

Philippians 2.9-11 Sermon / COB / 10.09.16

Introduction

- † **[1: Title]** I like this image. This image tells us that even bikers will come to bow before Christ. Even gross sinners like Mark and Carol – gross sinners, I say! – even gross sinners, as Mark and Carol once were, will come to bow before Christ!
- Happily, Mark and Carol received God’s grace and came to faith in Christ, so they have the joys of eternal life and the joys of riding a bike. Not everyone will be so fortunate, but in the end, everyone will bow in awe and reverence, whether saved or not. I should have looked for an image of a lawyer or a presidential candidate . . .
- † Philippians 2.9-11 says one day everyone will submissively bow even at the *name* of Jesus. How different that will be from today. I cringe as I watch a movie in which the actors repeatedly use the name of Jesus in vain, using it as a cuss word, to express disgust at what is happening as well as disdain for Jesus. I find myself apologizing to Jesus as I watch. Maybe I should turn it off as well.
- Even Christians show little respect for the name of God or the name of Jesus. If you are still damning things or exclaiming “Jesus” when surprised, you should stop. It is irreverent. A friend of mine who is a lay leader in another church recently posted on Facebook, “Lord I’m asking you for 1 specific thing next year ..please sweet baby Jesus don’t let them ruin this movie.” To me that is very irreverent. I cannot imagine any context in which I should refer to Christ as “sweet baby Jesus,” nor do I think publicly invoking his name about a trivial movie is appropriate.
 - I suppose most of us in this room have learned to keep our cussing vulgar rather than irreverent, and a few of us not to cuss at all. But are we really bowing before Jesus? Are we bowing before him if we sing half-heartedly or not at all, if church is an option in our life, if we are not reaching out to the unchurched, not edifying each other in the church, not investing in a fellowship that lives out the one-another commands? Christians will escape the judgment to Hell we all deserve, but we still will have to answer for our lives.
 - Do you know why everyone will bow in the end? Because they finally will understand who Jesus really is and they [we] will be in awe. Let’s contemplate this today, to give ourselves a heads up.

Exposition

- † **[2: 2.5-8]** You can open your Bible to Philippians 2.5. We will to study 2.9-11, but they are so intimately related to the previous verses, that I want to quickly review what we discussed last week.

Last week’s passage was **Philippians 2.5-8 NIV: In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, [that is] being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death-- even death on a cross!**

- † From this we learned about Christ’s identity and his character.

- His identity is the eternal Son of God, who shares the divine essence and equality with God the Father, but is distinct from God the Father. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are unique individuals who are so unified in character, will, and essence that they are one God.
- Christ's character is humble, sacrificial, obedient. He did not insist on his rights and powers as the Son of God, rather humbly condescending to become one of us, born as the human baby Jesus. As a person, he was pure in character, and therefore he was as obedient as a slave to God the Father. And though he was born as the rightful king of Israel and thus under God's covenants was the most powerful and important person in the world, he again gave up his rights and powers to humbly obey God the Father's will, to fulfill the prophecies about the Messiah-savior, who would sacrifice himself on the cross to pay the penalty for our sins.

[3: 2.9-11] This is who Christ is. Now we continue with **Philippians 2.9-11 NIV: Therefore God exalted him [Christ] to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should [would] bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.**

- † **[4: exalted]** Most English translations say God “highly exalted Christ”; the NIV says “God exalted him to the highest place.” The Greek verb ὑπερυνόω means God super-exalted Christ, God the Father lifted Christ from the lowest depths to the highest heights: from a humiliating death on the cross to be the resurrected conqueror and king!
 - In a physical sense, this exaltation involves Christ's resurrection from the dead, his visible ascension up to Heaven, his anointing from God to be the ultimate king, judge, and high priest. The exaltation involves one day everyone bowing to Christ in submission and reverence.
- † **[5: freely gave]** The Greek text says God the Father exalted Christ to the point that God freely gave Christ the name which is above every name. The verb here is χαρίζομαι, which has the same root as the word for grace. This exaltation is not only something *due* to Christ, it also is something *freely given* by God the Father.
 - **[6: name]** What is this name that is above every name? In one sense, the name “Jesus” is now above all others. When we think of the Messiah or Christ, we think of Jesus; when we think of the savior, it is Jesus; when we are asked who heads the church, who is lord of our lives, who will return as king and judge, we say Jesus.
 - At the end, when Jesus returns to judge everyone who has ever lived, everyone will bow in reverence to him. But there is more to this than that. The key is to remember who Jesus really is, and to notice that this passage begins in 2.5 and ends in 2.11 by teaching the same truth.
- † **[7: glory]** Let's look at the last phrase in 2.11: it says the exaltation of Jesus, the Christ, will be to the glory of God the Father. How can that be?
 - All through the Old Testament, from creation, through all the patriarchs and the centuries of Israel as a nation, right up until Jesus was born, God said over and over, “...**you shall not worship any god other than me**” [Psalms 81.9 NIV].
 - **Psalms 99.5** says we are to “**Exalt [Yahweh] our God and worship at his footstool; holy is He.**” Yahweh is the name God gave himself. So we are to exalt, glorify, worship only Yahweh, our God. How then can every knee bowing to Christ and every tongue confessing Christ bring glory to God? Why would God allow this, let alone cause it and want it?

- Because Christ also is God, isn't he? As we learned last week, before coming as baby Jesus, Christ already existed eternally as the divine Son of God, sharing equality and the divine essence with God the Father. So to glorify or exalt Christ Jesus takes nothing away from God the Father.
 - Almost exactly three years ago, we studied Psalm 2, which teaches that we worship God the Father in reverence and awe *by* honoring his Son, the anointed Christ. This is why it is appropriate to worship Jesus in church, instead of only God the Father. In the Old Testament, God repeatedly said he was the only one worthy of worship, but now we find out Jesus is God in the flesh; he is the Son of God, fully as much God as is God the Father.
 - You ever wonder which one you should pray to, God the Father, Jesus, or the Holy Spirit? How many of you pray most often to God the Father? to Jesus? to the Holy Spirit? I pray most often to the Father, but in certain situations to Jesus or the Spirit. But it ok to pray to each of them.
- † **[8: bow]** At the risk of boring you a little with both Greek and Hebrew, I want to show you something here, something I think Paul is saying.
- Our text says God the Father exalts Jesus such that everyone will submit to him: at the end, every knee will bow to Jesus, we all will bow even at the *name* of Jesus. Why? Because every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. When Jesus returns to judge every person who has ever lived, we all finally will understand and acknowledge that Jesus is ruler of the universe, that we must submit, bow to him.
 - **[9: name]** But Paul is saying more than that too. Before Jesus was born, what would you say was the name above every name? Yahweh, the name God gave himself. In Philippians, Paul is not talking about honoring just the name "Jesus," but the name *of* Jesus, that is, Jesus' true identity, because here [I would argue] Jesus is "given" the name of God, the name Yahweh, the name that truly and forever is the name that is above every name.
- † **[10: Isaiah 45.18]** Let's start with the Hebrew, in the Old Testament. We shall look at another prophecy from Isaiah, this time **Isaiah 45.18-25 [NASB]**. [It begins] **For thus says the LORD [Yahweh]...** When you see LORD all in capitals in the Old Testament, that is how your Bible is translating the Hebrew name God gave himself, which is Yahweh. I don't have time right now to explain why English Bibles do that, but if you are interested, you can ask me later. For now, understand, LORD all in capitals is Yahweh, God's name.
- **Isaiah 45.18-25 NASB: For thus says the LORD [Yahweh], who created the heavens (He is the God who formed the earth and made it, He established it and did not create it a waste place, but formed it to be inhabited), "I am the LORD [Yahweh], and there is none else. I have not spoken in secret, In some dark land; I did not say to the offspring of Jacob [the people of Israel], 'Seek Me in a waste place'; I, the LORD [Yahweh], speak righteousness, declaring things that are upright. Gather yourselves and come; draw near together, you fugitives of the nations; they [the nations] have no knowledge, who carry about their wooden idol and pray to a god who cannot save. Declare and set forth your case; Indeed, let them consult together. **[11: Isaiah 45.21b] Who has announced this from of old? Who has long since declared it? Is it not I, the LORD [Yahweh]? And there is no other God besides Me, a righteous God and a Savior [God calls himself the Savior]; there is none except Me. Turn to Me and be saved, all the ends of the earth; For I am God, and there is no other. I have sworn by Myself, the word has gone forth from My mouth in righteousness and will not turn back, that to Me [to Yahweh] every knee will bow, every tongue will swear allegiance. They will say of Me, 'Only in the LORD [Yahweh] are righteousness and strength.' Men will come to Him, and all who were angry at****

Him will be put to shame. In the LORD [Yahweh] all the offspring of Israel will be justified and will glory."

- **[12: compare]** In Philippians 2.10-11, Paul takes from this passage in Isaiah. Why is that significant? Paul says every knee will bow to Jesus and every tongue will confess Jesus as Lord, whereas in Isaiah it is Yahweh speaking, and Yahweh says that everyone will bow in allegiance to him as the only God, the ultimate ruler and only savior. Paul's confession of Jesus as Lord is not just about Jesus being master, it is about Jesus being divine, Jesus being "the Lord," Jesus being Yahweh, God and savior both.
 - **[13: definite]** Does the Greek of Paul's sentence support that? Yes, according to Greek scholar Daniel Wallace and his student, Will Groben. I note that in the Greek sentence of Philippians 2.11, the word "Lord" is emphasized by its placement ahead of the name of Jesus. Wallace says that placement helps make "Lord" what we call "definite" in Greek. You probably do not know what that means, but it clearly implies Paul is saying Jesus Christ is "*the* Lord," that Jesus is identified with Yahweh.
 - Paul's point is not only that Jesus is our master and the most important person in the universe, but also that everyone will confess that Jesus is Yahweh-God, that he is the divine Son of God sharing the divine essence with God the Father, just as Paul said in the beginning of this paragraph, in 2.5. And everyone acknowledging that Jesus the Christ is the divine Son of God, Yahweh, will bring glory to God the Father, Yahweh.
- † **[14: therefore]** The first word in 2.9 is the Greek connector διὸ, meaning "therefore," "for this reason," "as a result." Everything we talked about in 2.9-11 is a result of what Paul wrote in 2.5-8.
- When you first read through this, it seems as though Jesus has earned God's exaltation by being perfectly humble and obedient, and by willingly sacrificing to die on the cross. In one sense this is true. Jesus was the perfect person, pure, sinless, without corruption. He deserves to be exalted above the rest of us.
 - But there is more to who Jesus is and what he accomplished, and both of those influence his exaltation. We have already seen that God the Father would exalt Jesus to the point of our worship only because Jesus is the divine Son of God.
 - It is because of Christ's identity as well as his character that God the Father exalts him to the fullest. Not just anyone could step into this role, right? If Jesus were not the Son of God, he could not have demonstrated humility by condescending to be human, he could not have lived a perfect life, he could not have accomplished anything with his sacrifice on the cross. Only Christ, the Son of God, was destined to be God's anointed savior, king, judge, and high priest.
 - God the Father exalts Christ in part because he was destined to be exalted, based on who he was before creation; but also because Christ lives that out, fulfilling his mission. Christ did not humble himself to get a reward, but as the pure and divine Son of God he knew who he was and what he had to do, to justify this result. Christ's humble life and death masked his true identity, but God the Father reveals it by exalting him.
- † **[15: divine]** So in both halves of this passage – last week and this week – we learn about Jesus being God, that he is the divine Son of God, sharing equality and essence with God the Father, somehow distinct from each other and the Holy Spirit, though each is all of God, and they all are unified in essence, character, and will so much that they are one God together.

- † Ok, take a deep breath! Like last week, that is a lot of deep and important theology. I know it is hard to spend twenty minutes that deep in concentration. I am glad as a church we are willing to look deeply into scripture and not skip these theological parts. Now we do move on to application. We have learned *about* Christ, now we need to ask, what can we learn *from* Christ?
- † Jesus reveals God to us in a way we can understand. He shows us how to live as a perfect person and shows us what is the character of God which we are to reflect. God is not a grasping, self-centered being, rather he is known through Christ who humbled himself, sacrificed, suffered, and offered grace by satisfying the judgment against us.
- We learned last week that we should adopt Christ's mindset, his attitudes. So we should be willing to sacrifice and suffer for the sake of the gospel mission; we should be humble enough to sacrifice to bless each other and build unity in the church; we should obey God like slaves; we should be characterized by humility, instead of selfish ambition and vanity. Christ is our example, revealing the character of God and what perfect humanity looks like.
- † **[16: confess]** From our passage today, there are three themes of application for us. The first is about our relationship with Jesus. We usually think of Jesus as our personal savior. He is our personal savior, but he also is our personal ruler and he is our example of how we should live.
- So first, we should confess our faith in Jesus as the Son of God and the Christ [Messiah-savior]. We should confess this faith to God and to ourselves, this is part of accepting the gospel. We also should confess it publicly. We should identify ourselves with Jesus; nobody should doubt where we stand on faith or moral issues.
 - **[17: submit]** Second, we should submit to obey Jesus. He is the Son of God, he is the universal judge, he is the ultimate Davidic king who will rule the earth from Jerusalem when he returns, and right now he is head of the church. As Jesus submitted to obey God the Father, we should submit to obey him as our only intermediary with God. Paul and Timothy identified themselves at the start of this letter as slaves of Christ; that is how all Christians should see themselves.
 - **[18: follow]** Third, we should follow Jesus' example, we should learn to think and live as he did. Scholar Walter Hansen wrote, "The message of Christ's humble obedience unto death on a cross... strikes a blow at every proud heart." Jesus modeled humility, selflessness, and sacrifice, to obey God, to bless others, to fulfill the gospel mission. This should be our approach to life.
- † **[19: humility]** A second theme has to do with humility and exaltation. We all want to be important or at least to feel important, and in Jesus we find an example of what that really means.
- In **Matthew 23.11-12 NIV**, Jesus himself told his disciples, **"The greatest among you will be your servant. For those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted [by God]."**
 - Humble sacrificial service leads to exaltation. This is the model Christ has for us. We cannot be exalted as highly as Jesus because we could not have so far to humble ourselves, nor can we do it as thoroughly since we struggle with sin; but to be exalted in Christ's kingdom, for eternity, we need to be humbly obedient and humbly sacrificing now.
 - That's something we often lose track of; we get caught up in the moment of this life, and forget that we are working for eternity. Think about the teaching of this letter, of the whole New Testament: struggling now? take heart, because you can make an eternal difference and you will be delivered to eternal rest; thriving now? beware, because if you are not a good steward

for God then nothing you do will really matter eternally. Becoming a humble slave of Christ, a servant to bless others, is the way to find yourself exalted in Christ's eternal kingdom.

- Jesus' brother, James, who was head of the Jerusalem church, wrote in **James 4.10 NIV: Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.**
- The apostle Peter, one of the people closest to Jesus during his ministry years, wrote in **1 Peter 5.6, 10 NET: God will exalt you in due time, if you humble yourselves under his mighty hand... And, after you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace who called you to his eternal glory in Christ will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.**

† **[20: purpose]** The third theme has to do with our focus, our purpose, in life. Paul says that in the end all will confess Jesus as the LORD, as Yahweh, but that does not imply that all will accept the gospel and be saved. All will bow the knee in submission, but some will confess as they are condemned and must submit to the punishment.

- This is not just about whether you will be exalted to be a prince or only to be a street sweeper on the New Earth for eternity, this is about helping people find and follow Jesus Christ, because eternity is about Heaven or Hell, about being with Jesus or being with Satan. So we need to pursue our purpose of the gospel mission, making multiplying disciples of Christ, so that all can hear of God's grace and love.
- In the previous passage, Paul commanded we live worthy of the gospel, defending the faith and integrity of the gospel, being willing to suffer and sacrifice for God and the gospel mission he gave the church, putting aside our selfish ambitions and vanity to be humble servants for each other. In this passage, he shows us that Christ modelled all that for us to follow, and thus revealed this as the character of God we are to reflect. Christ sacrificed and suffered so we could have spiritual life, eternal life; we should rejoice in whatever part he gives us to help others have the same, and to serve in his name.

† **[21: empty]** Before we close, I want to mention one thing about which you do not have to be concerned. That's different, right?

- In 2.7, the NIV says Christ "made himself nothing," to translate the Greek verb κενόω, which means "I empty." Scholars have made a big to-do about this, wondering what it means that the Son of God "emptied himself." Some have argued that Christ gave up some aspect of his divinity, which is what makes this controversial.
- We saw last week that this phrase refers to the Son of God coming as a mere creature. We saw today that the human Jesus is given all glory and is identified with being Yahweh, which is the name God gave himself in the Old Testament. So I think we can safely put aside the controversy and conclude that Christ did not empty himself of his divine attributes; rather he emptied himself by giving up having the status of God to have the status of a slave, he poured himself out in service to mankind, an ultimate example of selfless and sacrificial service.
- Professor Hall Harris at Dallas Seminary says Christ chose to be empty of self: empty of self-interest, self-preservation, self-focus; i.e. Christ is the ultimate example of selfless, sacrificial, suffering for the sake of the gospel mission. He is our hero, our example by which we should live. Let's pray...