

“The Greatest in the Kingdom, Part 2”
(Philippians 2:1-11)

I. Introduction.

A. Orientation.

This morning, we saw an example

Of what we are not to be

In the Jewish leaders.

Jesus warned them that their time was coming to an end.

He purged them from God’s Temple.

Cursed the fig tree to show them

What was about to happen to them.

Told them the kingdom would be taken away from them,

That they would be destroyed,

And their city set on fire,

While others would take their place

Around the table to celebrate

The Wedding Supper of God’s Son.

And why was all this coming on them?

For at least two reasons:

Because of their hypocrisy,

And their pride.

God hates pride.

He hates it when we try to lift ourselves up

Over those around us.

As high as we soar,

He will bring us low.

But He loves humility.

He gives grace to the humble.

As low as we are willing to lower ourselves,

To that degree, He will exalt us.

B. Preview.

This evening, we have the perfect example

Of the One who lowered Himself the most;

And for His work, was exalted to the place

Of highest honor in the kingdom:

That of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

Let's look at two things:

1. First, Jesus' own example of humiliation.
2. Second, what this calls us to do.

II. Sermon.

A. First, let's consider Jesus' example.

1. To see the extent of His humiliation,

We first need to remember who this One is

That was willing to become

One with us to save us:

He is God.

Paul says, “He existed in the form of God,”

And is equal with God (v. 6).

Jesus is no mere man.

He is God in our nature,

God become a man.

As far as starting points

From which to humble yourself,

You can’t get any higher than that!

Jesus is the eternal Son of God,

God the Son,

The One who shares all the attributes of God,

And who with the Father and the Spirit

Is infinitely exalted, having all glory, honor and authority.

Paul wants us to understand

Who this One is that humbled Himself

So that we can see the degree to which He did –

He is none other than the eternal God Himself.

Now that we know how high He was,

Just how low was He willing to go?

As low as He possibly could have gone:

1. He became a man.
2. He took on the likeness of sinful humanity.
3. He was born into a poor family.
4. He took the role of a servant.
5. He became a curse for us on the cross.

First, He became a man.

Paul says this One who is the eternal God emptied Himself (v. 7).

He didn't empty Himself of all of any of His divine attributes,

Because then He would no longer be God.

He emptied Himself of His glory, honor and reputation

By taking something –

Something infinitely below Him –

By becoming a man.

We really don't have

An analogy that can do justice to this.

If you were able to take to yourself

The nature of a single cell organism –

An amoeba –

So that your personality was

In both your human nature and in that amoeba –

You wouldn't come anywhere close
To what Jesus did.

There is a finite distance between us and the amoeba,
But an infinite distance between God and us.

When He took to Himself our nature,
The almighty, became weak;
The omniscient, ignorant;
The eternal and omnipresent,
Limited to time and place.
The infinite became finite.

But He went further than this.

When He became a man,
He didn't take to Himself the likeness of perfect humanity,
But sinful humanity –

Paul writes in our passage that He was made in the likeness of men (v. 7),
Which after the Fall, is sinful.

He writes in Romans 8, "For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God *did*: sending His own Son ***in the likeness of sinful flesh*** and *as an offering* for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh" (v. 3).

It would be an infinite humiliation on His part
To become a man at all,
But to become one who looks like us?
He was like us in every way,

But without sin.

But He lowered Himself even further.

He didn't just become a man,

And that in the likeness of sinful men,

He became a poor man.

It would be an infinite condescension

For the Son of God to become

The richest and most powerful man in the world.

But He didn't:

He was born into the family of a poor tradesman.

He lived a meager life,

Learned an honest, but low paying trade,

And even worked in that trade,

Likely for over twenty years.

But He lowered Himself still further.

Born as a man,

Made in our fallen image,

And as the son of a poor carpenter,

He became a servant (v. 7).

It's true that He exercised something of His authority

In His earthly ministry,

But whatever authority He had,
He used it to serve His disciples
And to serve us,
Which is one of the reasons
Peter had some difficulty
When Jesus stooped to wash his feet.
Jesus didn't come to be served,
But to serve.

But He humbled Himself even further –
To the point of death,
The death on the cross.

In His service,
He was willing to bear our sins in His own body –
To take our curse on Himself,
And bear His Father's wrath for that curse –
That we might go free.

Paul writes in Galatians,

“Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us – for it is written, ‘CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO HANGS ON A TREE’ – in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we would receive the promise of the Spirit through faith” (Gal. 3:13-14).

Being God,
He became a poor man,

Who looked like us,
With our limitations,
To serve us,
Even to the point of taking our curse,
And dying in our place.

2. And what did the Father give Him
For humbling Himself this much?
Since He stooped the lowest,
He was raised the highest.

God highly exalted Him,
And gave Him the name above every name,
So that every knee would bow to Him,
In heaven, earth, and hell,
And every tongue confess that He is Lord,
To the glory of God the Father (vv. 9-11).

Who is the greatest in the kingdom?
The greatest is the Lord Jesus Christ,
Because He humbled Himself the most.

B. But who will be second?
Who will sit on His right and on His left (Matt. 20:23)?
The one who most closely follows His example.

The one who humbles himself the most,
Will be exalted the most.

Paul says we are all to have this attitude that was in Christ (v. 5).
To the degree that we do,
To that degree we will humble ourselves,
And to that degree we will share His glory.

What are some of the practical ways we can do this?
Paul actually gives us several things in our passage –
Though there are many more scattered throughout Scripture.

These have mainly to do with imitating
What Jesus has done for us.
As He was willing to stoop so low to lift us up,
So we are to stoop, or go out of our way,
To lift up our brothers and sisters.

First, he says be of the same mind (v. 2).
Literally, think the same thing,
And that with regard to one another.

It's true that we should try to agree as much as possible,
In as many areas as possible.
But even when we disagree,

We should look at one another

As Jesus looks at us,

And not think less of one another.

Secondly, we are to maintain the same love for one another (v. 2)

It's clear that Jesus loves each and every one of us as His children –

Look at what He was willing to do for us.

You are to love one another as well –

Especially those in the body you are united with,

But also those from other communions.

Third, we are to be united in spirit with our brothers and sisters (v. 2).

You are to be harmonious, to be as one,

To have a similar attitude towards one another.

You are to be intent on one purpose: glorifying God (v. 2).

Having a common goal will always unite a people.

Ours needs to be promoting the work of the Gospel

And glorifying God and His Son, Jesus Christ.

You are to do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit,

But with humility of mind,

You are to regard one another as more important than yourself (v. 3).

You need to make sure

You're not doing what you do with only yourself in mind,

Or thinking that you are somehow better

Than your brothers and sisters.

Instead, you are to consider them

Better than yourself.

And along with that,

You are not to focus merely your own personal interests –

What concerns you –

But also the interests of others (v. 4) –

What the concerns are of your brothers and sister in Christ.

It may seem that if we do this

The danger will exist of some doing nothing but serving,

And others doing nothing else but soaking in that service.

That potential exists, unless we all submit to this.

Instead of coming to a brother or sister

To tell them of your personal problems and woes,

So that they can minister to you;

You should ask them about theirs,

And minister to them.

You'll find when you do,

That not only will the Lord bring others along

To minister to your needs,

But that He will minister to your needs

More directly as well.

Again, Jesus is the perfect example.

He did all this and more.

He stooped the lowest

And served each one of us –

He still does.

And because He did, He was exalted.

If you will humble yourself,

And follow this example,

To the degree that you do,

You will be exalted.

If you should do so better than anyone else,

You will be the greatest in the kingdom

Next to Jesus Christ.

Let's strive to the best of our ability

To humble ourselves

And try to outdo one another

In serving and showing honor to one another. Amen.

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