

**Jesus: Humble and Exalted**  
**Philippians 2:5-11**

**This past week during Alison's recovery from knee replacement, we finished a History Channel miniseries about George Washington that we began 2-3 months ago. Although I knew this already, it was surprising to recall how divided our nation was in its fragile nascent state. Even with the beloved Washington as the reluctant first President, there were differences that threatened to tear our nation apart before it was fully established. Those times were as volatile as they are today, but we did not live then – we live in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.**

**The horrific and unnecessary death of George Floyd in Minneapolis this week has once again pointed out our differences and the sin in our hearts that is at the core of racism and lawlessness – all forms of lawlessness – and murder. I hope you read or listened to the prayer from John Piper that confessed sin, acknowledged grief, and proclaimed the hope of the gospel.**

**It is the sin that is in the hearts of all Adam's children that caused the Father, by an eternal love, to send the Son to die for sinners. It was love and humility that led Jesus to lay aside the privileges of heaven and to become one of us to die as a sacrifice for our sins. Is there any passage of Scripture besides today's text that so aptly describes the tender love of the Savior who became the model for how redeemed sinners should live together in unity, however different they may be? Philippians 2:5-11 is the best reason for God's children to humbly love and serve one another.**

**The issues of our day are complex, but the issues in all ages have been complex, and our sinful hearts fuel the flames of our suspicions of others and our evil intentions. Our sin nature wants to control, to feel and act superior to others, to pamper self, to express anger in unrighteous ways, to justify self, and to always be right.**

**We saw last week in Philippians 2:1-5 and 12-16 how believers are to treat one another as they live together in community. These are good words for us as we grapple with health issues none of us has ever seen in our lifetimes. I am certain we will love one another well, even with our different opinions about COVID-19. Unfortunately, we have seen violence in our land before. Not only must we speak out against injustice, but we must do so carefully, not justifying or condemning others in the spirit of the day. If we do not practice Philippians 2 love toward one another, we have no hope of helping society's ills.**

**Although our focus this morning is found in verses 5-11, I will read Philippians 2:1-11. This may come as a surprise to you, but I will read from the New International Version. I cannot remember when I did not preach from the English Standard Version, so this is a diversion for us. I will explain why in a few moments, but I will say before we read that this translation seems to me to best capture the Apostle Paul's intention in verses 5-8 as he shared what most scholars believe was an early hymn. Did Paul write the hymn? Possibly – maybe, even probably. It fits Paul's call for unity. Philippians 2:1-11 from the New International Version.**

**Philippians 2:1 Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, 2 then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. 3 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, 4 not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.**

**5 In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:**

**6 Who, being in very nature God,  
did not consider equality with God something to be used to his  
own advantage;  
7 rather, he made himself nothing  
by taking the very nature of a servant,  
being made in human likeness.  
8 And being found in appearance as a man,  
he humbled himself  
by becoming obedient to death—  
even death on a cross!  
9 Therefore God exalted him to the highest place  
and gave him the name that is above every name,  
10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,  
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,  
11 and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord,  
to the glory of God the Father.**

**This will be a brief message because we have a panel with representatives from the elders, deacons, and staff to discuss our return to the property for an outdoor service next Sunday, weather permitting. Our focus is on verses 6-8 this morning, and you will have already learned that deep theological truth resides here. After telling the Philippians in verses 1-4 to care more about others than themselves, Paul exhorts in verse 5, “In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus.” In verses 6-8 Paul shares Jesus’ example of humility.**

**It would take many hours to break down the theology in these three verses. The point of the verses is this: Jesus, who was and is God and was exalted in heaven alongside the Father, gave up the privileges of his divinity – he did not give up his deity, but he gave up the**

**privileges of deity – to humble himself and come to earth as a human. Remaining who he was, he became what he was not – human. Rather than asserting the privileges of heaven, he was obedient to his Father’s plan for him to live as Adam was unable to live – perfectly and keeping every law. His obedience led him to death on a cross where he died as the perfect sacrifice for our sins. When we confess our sins to God and believe that Jesus died for us, we are born again and placed in a wonderful family!**

**Okay, let’s break it down just a bit. In verse 6, the NIV says that Jesus was in very nature God. The Greek here is *morphe theou*, which literally means “form of God” as other translations render it. But the NIV captures the meaning of the expression. Jesus was in every way like God because he was in every way God. Father, Son, and Spirit are three Persons with one nature. Jesus was equal with God. Even so, he did not take advantage of his position by zapping young boys who beat him at games or adults who ridiculed him. In fact, verse 7 says, he made himself nothing. Nothing, that is, in comparison with who he was before his humanity. Verse 7 in the ESV says that Jesus emptied himself. Some say verse 7 teaches that Jesus gave up his divinity to become human. That is not what Paul meant. The ancient hymn poetically avers that Jesus laid aside the *privileges* of heaven to come to earth.**

**But Jesus did not come to be admired or exalted here. He came as an obedient servant – in humility. Do you remember Jesus laying aside his garments and picking up a towel to wash the disciples’ feet? He made himself nothing.**

**Not only did Jesus pick up a servant’s towel, he was obedient to death, even death on a cross. In the larger context, Paul was saying that if Jesus can die on a Roman cross to save us from our sins, we can be obedient and get along with one another by treating others as better than ourselves! The one who was in very nature God took**

**upon himself the very nature of a servant. The one who was the holy and righteous God became a human servant who died for our sins. No wonder the Father has exalted him and given him a name that is above every name, in heaven and earth!**

**Just before we move to the panel, I want us to think about a few practical implications of this great theology. If Jesus made himself nothing, then who am I to . . . fill in the blank?**

**If Jesus made himself nothing, then who am I to hold a grudge?**

**If Jesus made himself nothing, then who am I to look down on others because of race or social standing or educational training?**

**If Jesus made himself nothing, then who am I to speak ill of others when they are not present?**

**If Jesus made himself nothing, then who am I to speak ill of others when they are present?**

**If Jesus washed the feet of his disciples, then who am I to withhold encouragement from a brother or sister?**

**If Jesus made himself nothing, then who am I to insist on my way?**

**If Jesus made himself nothing, then who am I, for that matter, to assume that I am always right?**

**If Jesus made himself nothing, then who am I to withhold forgiveness to someone who has done me wrong?**

**If Jesus made himself nothing, then who am I to refuse to forgive myself even though God has promised to forgive sins for which I have repented?**

**If Jesus made himself nothing, then who am I to dislike and demean those who think differently about social and political issues than I do?**

**If Jesus made himself nothing, then who am I to . . . have you filled in the blank?**

**If I am united with Christ, I am a joint heir with Jesus, called to live a cross-centered life, joyfully obeying the Father, and loving my brothers and sisters, praying for his kingdom to come and for his will to be done on earth as it is in heaven. And with that, let us pray. Would you, in fact, pray the Lord's prayer with me?**

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.  
Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who have trespassed against us.  
Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever, Amen.**