

“Jesus is Lord”
 Philippians 2:5-11
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As I remember it, TIME magazine each year publishes a Person of the Year issue and not that long ago they published a person or persons of the millennium.

But if TIME were to publish a list of the most influential people in all of human history who would be on the list?

I believe the short list would include Guatama the Buddha, Mohammed, Karl Marx and Jesus of Nazareth.

Not one of them a soldier or politician.

Military and political leaders come and go but 75-80% of the world's population continue to live under the strong influence of these men.

Buddhism/Hinduism, Islam, secularism and Christianity.

In the book of the Song of Solomon in the OT, the daughters of Jerusalem ask the young woman “What is **your** beloved more than another beloved?” 5:9 (In Neill, The Supremacy of Jesus, 9)

Among the world's great philosophies and religions, “What is our Christ more than another Christ?”

In our staff meeting this past Thursday, pastor Than Baylor reminded us of these words from A.W. Tozer, “Perverted (or false) notions about God soon rot the religion in which they appear... The first step down for any church is taken when it surrenders its high opinion of God...The heaviest obligation lying upon the Christian church today is to purify and elevate her concept of God until it is once more worthy of Him – and of her (the church).” (Tozer, The Knowledge of the Holy, “Think Rightly about God”)

The living Lord Jesus is here this morning.

I am asking you to think with me about Him.

I want to **re**introduce Jesus to you this morning!

Do we know him?

Do we have a grasp of how great and good he is?

Do we understand how much he loves us?

- This is the Jesus who calls us to himself to save us and befriend us.
- This is the Jesus we worship this morning and each day of our lives.

The living Lord Jesus is here.

“The heaviest obligation lying upon the Christian church today is to purify and elevate her concept of God until it is once more worthy of Him – and of (the church).”

And to think rightly about him, we must go to the Scriptures.

Douglas Webster comments, “Submitting to Christ as he is revealed in Scripture by the power of the Holy Spirit is very different from speculating on a Christology acceptable to modern thought... Unless we affirm that our perspective of Jesus does not originate in the will of man but through the revelation of God”, we will not be seeing the real Jesus. (Webster [A Passion for Christ](#) , 27)

“I am concerned that...Jesus may be defined by a popular mentality which substitutes emotion for theology and exchanges biblical content for positive feelings. When the Scripture...no longer shapes the meaning and significance of Jesus, then ... people use his name for their own ends and identify Jesus with **their** cause, instead of becoming identified with Jesus and **his** cause.” (Webster 67)

To know God we must know Jesus and to know Jesus we must know Jesus as he is revealed on the pages of Scripture.

Again I remind you, the living Lord is here and this is who the Bible says he is:

Philippians 2:5b-11:

Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself

nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death--even death on a cross!

Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2:6-11)

As I pointed out three weeks ago, the context of this description of Jesus is humility.

Paul has called on the Christians in the church at Philippi to act toward each other in a humble, giving manner.

And Paul uses the example of Jesus to illustrate how he wants the believers to act.

For as he said in the immediately preceding verses, "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus..." Philippians 2:3-5

But in the midst of using Jesus as the quintessential example of humility, Paul does more.

He gives us a fuller picture of Jesus himself

It is not new information but it summarizes the essential truths about who Jesus is.

Like marveling at a gem stone by turning it in the light to see all of its beauty, Paul thinks and writes of the nature of Jesus in all his wonder and glory.

Have you ever had occasion to hear someone introduced whom you thought you knew very well?

And in the introduction you were surprised by learning something new or at least you were reminded of things you had long taken for granted?

I want us to look at, to study, Jesus this morning.

I want us to see him in his holiness, his humility, his love, and his honor.

This is important because **if he is who he claims to be**, it makes all the difference in this life and the life to come.

Shortly after WWII a highly ranked German diplomat said of Hitler, “Our great mistake was in underestimating that man. You could lead me blindfolded through ten rooms and I could tell you without error in which of them the Fuhrer was standing. There was an electric power that sparked out of him. If you have to deal with a man like that, there are only three choices.. – to give up politics and retire to your estate in the country (or) sell yourself to him body and soul or to bump him off.”

If you are confronted with Jesus Christ you cannot retire to the country – you have only two choices. (Stephen Neill, 22)

Which is it for us?

Do we live as if he is dead or are we learning to give ourselves to him, body and soul?

Let’s go back to the text where we have Jesus’ revelation of himself to us.

First an overview:

Verse 6 – Who he is – He is God.

2:6 “Who, **being in very nature God**, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped”

Verse 7 – Who he also became – a human being.

2:7 “but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, **being made in human likeness**.”

Verse 8 – What he did – He humbled himself to die on the cross for us.

2:8 “And being found in appearance as a man, **he humbled himself and became obedient to death--even death on a cross!**”

Verse 9 – The result of his obedience – He rose from the dead and ascended to heaven.

2:9 “Therefore **God exalted him to the highest place** and gave him the name that is above every name”

Verses 10-11 – What is yet to happen – He will come again to reign over all creation.

2:10-11 “**That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,** in heaven and on earth and under the earth, **and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord,** to the glory of God the Father.”

Let’s go back and look at each of these more closely.

Verse 6 “Jesus, who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped”

In all our talk of Jesus’ love and our friendship with him, let us never reduce him to a peer.

It is an inadequate analogy but for as many years as my father and I have been friends, he is still my father.

As long as we live here on earth, there will remain an important difference.

Jesus may well be our friend and helper but he is essentially different – He is God.

It seems to me that when Jesus was here on earth the disciples struggled constantly with this tension.

- This Jesus from Nazareth, whose parents and siblings they knew, was one of them and yet he wasn’t.
- He was a man and yet he was more.
- They ate with him, they walked, worked and laughed with him and yet something beyond humanity kept breaking through and confusing them.

This was a man and yet he was also God.

Imagine how hard that must have been to understand.

Peter eventually began to get it when he declared, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.” Matthew 16:16

It took until the very end for Thomas to get it when he finally exclaims, “My Lord and My God.”

Jesus is God.

He is not a lesser God or a junior God.

Don't let the “Father” and “Son” metaphors lead us to think of Jesus as somehow less than God.

There may be a functional distinction between God the Father and God the Son but as Paul says it, “Jesus, who, **being in very nature God**, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped.”

Paul is very precise in the words he uses.

The NIV translation of the Greek does the best job of conveying the sense of the words.

Your KJV or NASB read that he was “in the form of God.”

That is an equally correct translation but unfortunately those English words can convey the very opposite of what is here meant.

- Jesus is not merely masquerading as God.
- Neither is he merely in the form of but not quite the real thing.

The Greek dictionaries indicate that “form” means that which “truly and fully expresses the **being** which underlies it.” (Moulton and Milligan, 417)

Or again as the NIV translates it, “Jesus, who being in very nature God...”

And if that isn't enough Paul adds, “did not consider **equality** with God something to be grasped.

This word equality doesn't mean “almost” God it means “equally” God.

In fact Jesus accusers were angry with him because they understood it, as they said in John 5:18 Jesus was “even calling God his own Father, making himself **equal** with God.”

Philippians 2:6 is one of the strongest N.T. expressions of the full deity of Jesus.

But only one of many:

To the Colossians 1:15-17 Paul declares, "**He (Jesus) is the image of the invisible God**, the firstborn over all creation. For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together."

How could such a statement be made of any other than God himself? Who besides God is called the creator and sustainer of the universe?

The Apostle John declares the same:

John 1:1-3 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and **the Word was God**.² He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made."

And so declares the author of Hebrews.

Hebrews 1:3 "The Son is the radiance of God's glory and **the exact representation of his being**, sustaining all things by his powerful word.

And if we didn't understand it from those words, that same author adds:

Hebrews 1:10 The Father says to the Son, "In the beginning, O Lord, **you** laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of **your** hands."

The Jesus we worship today is fully God.

He was not created but has existed from eternity past.

He is God and must we never reduce him to a buddy, one who is only like me, just a little better.

The living Lord is here and he is God!

And Paul goes from there to talk about **who he also became**:

At the end of verse 6 Paul says that God the Son did not consider equality with God something to be grasped.

God did not think only of himself so that he clung to the prerogatives of deity.

He willingly laid aside his privilege.

He did precisely what Paul says he want us to do:

Philippians 2:4 “Look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.”

And what comes next is the most stupendous mystery of the Gospel:

In contrast to the strong statement of Jesus’ full deity in verse 6 we have **this striking statement about what Jesus did with that privileged position**: “but made himself nothing taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.”

God became a human being.

The language of verse 7 is also very precise even if it is difficult.

The NASB correctly reads that God the Son “emptied himself.”

There has been great debate through the years about what Jesus emptied himself of when he came to earth.

But that is an unnecessary question because the expression “emptied himself” or as in the NIV “made himself nothing” is a metaphor meaning he poured himself out; he gave himself.

The same idea is expressed in 2 Corinthians 8:9
“You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.”

Jesus did not cease to be God when he became a human being.

That is the awesome and unique mystery of the Christian Gospel.

- It was not that he was God, became a man, and then went back to being God after the ascension.
He didn’t just come, do his thing and leave.
- The living Lord who is with us today is the same God/man he was when he was here on earth after his resurrection.

There are a couple of more things that are important to know about our Jesus.

Please notice that Paul says God the Son **took** “the very nature of a servant”, being made in human likeness.”

Do you remember when earlier it was said of Jesus that he was “in very nature God”?

That meant not that he was pretending but that he was in fact God.

Here it says of Jesus that he took on himself the very nature of a servant.

Again, it is not that he is pretending but that it is his very nature – he is a servant.

He demonstrates his Deity by pouring himself out, by emptying himself and becoming a slave to our good.

That’s the kind of God he is – a servant-King.

And that brings me to the other thing about our Jesus in this context.

Our Jesus is the perfect example of what it means to be fully human.

Milan Machovec (a Czech Marxist) wrote, “Jesus...set the world on fire not because of the obvious superiority of his theoretical program but rather because...he himself was the attraction. (People) saw in him a man who already belonged to the coming Kingdom of God; they saw what it meant to be full of grace; what it meant to be not only a preacher but himself the product of his preaching...” (In Neill, 32)

Jesus was the real thing.

He was what we all long to be even if for a season we chase many other illusions of real humanity.

We follow other examples more readily than Jesus.

We aspire to be like some hero, some successful leader or great literary figure, or God-forbid some movie star or sports figure.

What truncated aspirations!

But to be like Jesus is to be most fully alive, most fully human.

Stephen Neill wrote, "(Jesus) combines unhesitating authority with a total lack of self-assertion; courage in the face of danger with almost feminine tenderness in affection; the harshest judgment on the self-satisfied and the complacent, with winning kindness to sinners..." (Neill, 28) That is a human being.

The living Lord who is with us now constantly models for us the humanity we, by God's grace, are becoming.

Look to any other, emulate any other, and you will end up a perversion of humanity.

Look to the living Lord present among us and become truly all you were meant to be!

And in verse 8 continuing our look at Jesus, what did he do?

2:8 "And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death--even death on a cross!"

Be careful that some connotations of those English words don't throw you off from the truth.

"Being found in appearance as a man" doesn't mean that Jesus woke up one day and said, "What a surprise; I look like a human being even though I know I'm not!"

"Appearance" does not mean "looks like the real thing but isn't."

To the contrary he means that he truly appeared (he was with us) as the real thing – human.

John helps us understand such terminology when he writes,

1 John 1:1-3 "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched--this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. ² The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us.

Jesus is the real thing – truly God and truly human.

And when Paul writes that our Jesus "humbled himself and became obedient to death--even death on a cross" he does not mean that Jesus was a martyr.

No, Jesus' death was not a mistake.
 He obediently carried out the plan conceived before time. (1 Peter 1:20 "He was chosen before the creation of the world...")
 Hebrews 9:22 "for without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.

The living God/man who is with us this morning, paid the debt for our sin.

Traditional Hinduism denies the possibility of forgiveness.

Karma rules all; you sin, you incur a debt that you must repay.
 And you keep paying, reincarnated life after reincarnated life, until your debt is paid in full.

Islam won't accept the idea of one man dying for another.

Nonsense, they say.

"If one man eats, will another man's belly be filled?"

Secularism says, be a man, stand on your own feet and take your own medicine.

Secularism, Islam and Hinduism say, "You sin, **you** pay".

Jesus says, "You sin, **I** pay."

H. A. Hodge wrote, "No other of the great religions offers this atoning sacrifice of an incarnate God. All the rest appear to think that the condition of sincere repentance and amendment is enough... It might be, if sin were merely a kind of error, which could be retrieved by second thoughts or a passing infection, which our essentially healthy constitution could throw off. It is thus that most of the great religions regard it; they dare not do otherwise or they would find the problem insoluble. But Christianity takes a graver view of sin... For our deliverance we need the injection into our lives of a new power, a power not native to us but capable of remaking us, a power which Christ alone could and did supply; and he supplied it by his passion and death." (H.A. Hodges, Death and Life Contended, 66)

"Amazing love, how can it be that thou my God shouldst die for me."

If Jesus who is with us this morning were to make himself visible to us here and now in this room we would still see the scars in his hands.

But Paul's description of our living Lord does not end there.

The suffering and death of the God/man Jesus is not the end of the story.

Paul is very concerned to reassure the Philippians and us that our hope in Jesus is well placed and thus will be vindicated just as Jesus was and will be.

Without going into the detail of the Gospels and Acts, Paul nonetheless speaks of the resurrection and ascension and then of Jesus' powerful second coming.

And so Paul finishes his description and worship of Jesus with these words:

Philippians 2:9-11 "Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

The exaltation to the highest place is without doubt a reference to Jesus' resurrection and ascension to the place of highest honor in heaven.

And much of what follows is clearly taken from Isaiah 45:23 where God is describing the end of the age, "Before me every knee will bow; by me every tongue will swear."

That this is a reference to Christ's second coming is also quite clear.

Using the same language, Paul writes to the Romans 14:10-11 "For we will all stand before God's judgment seat. ¹¹ It is written: " `As surely as I live,' says the Lord, `every knee will bow before me; every tongue will confess to God.' "

At the end everyone will see that this Jesus, whom some refused to believe, is in fact the King of kings and Lord of lords – He is Jehovah, Yahweh, Messiah, God almighty.

The Jesus who is with us this morning is the God of eternity past and future and the God who has determined the outcome of all things.

The result is what the Psalmist wrote, “Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me...”

The recent chaplain of the U.S. Senate, wrote, “Without a trust that God has a purpose He (will accomplish), human cruelty dethrones for us either God’s goodness or his omnipotence; and one is a mockery without the other.” (in Ogilvie [Let God Love You](#), 67)

But we are able to affirm this morning that our Jesus is both good and great.

Yes, Jesus is God.

- It is no wonder the disciples bowed before him.
- No wonder they sometimes cowered in fear when they saw his awesome power.
- No wonder it changed their lives forever.

But the words of Philippians 2 are not only about a Jesus of another era or the Jesus of the disciples.

We are talking about the Jesus who is here with us this morning.

Don’t let this be only an exercise in right thoughts but join me in worshipping him here and now.

Someone wrote, “It is possible to rationalize the existence and power of Christ without ‘relationalizing’ his Lordship...” (Ogilvie, [Let God Love You](#), 69)

- **We** bow before him.
- **We** call him Lord.
- **We** trust him with life and eternity.
He is God and He is here!

Hymn 43 "All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name"
Chorus 34 "He is Lord"

Hymn by Francis Bland Tucker
All praise to thee, for thou, O King divine,
Didst yield the glory that of right was thine,
That in our darkened hearts thy grace might shine:
Allelujah

Thou cam'st to us in lowliness of thought;
By thee the outcast and the poor were sought,
And by thy death was God's salvation wrought:
Allelujah

Let this mind be in us which was in thee
Who was a servant that we might be free
Humbling thyself to death on Calvary:
Allelujah.

Wherefore, by God's eternal purpose, thou
Art high exalted o'er all creatures now,
And given the name to which all knees shall bow:
Allelujah

Let every tongue confess with one accord
In heaven and earth that Jesus Christ is Lord;
And God the Father be by all adored;
Allelujah