

April 13, 2025

Philippians 2:5-11

In our Bible Information Class I'll often say, "now *this* lesson is one of my favorites. *This* is a fun one. *This* is a special topic to me," and that I end up saying that about most of the topics that we do. In preaching, I will often do the same thing and say, "*this* is a special part of Scripture," and you think to yourselves, "He says that a lot." Fair enough. But this week, that's really, really true. *This* is a special text. If someone were to ask me, "Who is Jesus? Give me a short, sweet part of the Bible that gives me what I should know about Jesus," this is one of the first places I would go. Theologians will call these passages a *sedes doctrinae*, a "seat of a doctrine," a part of Scripture that clearly teaches vastly important teachings, or doctrines about Jesus. So here is the **Doctrine of Jesus. 1. The identity of Jesus. 2. The Mind of Jesus. 3. The Humiliation of Jesus. 4. The Glory of Jesus.**

1. The Identity of Jesus. Most people agree that Jesus is a good teacher. A popular theory is that all the "god" stuff about Jesus wasn't really from him, but that the stories of him got embellished and people started actually believing that he was God, and then some would even say that the Gospels that we read, where Jesus is quoted claiming to be divine, are really just quotations put in his mouth by people that really wanted that to be true. You might hear that from your professors, the internet or TV, but here Paul blows that out of the water. Paul's writing this letter to the Christian Church in Philippi about thirty years after Jesus died and rose, and many of the experts think that this portion of Paul's letter is actually a hymn or their version of a "creed," because it's clearly poetry- which means that Jesus' followers, immediately after they met him, were convinced that he wasn't just a teacher, or a prophet, or even a divine person. Jesus is "in very nature," God. The Greek says Jesus has the "*morphe*" of God, translated: "in very nature, God." And yet, he had equality with God. Paul teaches what we call the doctrine of the Trinity- that Jesus Christ is true God, and yet distinguished from God the Father and God the Holy Spirit, and yet there are not three Gods, but one God, but God doesn't go into Father mode, Son mode, or Spirit mode. No- one God, yet three distinguishable persons. Jesus is God. Jesus has no beginning. He has existed even before time began. Therefore, Jesus, even as a human being, is still God. *That* is who Jesus is. Every word that leaves his mouth is the Word of God. Every person he interacts with has just conversed with the Almighty. Jesus is omnipotent- he can do all things- there is nothing he cannot do. He is omniscient- he knows all things, everything that is going to happen, he knows. Jesus is omnipresent- he is everywhere, in every corner of the universe, upholding every subatomic particle with his command. He is the Great I AM of the Old Testament that sent fire and lighting from Mt. Sinai. He is the God who spoke to the prophets. He is the God who controls all things to this day. That's who Jesus is. He is *not* just a teacher. And now, Paul wants to give you an insight into the mind of Jesus.

2. The Mind of Jesus. The city of Philippi was a Roman colony, and was primarily a retirement destination for former Roman soldiers that had made a good wage, earned public honors, and now wanted to settle down and build a life after the military. In Roman culture, everyone was desperately seeking honor, recognition, people applauding them and acknowledging their gifts,

talents, and accomplishments. Muscles were for flexing. Authority was for controlling people. Accomplishments were for glory. Money was for spending on public projects, putting one's name on that project, and receiving honor. Marriage was for climbing up the social totem pole and being connected to wealthy, well-known families. And Paul is saying, "Jesus did the exact opposite." Jesus had all the glory, all the power, all the control, all the essence of God as God himself, and he did not use it to his own advantage, glory, or gain. Jesus' mindset, although he has all the power and glory and strength and honor, is never about himself. Let's go back to the doctrine of the Trinity: God in his very essence is Triune- Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He *is* in his very essence eternal love and friendship between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Which means that when he created the universe, and ultimately human beings, it wasn't because he was bored or lonely. He created the universe to be an object of his love, not a source of love. He created human beings so that he would love and cherish them, not because he was insecure and needed worship. Everything Jesus does and says and thinks is always about others, always putting others before himself- even before creation began. That's *who he is*. Compare that with fallen humans- we aren't equal to God, yet are constantly using everything we can, our salary, our education, our bodies, our authority, our talents all for ourselves. Jesus has infinitely more than all of us, and his mindset is the opposite. And we see that in what we call his "humiliation."

3. The Humiliation of Jesus. Paul says Jesus is in "very nature" God, and he takes on the "very nature" of a servant, being made a normal human being, and subjecting himself to death, even death on a cross. Consider that for a moment. He who fills the universe makes himself so small, a single cell in the Virgin Mary when he's conceived in her womb by the Holy Spirit. And he becomes dependent on a person who he created, and endures the messy, traumatizing experience of childbirth, and not to wealthy people with a comfortable life or connections, but to impoverished parents. And remember, he never stopped being God. That's important! He was still all-knowing, still all-powerful, still glorious, still eternal, still infinite, and yet he didn't make use of his divine knowledge- he had to learn and grow in knowledge of the Bible that *he wrote!* He willingly submitted himself to the authority of his parents, his religious teachers in the synagogue, even when he was the ultimate authority, the king of the Universe. He didn't choose when he would become a religious teacher- he waited until the Holy Spirit called him at thirty years old. And for his disciples, he picked fishermen who would constantly misunderstand him. He chose a tax collector and a Jewish terrorist. He chose a man who would ultimately sell him for thirty pieces of silver. And notice- Jesus never stopped being God. He proved that when he did all his miracles, but he never used his miracles to benefit himself- they were always for the benefit of others. And even as he rides into Jerusalem, people praising him, he's on a donkey- a humble beast of burden- no one is greater than him, and no one is brought lower than him. And while he is still the all powerful, all-knowing God, he allows himself to be slandered, struck, convicted, and sentenced to death by the religious leaders who claim to be more devoted to him than anyone. And he allows himself not only to die, but to die in the most painful, slowest, most excruciating, and most shameful way possible at the time. And worse than the physical pain was the pain of the spiritual wrath of God laid on him as his Father, the one whom he has known

intimately, in closest communion as one God, abandons him, turns on him, punishes him. *Why?* Why would the God of all creation allow this to be done? Because it was the only way he could have you. God needed to experience death, so that his death would be a payment, a substitute for the death that all people deserve. No one is greater, more passionate about justice, more zealous for his Law, than Jesus, and yet, no one was lower, more humiliated, more despised, more punished, and more desperate for you, than Jesus.

4. The Glory of Christ. Paul says, “therefore,” because the sacrifice is made, the work is done, the wrath of God is satisfied, the demands of God’s Law that say, “those who disobey God must die,” have been absolutely and fully satisfied by Jesus, he returns to glory. And notice- it says God exalted him, God gave him the name above all names- well didn’t he already have that? Yes, but now that’s applied also to Jesus’ human nature. Before Jesus rose from the dead, he was God hiding his glory, but now that’s over, he’s no longer hiding. And Jesus, in humility, receives from the Father all the glory that he has as God. What does that mean? Jesus is still a human being. He still has a human body and a face and hands and feet and everything a human being has. And yet, he is God and is controlling the Universe, guiding all things for your good. And his name is above all names. That means that the name of Jesus, he alone, is our salvation. He alone is why we don’t have to be afraid to die, or of anything. He alone is in control of all things, even Satan and his demons. He alone is the one through whom all people can be saved. And sooner or later, every person- rich or poor, powerful or weak, alive or dead, and every spirit, angel or demon or Satan himself, will confess that Jesus is Lord. Some will do so with joy, others will do so with hatred. But all will know.

So what does this mean for you? This “doctrine of Jesus affects the way we look at service submission. **Service:** Jesus is proof that in order to be exalted in the glory of Heaven, you must humble yourself- that’s true in more than one way. In order to be exalted as God’s holy, perfect child, you must humble yourself by admitting that you haven’t obeyed and don’t deserve to be his child and trust only in Jesus as your savior, not yourself. But that’s true in the Christian life as well. In God’s Kingdom, the ones who are great aren’t necessarily the ones who are rich, powerful, successful, smart, or impressive, but those who lower themselves and see themselves as servants who just want to be a blessing for the sake of being a blessing. Christ served out of love, not out of ambition or a desire to be recognized. A temptation for Christians who serve is sometimes they get frustrated when they aren’t recognized or the people being served aren’t grateful as they should be. Be careful of that- if we have the mind of Christ, we will serve others with joy whether or not we are recognized or successful, it’s simply a joy to serve.

Submission: Let me ask you: When Jesus submitted himself to the will of the God the Father, did he become less important, less powerful, less valuable, less “God” than the Father? No. When Jesus submitted himself to the authority of his parents, his rabbis, his government, did it make him lesser than them, or weak, or unimportant? No. Therefore, wives, both current and future, when Jesus asks you to submit to your husbands, and yield to their leadership in a humble, godly way, does that make you lesser than them, weak, or unimportant? No. And

husbands, how did Jesus use his authority and power- to manipulate, get his way, and dominate? No- he used it to benefit his people, to sacrifice himself for his people- which means that's the kind of leader you the husband are called to be. Everyone- does submitting to your boss, your government, your church leaders make you lesser than them, weaker, or unimportant or less valuable? One of the biggest lies our culture tells us is that if you submit to someone else's leadership, you are weak and unimportant, and Jesus is living, breathing proof that this is not true.

That's the point Paul is making in this powerful, profound doctrinal statement about Jesus: because you belong to Jesus, look at things the way he does. In God's eyes, you are perfect like Jesus. Therefore, think like Jesus, act like Jesus, serve like Jesus. Amen.