ways. Ours is a narrative spirituality, patterned after the narrative of Jesus, conformity to the crucified Christ. Let's consider 7 broad areas of life that we should adopt the Jesus mindset with:

1) Love: Eph 5:2. 1 John 3:16 says "This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters" (NIV). For us, love is defined by the cross. 1 John 4:10-11 puts it this way: "Love consists in this: not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Dear friends, if God loved us in this way, we also must love one another." Love is cruciform.

2) Service: John 13:15: "For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you." 34-35; Gal 5:13-14.

3) Disagreements on grey matters: 1 Cor 8:1-2, 8-9, 13, 9:1, 4-5, 12, 15, 19-22 (being shaped by Christ's Law), 10:23-24, 10:31-11:1; Rom 15:2-3.

4) Marriage: Eph 5:25 (headship is not a matter of self-assertion but of self-sacrifice / side note on divorce).

5) Leadership: Mark 10:42-45. / 6) Generosity: 2 Cor 8:9. / 7) Burden-bearing: Gal 6:2 (the pattern of the Messiah)

This Jesus Mindset should inform so much of what we do. Cruciform living. / [Young people, one the main ways you can adopt the Jesus mindset is with your siblings. So much sibling rivalry and squabbling comes from self-centeredness, which is the opposite of the Jesus mindset. This is where WWJD is helpful. What would Jesus do? He would put others first. He would give of self for the good of others.]

² Harmon 159.

³ Gorman, *Inhabiting*, 16.

To share the mindset of Jesus is to see positions of privilege and rights as opportunities to serve others rather than advance our own selfish agendas. Advent is about God becoming a man to free us from us. Oh, the self-centered life is antichrist and therefore anti-joy. You were made for more! Jesus said whoever would lose his life for my sake and the gospel's will find life. G.K. Chesterton said, "How much larger your life could be if your self would become smaller in it?" 2 Cor 5:15: Jesus came and died so that we who live might no longer live for ourselves.

This is the total opposite of what the evolutionary worldview teaches: theirs is natural selection, strong eat the weak, preserve your own. This call is to give away yourself for others because that is the way of the King. I submit that the vision of life laid out in these chapters is so much more beautiful and compelling.

The Jesus Mindset: humility, obedience, joy, and self-giving love. A story whose symbols are the towel and the cross. Let me close with Martin Luther "Although the Christian is thus free from all works, he ought in this liberty to empty himself, take upon himself the form of a servant, be made in the likeness of men, be found in human form, and to serve, help and in every way deal with his neighbor as he sees that God through Christ has dealt with and still deals with him. This he should do freely, having regard for nothing but divine approval. . . . I will therefore give myself as a Christ to my neighbor, just as Christ offered himself to me; I will do nothing in this life except what I see is necessary, profitable, and salutary to my neighbor, since through faith I have an abundance of all good things in Christ."

Benediction: Now may the Lord of Glory, free us from a focus on the self and enable us to adopt the mindset of Jesus, who though he had every right – gave them all up by becoming a man and dying on a cross for us and for our salvation. This week, may his example fuel us to live cruciform lives for the good of others and the glory of God. Amen.