

The Humiliation of Jesus
The Key to Our Unity
Philippians 2:5-11

This morning we venture into something that is too good for us to behold. Something too magnificent for us to know and comprehend.

The text before us is one that can only be explained by divine revelation because in it is the exposure of the undertaking and humiliation of our Lord.

There is nothing in this text that is relatable to mankind because mankind has not come from the heights of heaven to the tomb of death. No man has set aside the riches of eternal glory for the ridicule of man. Not one soul has ventured in setting aside the praises of angels to receive the scoffs of his own creation. No one has exchanged intimacy with God for the wrath of God.

Only one has done that and his name is Jesus.

What we have before us in this great text is the depth to which Christ descended in order to rescue sinners from the wrath of God.

No other has done this and no other will. Only Jesus alone.

But what is relatable to man is the point that the great Apostle makes in pointing to the incarnation of Christ is a very particular attitude, a very particular disposition, a very particular characteristic that should be found in God's children and it is that of HUMILITY.

Jesus is the best illustration of humility because, as we will see, he had every right to demand worship, to demand allegiance, but in his incarnation, he does neither, but instead humbles himself by taking the form of man, and if that wasn't humiliating enough, he humbled himself to the point of death, even death on a cross, all for the glory of God and the benefit for sinners.

You see, up to this point in the letter to the Philippians Paul has been building a case to call the Philippians to walk in unity in the gospel. And Paul understood, as we need to understand, that without humility the partnership in the gospel will not stand.

And it begins in the mind.

Phil 1:27

*27 Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, **with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel***

He says ONLY let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel. That is singular focused. That is to live with integrity and honor before God and not a double life. So that we can be standing firm in one spirit and in one mind.

And notice what he does here, *with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel.*

In order to strive together side by side, we need to be of the same mind, singularly focused on the faith of the gospel.

We cannot be about our own agendas but that of Christ.

He goes on to say:

Phil 2:1-4

So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, ² complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. ³ Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. ⁴ Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.

Just as he said in verse 25 of chapter one, that he was for their joy, he implores them to be about his joy by being of the same mind intent on the same purpose, united in Christ.

One of the chief robbers of our communal joy is pride so he is calling them to humble themselves.

We by our very nature are prideful people. Even as redeemed saints covered by the blood of Christ struggle with the sin of pride, and it is evident in the sin that remains.

The sin of pride produces gossips, slanders, envy, greed, vanity, self-interest, self-centeredness, lies, unforgiveness, and all sorts of other sins that should not be named amongst God's people.

And all those sins lead to a brokenness in our gospel partnership because we prize self over Christ and our mission over his.

Therefore, Paul emphasizes so much about humility because in humility one can consider others best and not their worst, you can be for them and not against them.

But it starts in the mind.

To make his point more valid, Paul draws upon the greatest example of humility in the person of Jesus Christ in verse 5.

Phil 2:5

Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus

Now I don't think the ESV captures it as well as the NASB.

Phil 2:5 NASB

Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus

Have this attitude, what attitude, that of humility which was also the attitude of Christ when he stepped out of heaven and took on flesh.

And what follows in verses 6-11 is not only the example of humility, but a robust theology of the incarnation of Jesus.

Not only does Paul point us to Jesus to understand true God honoring humility, but also, he shares with us what Christ gave up through His willful humiliation to rescue wretched sinners.

The key to our unity is humility, and the key to our humility is Christ.

So what I want to do in the remainder of our time is to take a look at the humiliation of Christ in his incarnation as our example.

We will see three aspects of his humiliation.

In humility Jesus took on flesh

In humility Jesus died a sinner's death

The Father exalts Jesus because of his humility

In humility Jesus took on flesh – vv 6-7

Lets get technical for a few minutes and look at a few key terms

Though he was in the form of God

What Paul is communicating is the eternal truth of the deity of Jesus Christ.

The term FORM is the term morphe – refers to the inner, essential, and abiding nature of a person or thing. It deals with the nature of someone or something.

In speaking of humans, it is who you are. No matter big or small, tall or short, you are a human being, you are a person, in your nature, made in the imago de, image of God.

That's why everyone's life has meaning and value and purpose.

Anyone who is sick is no less human than someone who is well.

Anyone who is weak is no less human than someone who is strong.

Anyone who is at the end of life is no less human than someone who is at the beginning of life.

All life at the moment of conception is not less human than the baby who takes their first breath.

Race, age, creed, religion, are not defining factors of our morphe

So, what that means in relation to Christ is that He was, is, and will always be God. Before ever becoming a man, He was God. This is the declared glory of his deity, that he was in the morphe of God, the nature, the essence of God.

The phrase "though he was" is just one word in the Greek and it is in the present tense, and it simply means "to be". I think the NIV and the KJV translate this the best, they chose the word "being"

NIV – being in very nature of God

KJV – being in the form of God

This tells us that Jesus, when He became a man, He did not cease to be God because that is the very essence of his being, that he is God true God.

John 1:1-3

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.

John 1:14

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Jesus is the always existing One.

But, even though He was God, true God, in His humility, looking back at the text

did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped

The term equality is the Greek word isos (esos) which means equal, equal to or same as.

Once again, a reference to the essential nature of Christ as God.

The term grasped is the Greek word harpagmos and according to

Louw-Nida Greek Lexicon

that which is to be held on to forcibly— ‘something to hold by force, something to be forcibly retained.’

Parents should understand this term very well. Especially parents that have children who are close in age.

Picture the scene with me. You are sitting at your table in your kitchen nook with a nice cup of hot coffee looking out of the window and enjoying the serenity of a calm and peaceful outdoors.

All of a sudden it is interrupted with screams and yells, and you go to investigate. When you walk around the corner, and to your parental surprise, you witness your two beloved little ones playing tug of war over a toy screaming, “it’s mine”. This almost sounds familiar to me, lol.

These two beloved little ones are exercising their fight for what is perceived to be theirs with harpagmos.

That is the concept of harpagmos, it is to hold onto with force.

Unlike our beloved little children, Jesus didn’t fight for what was rightfully his, he didn’t count equality with God a thing to be forcibly held onto.

-This is how Louw-Nida would translate this verse-
‘he always had the nature of God and did not consider that remaining equal with God was something to be held on to forcibly’

Jesus Christ had all the privileges, rights, and honors of being God but in His humility refused to hold on to that favored position but willfully set them aside to become a hope offering for us.

Instead of holding onto it with force or fighting for it, *emptied Himself by becoming His creation*

Just to take another moment of understanding the depth of this.

Verse 7

but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men

What Christ did when He “emptied Himself” was not pour out something like you would if you were to empty a jug.

This term emptied, it’s the Greek word kenoō which means:
to completely remove or eliminate elements of high status or rank by eliminating all privileges or prerogatives associated with such status or rank

It is as if a very wealthy individual decided to set aside their riches and live amongst the homeless. They are no less rich but they choose not to access their funds or to access what is rightfully theirs. They choose not to access the prestige that comes with it, the class, but to associate with and live among and become a homeless person.

The riches of glory, Jesus Christ set aside to live amongst an impoverished people.

What He did was set aside His right to glory and honor and made Himself to be like His creation.

He did not at any point stop being God, nor did He exchange deity for humanity

What He did do was veil His glory in human flesh and completely submitted Himself to the will of the Father by becoming fully man.

That's what Jesus did when He emptied Himself. He set aside his rights and privileges and He took the *form* of a bondservant in the likeness of men.

by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men

Paul tells us the He *took* the form of a bondservant. This is in direct contrast to what is said in verse 6, He did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped or held on to.

He let go of, and then it says that He took. That is something that He did willfully.

He took the form of man. We see the term *form* again and it's the say term *morphe*.

Not only did he have the essential nature and essence of God, but now he has the nature and essence of man.

When Christ took on the *morphe* of man, the nature of man, he became man fully while remaining to be fully God.

Christ was not just God covered in flesh, He was fully human in the nature of man. He was a human man 100%, still 100% God, and became 100% man.

This is what is called the Hypostatic Union: 2 natures unified.
100% God and 100% Man, at the same time.

He ate like us, felt joys like us, felt pains like us, wept like us, because He was just like us except without sin.

The significance of this cannot be understated. If Jesus was any less than God true God, then the demands of God could have never been met. If Jesus was not Man true Man, then he could not truly stand in our place as our representative.

And notice, He took the form of a not just any man, but a BONDSERVANT, a duolos, a SLAVE.

Oh, what a tremendous act that He did by coming in this world, not as a ruler, not as royalty, not as a conquering giant, but a slave.

The ruler of the universe, the King, the creator of all things became a slave to save many.

Mark 10:45

For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.

He is the King of the universe, and He stepped out of Heaven into His own creation.

This is instructive for us. This shows us how much God really cares for His creation that He would step off His throne and step into this sin filth world as an offering of Hope for a hopeless race.

Do you ever marvel at the fact that God, true God, the always existent one, has stepped into His own creation to pursue a people who have hated Him since the fall?

There has not been one man in the history of the world who has loved God without God acting on that man first. Because in our sin we hate God.

We must walk with caution here and not begin to have a higher view of man than what the Bible has. Jesus didn't step out of heaven because there was something of value in sinners. There is nothing good in man that deserves the rightful attention of God.

Rom 5:6-8

⁶ For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷ For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die— ⁸ but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

We were weak, ungodly, sinners

BUT GOD

Do you ever marvel at the love of God?

This should not point us to see our inherent value because there is none, but it should point us to the immense value of God in love through His Son.

This should be a constant reminder for us, that no matter where we are or what we've done or what we are going through, God stepped out of Heaven to save you and me because of the great love with which He loved us.

This should humble us.

Because in his humility Jesus took on flesh.

In humility Jesus died a sinner's death - Phil 2:8

But Jesus didn't stop in his humiliation at becoming man, no, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, death on a cursed cross.

Why did Christ come to earth?

To do the Father's will.

John 6:38

For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me

What was the Father's? To seek and to save the lost.

Luke 19:10

For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.

How did He seek and save the lost? By dying for our sin.

1 Peter 3:18

For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit

When Jesus as a baby laid in the manger, He had already obeyed the Father's will to set aside His glory and right to be worshiped as God true God for the express purpose of saving people from their sins

This was the plan of God before the foundation of the earth.

Acts 2:23

this Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death.

Jesus Christ knew that He was going to the cross and He didn't fight against it, from the foundation of the world He knew.

This truth He made known to the prophets

Acts 3:18

But the things which God announced beforehand by the mouth of all the prophets, that His Christ would suffer, He has thus fulfilled

To which the angel of the Lord announces

Matt 1:21

She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins

Luke 2:10-11

Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people; for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord

The perfect obedience of Christ led Him to abandon His heavenly abode and take on a life less desirable. He obeyed the Father perfectly and that caused Him to step in the muck of sinful people in order to rescue them from their atrocities.

How obedient was He? To the point of death.

Even when He was in the garden of Gethsemane the suffering had begun, but He didn't waiver in His obedience to God.

In Christ's plea for the cup to be removed and that the hour would pass, the response was deafening silence.

The suffering of Christ to the point of death began at the SOUL level.

My God my God why have you forsaken me.

But He didn't waiver nor did He doubt for He knew that the whole purpose of Him coming to earth was to die a sinner's death, to bear the wrath of God.

And He did this by dying on a cross which according to Gal 3:13, was considered a curse.

He became the curse so that we could be blessed.

There is nothing about His death on the cross that warrants glorification other than the fact that it was the Son of God that hung. It was violent, it was excruciatingly painful, it was gruesome, it was illegitimate, it was bloody, it was cursed.

But Christ willfully obeyed

What would cause Jesus to be this obedient.

It had to be His Love.

EDWARD PAYSON

How infinite how inconceivable must have been the love which brought down the Son of God from heaven to redeem our ruined race? Which led him to exchange the adoration of angels for the scoffs and insults of sinners. The enjoyment of eternal life for an accursed painful death. Nothing but love could have done this. Not all of the powers of heaven, earth, hell combined could have dragged him from his throne and

rested the scepter of the universe from his hands. No! It was love alone. Divine all-powerful love, which drew him down. It was in the bands of love that he was led a willing captive. Through all the toils and sufferings of a laborious life and it was these bands that bond him at the bar of Pilate. Unless we can ascend into heaven and see the glorious and happiness which our redeemer left, unless we can descend into the grave and learn the depths of wretchedness to which he sank, unless we were to weigh as in a balance all the trials, toils, and suffering of his life, never never can we know the immeasurable extent of his love.

By becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross, Jesus opened up heaven for us and has made a way for us to journey to the Father through Him.

The demands of the Law of God, the necessity of a perfect life, the necessity of a permanent sacrifice, He has done it.

Three of the most HOPE Filled words Jesus said:

John 19:30 – IT IS FINISHED

God's Holy Wrath and Holy Love meet on the Cross in the words "It is Finished"

And its only at the cross. If you want hope, if you want love and not wrath, its only at the cross.

If you want love and hope and you don't want to go to the cross, then the only thing that is yours is the wrath, for the love of God that satisfies His wrath is on the cross of Christ.

Its not about being a better person, its not about keeping rules, its not about doing the right thing, its about Jesus Christ and the love with which He has loved us.

ITS ALL ABOUT GRACE UPON GRACE.

Matthew 11:28-29

²⁸ Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

If you think that you have sinned too much there is hope for you, there is not one sin that Jesus cannot forgive you of.

If you think that you are too far gone, remember that Jesus has sunk to the deepest Hell to rescue sinners just like you and me.

Do not hold on to your pride and reject the hand of salvation that is offering you hope. Repent today and turn to Christ.

The Father exalts Jesus because of his humility -v9-11

These words are good for us.

For this reason, because of the obedience of Christ to go to the cross and die a sinner's death, is good for us.

This tells me that the offering of Christ was accepted.

But God does not leave Christ dead; He raises Him from the dead and has exalted Him.

If Christ had not obeyed God, if Christ had chosen a different way, if Christ was not the full satisfaction of God, we would be without Hope

But not only is He our offering but the He is the complete satisfaction of God. What a tremendous truth that God has exalted Him so high because of His obedience.

How high does He exalt Jesus?

To the highest of heights. There is no one higher and no name better that Christ is not exalted above.

As Christ is exalted every man is made low by the bowing of the knee and every tongue will confess Jesus as Lord.

And what a magnificent truth this is that because Jesus is exalted, He will exalt His children with Him.

CHARLES SPURGEON

Believer, there is comfort for thee here, if thou wilt take it. If Christ was exalted through his degradation, so shalt thou be. Count not your steps to triumph by your steps upward, but by those which are seemingly downward. The way to heaven is downhill. he who would be honoured for ever must sink in his own esteem, and often in that of his fellowmen.

Oh! think not of yonder fool who is mounting to heaven by his own light opinions of himself and by the flatteries of his fellows, that he shall safely reach Paradise; nay, that shall burst on which he rests, and he shall fall and be broken in pieces. But he who descends into the mines of suffering, shall find unbounded riches there; and he who dives into the depths of grief, shall find the pearl of everlasting life within tis caverns.

What great hope that we have in Christ because of all that God has promised and all that Christ has accomplished.

What more could any child of God ask for other than Jesus Himself

He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?

Closing

To bring this full circle, this is the example of the mind that we are to have, which was in Christ. A humility to not hold onto our rights and privileges but to let them go in order to consider others as more important.

Just as Jesus considered didn't consider equality with God a thing to be held onto, we should not consider our rights and privileges as something to be held onto.

So we see in the incarnation of the humiliation of Jesus. That He was willing to exchange the glories of heaven for the shame of men, all because of His love.

What do you say dear soul? What do you say to this offering of Hope that is presented only in the person of Jesus?

Will you this day see what great love the God of the universe has for you that what He gave was not simply a person, but the most precious, the most exalted, the most honored, the most cherished of all beings, that of His Son Jesus Christ?

Does the love of Jesus drive you to live your life differently than the way you were before Christ came into your life? Are you driven by the wonderful Hope of Jesus Christ?