

Sunday Morning Message

December 17, 2023 (Adapted from a message originally preached on December 18, 2016)

Christmas Message

Having the Mind of Christ This Christmas

Text – Philippians 2:1 - 11

Congregational Reading – Philippians 2:5 - 7

Introduction

Philippians is one of four New Testament letters that are known as “The Prison Epistles” because they were written by the Apostle Paul while he was incarcerated while awaiting trial at Rome after being accused by the religious leaders at Jerusalem of bringing a Gentile into their Temple, which he did not do. The other three letters written from this time in Paul’s life were Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon.

Philippi is a port city located in an area called Macedonia, which is in present-day northern Greece. Paul had ministered there on his second missionary journey and had again visited the city on his third journey.



Two very important historical events that occurred in Philippi were the salvation of Lydia and her family, and the Philippian jailor and his family. You might also recall that Paul spent a night in jail there in Philippi, where he and Silas were beaten, but then

sang praises to the Lord from their prison cell.

This letter is unique among Paul's letters to churches. Paul had a great relationship with this church. He loved them and they loved him. This will prove very evident as we study the epistle. There is very little correction given here, but mostly encouragement. It is also a very practical letter; unlike Paul's letters to the Romans and Ephesians, which are very heavy in doctrine.

One of the key themes in this letter is that of rejoicing. The words joy and rejoice appear in the epistle eighteen times. The phrase rejoice in the Lord appears 3 times and rejoice in Christ appears 1 time.

Other key verses in this letter: 2:5; 3:7 – 8; 4:6; 4:8; 4:13; 4:19

Read verses 1 - 11

This portion of Scripture is often referred to as the “**Kenosis**” passage, taken from the Greek word κενώω (ke-no'-ō) found in v. 7, which means “to empty oneself” or to make of no reputation.

Verses six and seven actually tell the Christmas story “in a nutshell”:

“Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:” (Philippians 2:6-7)

We don't read here about the specifics of His birth – there is no mention of Mary and Joseph, nothing recorded here about the manger or Bethlehem, not even a hint here regarding the Magi or the shepherds. Nevertheless, the essence of the Christmas story is found in these two verses.

Jesus, the God of the Universe, emptied Himself or made himself of no reputation, and became a man. God became man. That's a pretty big step down.

Jesus who owns all of the silver and gold as well as the cattle on a thousand hills came down to this earth to be born in a stable to a very poor family from Nazareth, which was a very poor place:

*“And Nathanael said unto him, **Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?** Philip saith unto him, **Come and see.**”* (John 1:46)

Jesus who is the Creator and Sustainer of all things, was for a time “subject unto his parents”, and was taught by His earthly guardian Joseph to be a carpenter. The God who made the worlds was now making furniture. A step down for sure!

Why would the King of Glory do such a thing? He became a man so that He could save men and women. He came to the earth to die on the Cross:

"And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." (Philippians 2:8)

Supporting verses:

"And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins." (Matthew 1:21)

"This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief." (1 Timothy 1:15)

"For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." (Luke 19:10)

The focus of this message is not on why He came, but on what was His mindset when He came.

Then we need to make the parallel between His Mindset and ours. What should our mindset be as we serve the Lord today.

"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:" (Philippians 2:5)

Christ left glory to come to this earth. He emptied Himself – became of no reputation. Note – that does not mean that He became less than God, but He did give up or surrender some of the attributes of deity while here on the earth. He still had all of the power on earth that He had in Heaven. He just chose not to use them. He still had all of the glory that He had in Heaven, He just veiled it while He was on the earth.

The analogy is not to us being born into this world as we had no choice regarding that decision. However, we did choose to be born-again into the family of God. Should not we have His mindset – should not we empty ourselves – make ourselves of no reputation as we serve Him here on earth?

What is the Mindset that we should have while we serve here on the earth? What was Jesus' mindset as He came down here at Christmas?

I. He Had a Mindset of Submissiveness (Humility - v. 7 - *"made himself of no reputation"*)

He emptied Himself of the glory that He had in Heaven. He veiled it in human flesh.

He did not come to earth and demand exaltation and glory – He emptied Himself of it. He made Himself of no reputation. He submitted to His parents. He submitted to the

will of His Heavenly Father. He submitted Himself to the limitations of living in human flesh – he hungered, he thirsted. He ultimately submitted Himself to death.

He Humbled Himself.

One of the biggest problems that we have is humility. We are always trying to make ourselves look good – to improve our reputation in the eyes of our peers. Our job today as born-again believers in Christ is to make Him look good and to place others before ourselves. If we are going to exalt the Lord, we are going to have to learn to humble ourselves and be submissive:

"Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall." (Proverbs 16:18)

Satan learned this principle. He tried to exalt Himself and it caused His fall:

"How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High. Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit." (Isaiah 14:12-15)

Eve learned this principle. She wanted to be like God, so she believed the devil rather than her husband and God, and ultimately plunged the whole human race into sin.

God hates pride:

"A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, A false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren." (Proverbs 6:17-19)

"Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up." (James 4:10)

"Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time:" (1 Peter 5:6)

"Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble." (1 Peter 5:5)

II. He Had a Mindset of Servility (v. 7) *"and took upon him the form of a servant"*

Jesus did not come to be served. He came to serve. Jesus did not come to be ministered to, but to minister:

"But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." (Matthew 20:25-28)

Tozer said:

"I am Thy servant to do Thy will, and that will is sweeter to me than position or riches or fame, and I choose it above all things on Earth or in Heaven."

A servant does much of his work without recognition.

"Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven. Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly." (Matthew 6:1-4)

Illustration Joe Reyes – always willing to serve behind the scenes.

III. He Had a Mindset of Sacrifice (v. 8) *"and became obedient unto death"*

Christ lived His life as a servant. He had nothing of earthly value. He gave everything.

"I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive." (Acts 20:35)

And then, He gave His life to die on the Cross for our sins. He was willing to sacrifice for others.

Christmas is a time of giving and we often sacrifice for others at Christmas, but the message of Christmas is that we should be living sacrificial lives every day of the year. We should be more than willing to give to God and to others.

"1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. 2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."
(Romans 12:1-2)

Conclusion

While Jesus was here on the earth, He had no reputation and no possessions.

"58 And Jesus said unto him, Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." (Luke 9:58)

Reputation and possessions are the two things you and I guard and protect the most. We are scared to death that we are going to lose our possessions, and we are so worried about our reputations.

Jesus served fully and faithfully and sacrificed everything, ultimately giving His life so that you and I could be saved. We serve grudgingly and sacrifice little. Yet we expect and even demand that other people serve us and sacrifice for us. And that's almost understandable for lost people, but not for born-again children of God.

Our "reasonable service" is to have the same mindset that Jesus had:

He was humbly submissive

He was a willing servant

"5 Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; 6 Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; 7 With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men: 8 Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free." (Ephesians 6:5-8)

He was more than willing to sacrifice.

Jesus didn't demand His rights as God when he came to earth. He surrendered them. Why don't we stop trying to demand our rights as humans and, instead, be like Jesus? Let's humble ourselves, let's serve others, and let's sacrifice for the cause of Christ.