

Jesus Our Example
Philippians 2:5-11
Sunday, December 15th, 2024
By Ryan Perry

Scripture

Philippians 2:5–11

[5] Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, [6] who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, [7] but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. [8] And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. [9] Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, [10] so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, [11] and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Pray

Introduction

If you currently have your Bible open, you will see that Philippians 2:6-11 appears one of two ways:

- One, in the ESV or NASB, it will appear in paragraph form.
- Two, in the NIV, CSB, and the NLT it will be written out like a psalm.

The reason for this is that most scholars believe that these verses are actually a hymn. They are written in a poetic form, use poetic language, and have a consistent meter, which likely means that it is a song of some sort.

Now, we don't know exactly where it came from, but many believe Paul took it or at least part of it from some other source in the early church.

This might lead us to believe that Paul put it here within the book of Philippians so that these believers in Philippi would stop, pause, and take some time in their reading of this letter to sing about and worship Christ.

Of course, I believe that everything Paul says is written so that God's people would worship Christ more. But when we look at what Paul has already said in this letter, and then how he connects verses 6-11 to it, we begin to understand that this hymn (which many call the "Hymn of Christ") is meant to serve a practical purpose.

If we go back about a month, you may remember Paul's call to us from Philippians 1:27 to live as Heavenly Citizens who reflect the greatness of Christ. As he said:

Philippians 1:27

[27] Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ...

And the way that he wants us and the Philippians to live this out is by pursuing unity. A unity of purpose that is centered around living out and proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ, both outside and inside the church. As Paul writes in Philippians 1:27b:

Philippians 1:27b

...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,

Philippians 2:2

[2] complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.

As citizens of heaven, we are to be like-minded, with the love of Christ, working together as one person, for the purpose of making Christ look great.

But there was still another practical question to answer. **How do we, along with the Philippians, actually pursue a unity like this?**

To which Paul responds with one of the simplest, most practical, and profound answers in the whole New Testament. As he writes in Philippians 2:3-4:

[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.

Put simply: **Don't seek selfish gain or empty glory, instead serve one another.**

What Paul is describing here is a genuine, servant-hearted humility, that leads to real unity in the church, which results in Christ being proclaimed, cherished, believed, and worshipped.

Now, Paul in his letters, and especially in Philippians is very big on examples. He gave an update on his imprisonment in 1:12-26 and then talks about Timothy and Epaphroditus in 2:19-30.

The reason he did this was not only to encourage the Philippians but also, according to Philippians 3:17, he did this to give them an example to follow.

And this morning, as we look at Philippians 2:5-11, it is clear that Paul is doing the same thing with Christ.

As he writes in Philippians 2:5:

[5] Have this mind (mindset) among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus...

Or as the NIV writes it:

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

Paul is calling them to a servant-hearted humility in Philippians 2:3-4 and then in verse 5 he reemphasizes that call by telling them to have the mindset of Christ who is the ultimate example of that same kind of humility.

So as we look at this hymn of Christ in V. 6-11, there will definitely be moments of worship, but the greatest thing that Paul wants us and the Philippians **to learn and live out** is the example of servant-hearted humility that is embodied in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

He is our example of choosing servanthood over glory. He is our example of humble obedience. And he is our example and hope for the glory to come.

Let's begin then by looking to Jesus as our example of servanthood over glory.

1. Jesus chose servanthood over glory (Phil 2:6-7)

Philippians 2:6-7

[6] who, though he was in the form (nature) of God, did not count (consider) equality with God a thing to be grasped (used for his own advantage), [7] but emptied himself (made himself nothing), by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness (form or resemblance) of men.

Right away, one of the first words that jump off the page is the word **“form.”** The Greek word is *morphe* and it points the **nature or essence** of something.

And in this context, we learn that Jesus was, in his nature and essence God. The Author of Hebrews says in Hebrews 1:3:

[3] He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power.

Jesus is fully and wholly God, through and through.

But even though he was fully God, V. 6 says that he did not count or consider equality with God (or being the same as God) as something to be grasped.

Now the word for grasped in Greek can be tricky. **It can mean to rob, to seize, or to use for your own advantage.**

And I only point this out because there have been some, throughout history who have tried to say that it means to rob or seize because Jesus didn't truly have divinity within himself.

But the better rendering of it in this poetic statement is that he didn't use his divinity or his being God for his own advantage.

Jesus didn't use his divine power as God, for his own selfish gain.

Application

Think about how counter-cultural that is. We live in a world where people use their positions of power for selfish gain all the time.

There is a reason why billionaires keep getting richer, why world dictators continually stay in power, why many people can barely earn a living wage, and why many citizens within third-world countries are exploited and are dying of simple diseases and starvation.

It's because there are so many in power who are using their power, money, status, and position, not for the good of others, but for their own selfish gain and empty glory.

Even in our own lives, many of us might not need to look very far to see this same kind of behavior.

If you are a parent, there have probably been times when you have unfairly shamed or guilted your kids so that they respond to you in a way that makes you feel good.

Likewise, in a marriage, a dating relationship, or even in a friendship we can so easily become takers who are always receiving and never giving to the other person.

The human heart is fickle, and we can so easily end up using people and even positions of authority for our own selfish gain.

Jesus, on the other hand, was free to do anything he wanted as God, and yet, he chose not to take advantage of his deity for his own purposes.

Instead, Paul tells us that he emptied himself or as the NIV says: he made himself nothing. And he did this by taking on the form or nature of a servant as he was born in the likeness (form or resemblance) of men.

Really let that set in.

Jesus, the living God, one part of the trinity with the Father and the Spirit, left the glory of heaven so that he could take on the nature of a lowly servant, which meant that he would become a frail human, like us, with all of our limitations and weaknesses.

Again, this wasn't something that he did for his own advantage. Rather, he did it to serve.
To be a servant of God the Father and of us.

Look with me at what Jesus says in John 17:1:

[1] When Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you,

Jesus came to glorify and make much of the Father. He came to serve the Father's purposes.

He also says in Matthew 20:28:

[28] ...the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.

He came to serve us by giving his life for us so that we could be ransomed. Bought back from our slavery to sin and death, and given a new and everlasting life with him.

Jesus truly is our ultimate example of humble servanthood. Fully God, became a lowly human so that he could serve others instead of himself.

Application:

One of my favorite moments from the life of Jesus comes from the feeding of the 5000 in Matthew 14. John the Baptist had just been beheaded so Jesus decides to go be alone, more than likely because he is mourning the death of a friend and family member. And instead of leaving him alone, the crowds follow him on foot and find him because they want more from him.

And one of the reasons I love this moment is because Jesus responds to them in a way that I think most of us wouldn't. Look with me at Matthew 14:13-14:

[13] Now when Jesus heard this, he withdrew from there in a boat to a desolate place by himself. But when the crowds heard it, they followed him on foot from the towns. [14] When he went ashore he saw a great crowd, and he had compassion on them and healed their sick.

This is unbelievable. We have in the example of Christ someone who poured himself out for others and yet kept nothing for himself.

Not only that, but he also didn't whine about it. Instead, he actually found is hope and joy in doing so. As he said in John 4:34:

[34] My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work.

This is a glorious picture of our servant-hearted Savior, and I hope it inspires you to love him more and more.

But remember, he is also our example. This means that we have in Christ, an example of what it looks like for us to live as humble servants.

And I don't know about you, but when I look at the example of Christ choosing servanthood over glory, I am reminded that I so badly need God to reorient my heart.

Because the truth is that I'm a pretty selfish person. When I get home from work I want to sit, I want to rest, and very often I don't really want to talk to people. But in this current busy season of life, I can't do that.

Instead, I need to come home, ready to serve my wife and kids in any way they need me to even if I'm tired, even if I have a lot on my mind, and even if I just had a late night.

Now, does this mean that I do this perfectly? Not at all! But time and time again, day after day, God has been reminding me, *"your joy and peace are not found in having an abundance of downtime or in your perfect days, but they are found in walking humbly with me and serving others as I have served you."*

And it is my hope and prayer this morning that the example of Christ's servanthood will bring you to the same conclusion. **To choose servanthood over selfishness, and to see it as the joy, peace, and food that God has for you in Christ.**

2. Jesus chose humble obedience (Phil 2:8)

Philippians 2:8

[8] And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

So now, we have the God/Man. The one who is in very nature God is now also in very nature man or human. **This is what Theologians call the Hypostatic Union.** Meaning that in Jesus we have someone who is simultaneously 100% God and 100% man.

Now there are many people out there who claim that this is impossible. Nothing in the universe can't exist as two things at once. To these people, I would echo the words of Jesus in Matthew 19:26 when he said:

[26] "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."

However, as a side note, we only need to look to physics to see that this is possible. Because according to modern physics, light simultaneously exists as two things, a wave and a particle. How does this work? They don't really know, but it's still true.

But as miraculous as his deity and humanity are, Paul wants us, and the Philippians to see that Jesus did more than simply come to earth.

Jesus Christ, the living God, one part of the trinity who was, and is equal with the Father and the Holy Spirit, actually humbled himself. **That word humble actually means he humiliated himself.**

He did this by coming to earth, becoming a man, and **choosing to live his life in submission to the Father.** Jesus willingly put himself under the authority of the Father, and, as Paul wrote, he became obedient to him. In fact, the author of Hebrews says then same thing in Hebrews 5:7-8:

[7] In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence. [8] Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered.

Now, it might seem strange that Jesus needed to learn obedience to the Father, but remember Jesus had never experienced this before. Before he came to earth the only thing he had experienced was equality with God. He didn't have to submit to the Father in heaven, but rather he was a co-equal and co-creator of the universe with him.

But now, in coming to earth and taking on frail humanity, he not only experienced some of the limitations of being human like hunger, thirst, and tiredness, **but he had to submit himself to the Father's will, which would include suffering and death, even death on a cross.**

Jesus, willingly and humbly obeyed the Father even though it meant he would die the most gruesome and humiliating death known to man. He came from the highest place of glory and came down to experience a death that was reserved for the worst of the worst criminals.

And he did all so that he could serve others.

Application

How many of you know what a cost/benefit analysis is?

Here is a simple definition that Google gave me: **A systematic process of comparing the expected costs and benefits of a decision, project, or policy to determine if the potential benefits outweigh the associated costs.**

What are the costs, what are the benefits, and do the benefits of something outweigh the costs?

This train of thought probably sounds reasonable to most of us. But the truth is that we are often thinking about it in relation to ourselves. Will this decision, process, project, etc... benefit me more than it costs me?

For example: If I help my neighbor with (fill in the blank) will I have enough time and energy to get the things done that I want to do today?

You see, it becomes a decision analysis that often is ultimately based on our own desires and wants.

And if we remember what is going on in the Philippians church, this is exactly what they are doing which is why Paul calls out their selfish ambition and desire for empty glory.

But it is also why he gives them the example of Christ's humble servanthood and obedience. **That they would stop living their lives for their own gain, and instead would be thinking about their decisions and lives in relation to how they build the kingdom of God and serve others.**

Can you imagine the type of community and unity that would exist in the church if we lived this way? Looking to pour ourselves out for Christ and his people in such a way that we would always be looking to the benefit of the kingdom and others above ourselves.

Again, this is so counter-cultural that I believe it would produce a fruit-filled gospel witness. Because people in the Coulee Region would begin to see something that this the exact opposite of the average human experience.

They would see a people who are working, not for their own selfish gain or empty glory, but a community of God's people who are loving one another, serving one another, and thinking of each other above themselves.

They would see a church full of a love for God and one another and a church that is unified in Christ.

And I believe that this would result in the lost being saved, believers growing in their faith, and Christ being seen and experienced in our community, as we wait for the day when we will see Jesus face to face. **Because like Jesus, what awaits us at the end of this life is real and everlasting glory.**

3. Jesus was exalted by the Father (Phil 2:9-11)

Philippians 2:9-11

[9] Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, [10] so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and

on earth and under the earth, [11] and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Jesus as God came to earth and became a man. And in becoming a man his sole purpose was to be a servant. To walk in humble obedience to the Father, so that he would go to the cross and die a criminal's death on our behalf.

But the story doesn't end there. It doesn't end on Golgotha where Jesus died, and it doesn't end in the tomb where he was laid.

Rather, all of that, was building to something. It was building to the moment when Jesus would be wondrously and gloriously resurrected.

And in the resurrection, we not only have the hope and reminder that Jesus truly conquered sin and death, but we also have the hope that we to will share in that resurrection. As Paul writes in Romans 6:5:

[5] For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.

However, as amazing and wondrous as the resurrection is, there is so much more to the story than Jesus simply coming back to life as confirmation of what he did for us.

Paul tells us in verse 9 that God (the Father) exalted him, which means that he elevated him above every other earthly thing, and he bestowed or conferred upon Jesus (the God/man) the name that is above every name.

Now you might be thinking, what name does the Father give Jesus? He already has a name.

But when we look at verse 11, we realize that Paul adds something to the name of Jesus Christ. He says that “every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is **Lord.**”

The word for Lord is derived from the Greek word *kyrios* and it is the same word that is used in the Septuagint (The Greek translation of the OT from about the 3rd century B.C.), when referring to God.

This is the moment where the Father, gives to Jesus, as this new God/man the title that was rightly his when he was originally in glory.

Now, it's not like Jesus ever stopped being God or Lord, but now, the Father is making it known to the whole world so that every knee will bow in heaven, on earth, and under the earth.

This literally means everyone, and everything will bow to Christ. And every tongue will confess that Jesus is the Lord God Almighty.

And if anyone has a doubt in their mind that Paul is trying to paint this grand picture of Jesus as God, verses 10-11 clear that up for us because they are a direct reference to Isaiah 45:22-23 where the prophet writes:

***[22] “Turn to me and be saved,
all the ends of the earth!
For I am God, and there is no other.***

***[23] By myself I have sworn;
from my mouth has gone out in righteousness
a word that shall not return:***

***‘To me every knee shall bow,
every tongue shall swear allegiance.’***

Jesus the God/man is fully and wholly God and man, and he is the one who has been exalted back to his rightful place as God, and he is the one who one day will return.

And when he returns, he will come, in his full glory, and all creatures everywhere, even those who have passed away, will bow to him, and will confess that he is the Lord God.

Application

This is a picture of Christ as the conquering servant king. A picture which should inspire awe and wonder in our souls, but also should be a comfort and joy to us.

Because, it reminds us, like the Philippians, that neither Caesar nor any other earthly ruler is the true Lord who rules our lives. **Only Jesus is.**

Which means that we don’t fear earthly powers and rulers or put our hope in man-made institutions. Instead, Jesus is our true king who died on our behalf, conquered sin and death, and now rules and reigns as God, which means that he will accomplish his purposes for us.

He will fight for us and finish what he started on the cross.

But also, as our example, Jesus shows us the outcome of a life of humble and faithful servanthood to God and others. That because of Christ and what he did on the cross, it will result in our being with him in glory.

As Paul writes in Colossians 3:4:

[4] When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

Jesus will bring us home.

And if the glory of heaven is what awaits us, then we should be confident that God will take care of us as his people.

Which means that we don't need to seek selfish gain and we don't have to be thinking about how something benefits us.

Instead, we are now free to serve God and others with a servant-hearted attitude. Not looking to our own interests, but to the interests of others.

And when we do this, the church will be built up, God will be glorified, and we will be able to live with the joyful expectation of hearing our God and Savior say to us those beautiful words from Matthew 25:21:

[21] 'Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.'

Let's Pray.