

Christmas “The Way To Glory” Philippians 2:5-8

This evening, I want to look at a passage of scripture from the New Testament, the book of Philippians 2, an amazing passage of Scripture, and I know all Scripture is amazing because all Scripture is God breathed. This passage speaks to us tonight of who Jesus is and what he did, and why we celebrate what we do on Christmas, and the very fact that all of us are made ultimately to witness glory. And that is what we celebrate here at Christmas. When I ask you, if you play, pay careful attention. As I read Philippians 2:5-8, please pay careful attention. This is God's holy and inerrant word.

Have this mind among yourselves which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men, and being found in human form. He humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore, God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so 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.

Will you pray with me?

Father, I doubt if there's anyone here tonight who has never heard the true story of Christmas. Many of us have heard it many times, but there may be some here who have not familiarize themselves with what is true about who you are. We just ask for your Holy Spirit to open our hearts and eyes to see the glory of our Savior, who is Christ the Lord. We ask it in his name. Amen.

Every culture has proverbs about promises, which tell us, I think, something about the universal nature of humans and promises. Here are a few from around the world.

Eggs and O's are easily broken. It's a Danish proverb.

Nothing weighs lighter than a promise. That's a German proverb.

When a man repeats a promise again and again, he means to fail you. It's an old English proverb.

I like this other Dutch proverb. *Promises make debt, and debt makes promises.*

Now, what's pretty obvious about all of these striking about them all is the cynicism behind them. There seems to be this universal negative expectation when it comes to promises. The only thing one can regard with any assurance about promises is that they aren't likely to be kept. Edmund Burke said hypocrisy can afford to be magnificent in its promises for never

intending to go beyond promise. It costs nothing. Worst of all is when people make promises to or in the name of God that they either never intend to keep or find. They lack the power to fulfill, no matter how well intentioned they may be. One quote I discovered in this area is particularly telling.

Oaths are the fossils of piety.

The bottom line is that people make and break promises. We expect it in others, and sadly, we probably also expect it in ourselves. In light of this, it wouldn't be surprising that we might tend to transfer this same negative view about promises ultimately to God, because the prevailing view of God in our culture is that he's really just a bigger version of us, and so he probably does the same things just on a bigger scale. Even in Bible teaching churches. I suspect that a cynicism about God has developed. Maybe God is just too big. That is, he's just too big to care about my little life, my little problems. Maybe God's promises don't extend to me because of some sin. I just haven't rooted out that I haven't discovered. Maybe God hasn't really promised me anything. Or maybe God isn't really who I thought he was. After all, he may be here tonight and that is one of your sentiments. Or perhaps even all of them. But I want to assure you tonight that one of the most important things for us to know about God is that he is a promise maker, and he is a promise keeper.

No matter what else we might attach to Christmas, and we attach a lot of things to Christmas. Christmas is all about God's making and keeping a promise. Ultimately, it comes down to that. That promise is found in this text that we've looked at, that I just read 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. That's a bold promise. You may. Everyone. Past. Present. Future. Everyone, everywhere, from every age of time will give God glory by confessing that Jesus Christ is Lord. That is an absolute statement, and it's a promise. Not a single person in this room will not give glory to God. Confessing Jesus when he returns. But before this promise can be fulfilled, there are two acts of humbling, if you will, that that that are necessary to take place.

One of those acts is already taken place, and that is the willful humbling of Christ Jesus himself. Again, in this passage, Christ Jesus, who though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped. But he emptied himself by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men, and being found in human form. He humbled himself. There it is. That is the very heart, the substance of Christmas, the birth of Jesus the Savior, who is Christ the Lord. You can almost hear Linus saying it out of Luke two. The Jesus birth is itself an answer to a promise. One that was made at the very beginning of time to Adam and Eve, after they rebelled against his commandment not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. And that rebellion is why we are in the world we are today broken with hurt, with pain, rejection, war, and why people don't keep their promises. It's the hard reality of sin and all of us are in it. Sin came into the world, broke our fellowship with God, but in his grace being who he

is, God made that other promise ultimately to send a Redeemer, a deliverer, one who would take away the sin that came into the world and reconcile us back to himself.

But the twist in that promise is that the one who would come would also be God, 100% God, 100% man. Again, from Philippians two, Paul's point in our passage is that Jesus, who though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.

But he was God. So one day, every day, everyone from every place and every time will confess that Jesus is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Why? Because Jesus humbled himself. The Bible teaches very clearly that Jesus is God. Specifically, he is the second person of the Trinity, and before he came to earth to take on a human body, which we celebrate right now, he dwelt in the full glory of deity with the father and the spirit.

Now, if I can get technical for a moment, because word choice is important, especially when the Holy Spirit chooses the words. The word translated form here refers to the essence of a thing. The verb of the phrase is in the present tense. I told you I was getting technical, which indicates that Jesus continues to be, in essence, God.

Therefore, I love the NIV translation here who, being in very nature God, sums it up. He was God. He is God. He continues evermore to be God, and yet he took on human flesh. It is a statement of declaration about Christ essential and his unchanging deity. He has always been God, and yet he humbled himself. He emptied himself. The text says, well, he did not empty himself of his deity. He can't stop being God. He is who he is. But what he emptied himself of was his display in position of rightful glory and the glory of heaven. The second person of the Trinity laid aside the glory that was rightfully his and all of its accouterments, if you will. Humbling himself by becoming a servant. Taking the form, being born in the likeness of men. Now the contrast is pretty, pretty profound. He is in very nature God, and therefore he's the one who deserves to be served. And yet he laid aside his glory. He's the only one to whom service ought to be rightly rendered. And yet he came here to present himself as a servant for us.

But what does the servant do? He. He or she presents himself to his or her master for the service that the master commands, that the master desires. They're ready to attend to every command of the master, to see that all that he desires is accomplished. Now that's utterly amazing to think that Jesus, yes, he was here on earth and served, which is all in itself remarkable. But really, his service began before he even left heaven, as he submitted himself to the will of the father in the work of redemption. Jesus is first and foremost in our salvation. A humble servant of God the Father, laying aside the glory and splendor of his deity to accomplish His Father's will in our salvation. And he did it specifically by taking on that human body.

Now, in most every culture, it's common that servants, at whatever level, are specifically dressed in ways that signify that they are servants. They're set apart, sort of disassociated from the world around them. So you can notice that they are there to serve you. Look for people with certain clothes on. Even today in my teenage and college years, I worked several jobs in which I

was required to dress for the service. I was commanded to do. Yeah, I did get paid for it, but still I was commanded to do it. Work at a grocery store and I wore an apron. I noticed they don't wear aprons in grocery stores anymore. I was a bag boy. Why did I need an apron? But it set me apart. And believe me, people treated me like a bag boy. But I also worked at Long John Silver's in Clemson, South Carolina, deep frying frozen fish wearing a red and white striped polyester shirt. And this ingeniously designed hairnet, basically that looked like a pirate's kerchief that went over my head and had a little ring on it to make it look like I was a pirate. It was the most humiliating thing I've ever done in my life. And I only worked there for a week.

When you think about it, really the same thing is true for Jesus. In order to accomplish his service. You could say that Jesus also dressed himself for the job. He put on a servant's garb, the servant's garb, garb of a real human body. Of course, it says in the Gospel of John, he became flesh. But here's the difference Jesus dressed as a servant not to disassociate himself from people, but to associate himself with those who came to serve, to be like them.

C.S. Lewis says he was God in disguise, looking like one of us because he was one of us, and he humbled himself so he could offer himself for our sins. He was dressed for service in a body. And what was that service specifically? To live a real human life and ultimately to die a real human death as a sinless sacrifice for sinners.

Verse eight, again being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. The Son of God humbled himself, becoming a servant by taking on a body, but also by dying in obedience to the father. And we need to always remember, as we look at those nativity scenes and those adorable creches and the kids representations of that stable, that that little baby didn't stay a baby but grew to be a man so he could die for sinners.

And he did it in obedience to his father. Now, I love to read history, and I especially enjoy reading the letters, personal correspondence of historical figures, because when you read those letters, it is not reading about history. It's reading from those who lived it. Letters also reveal the customs and conventions of the day. Firsthand accounts. One of the most common ways that letters in the past were closed was with this phrase your obedient servant. Now I know that it was convention, and that many people wrote that not intending to obey anything, the person they were writing to whatever offer. But it says, here I am, I'm ready to obey. I am at your disposal. And that sums up Jesus' attitude in humbling himself in obedience to the father's plan, even to that point of dying, as it says in the Psalms, here I am, I've come to do your will, a body you have prepared for me.

But there's more. We need to see that Jesus wasn't just being a dutiful servant, though. He was a dutiful servant, a perfect, dutiful servant. He wasn't merely submitting in obedience even to the point of death, but he was a willing servant. When we look back at verse six, we see that Jesus didn't hang on. He didn't consider his deity something to be grasped to, to be clung to in order to avoid the mission of redemption.

Father, I'm too good for that. But no, he laid it aside in obedience, but with desire. Now context is important. As one of my professors in seminary used to say, context is our friend. In the context of what Paul is saying here in verses five through 11 is his encouragement to the church at Philippi at Philippi to humbly serve one another.

If you look back at verse one, which I think is going to be on the screen, yes, if there is any encouragement in Christ, he says, any comfort from love, any participation in the spirit, any affection and sympathy complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord in one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.

Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. It's those last two verses that is the key to understanding humble Christian service, but especially to understanding the attitude of Jesus in the mission of redemption. In fact, that's why Paul says what he does in verse five. He says, essentially, as the Greek would put it, think like this.

Think like Jesus did. And if you do, then you will serve one another. Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God a thing to be grasped. This is not something that can be done by merely checking off a box, by being merely dutiful. It comes from the heart. We might sometimes look at Jesus dying for sinners as him just doing what he was supposed to do.

It was his job to save. And so he saved. He did what the father sent him to do. He did it obediently accomplished it, and he went back to heaven. But that's not the case at all. It's true that Jesus had to be obedient to the father to save us, but we can't miss that. He humbled himself not merely to be obedient, but because he loved us.

It wasn't mere obedience. Let's say I tell my wife, Lisa, I want to treat you to a special weekend away with a nice hotel, shopping, romantic dinners, relaxation. We can do what you want to do when you want to do it. We'll just enjoy what you want to do. And let's say we do that. And then on one of those evenings towards the end of the weekend, we're enjoying a quiet place of Lisa's own choosing.

She says, thank you so much for planning this time. It means so much to me. Now suppose I were to say in response, well, I really only did all of this in obedience to God. To put your desires before mine, because I made a vow in our wedding that I would do that I need to be obedient to God.

So I really would have preferred to stay at home and watch football this weekend. But I'm being obedient to God now. After I wake up in the emergency room, or if I wake up in the emergency room, I could offer. In my defense, really, what I said was true because it is true. I do need to be obedient to what God has commanded me as a husband to love, to serve, and to take of Lisa's interests more of more important than my own.

But suppose I say instead, Lisa, I love you, and you deserve every minute of this minute of this and more.

It would not be enough if I could give you every weekend of every month, every year, to show how much I love you. And now if I mean it. And by the way, I do mean it.

That I believe that captures the essence of what Jesus obedience to the father was. He loved his father and sought to be obedient to him, but his love for us is in totally sync with the father's love. John 3:16 For God so loved the world that he gave his only son, that whoever believes in him might not perish but have eternal life.

So I think it would be completely accurate to say, for the son so loved the world, that he willingly gave. He was the father's servant all the way to death, not merely because it was the right thing to do, but because it was the loving thing to do. And he loved us. That brings us back to the promise of this text.

Everyone, everywhere, from every age of time, will give God glory by confessing that Jesus is Lord not only because Jesus humbled himself, but also because God exalted Jesus to glory. Jesus work wasn't completed with his death on the cross. Of course not. God gloriously showed that he accepted his sacrifice for sin by raising him from the dead and declaring him to be Lord of all.

Verse eight through 11. Being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on the cross. Therefore, God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so 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.

Now this is rightly where we use a word that has been unfortunately so overused that I don't think it means what we think it means. Awesome. As we step back from the passage, we see the big picture. The Son of God, full of glory, humbled himself and laid aside his glory, took on a human body for God's wrath for sin, then rose in victory and returned to that glory, where he rightly and gloriously bears the name Lord.

And at every single point Jesus not only knew what he was doing, it was this very return to glory that ultimately motivates him, the joy that he anticipated in that return to glory, so that he humbled himself to endure everything from the manger to the cross to the throne. As the writer of Hebrews says, for the joy that was set before him, Jesus endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of God.

Now Jesus himself said the same thing in his prayer on the night that he was betrayed, given over to be crucified. This is in John 17. Listen to these words for the father, the hour has come. Glorify your son, that the son may glorify you. So that you have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him.

And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do. And now, father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world

existed. But it isn't merely that Jesus was looking only for his own return, his own restoration to that glory that he had before he left.

It was by the cross that he would bring with him his pastor having said, every one of you that Jesus died for it upon whom he would rest his glory. He wanted to bring us back to know that glory. John 17 again. Now I'm coming to you in these things I speak in the world, that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves.

Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me near, be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me, because you love me before the foundation of the world. A righteous father, even though the world does not know you. I know you, and these know that you have sent me. I made known to them your name, and I will continue to make it known that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them.

That's why he came to make known the name of the father to the children, to redeem the children from their sins, and then return them to the father to enter his glory. That is the way to glory at every point. The Christmas story is about glory. The glory of the Lord Jesus shown around the terrified shepherds while the angels shouted, Glory to God in the highest, because the Glorious One had laid aside his glory to be born in a cattle stall.

But he did it because this was the way to glory. He humbled himself. And he was exalted. Now you may remember at the very beginning I said, this promise of God that everyone, everyone, everyone, everywhere will give God glory requires to humbling. We've looked at one of them, but the second one is our humbling to do to humble ourselves and confess that Jesus is Lord.

We have the absolute assurance that every knee shall bow on heaven and earth, and under the earth. Every tongue will confess. When Jesus returns, and there will be two types of confessors on that day. The first type of confessor is those who've longed for Jesus coming, who have trusted in his death as the payment of their sin, and in his resurrection as their hope of eternal life, who've loved him and know their way to glory is sure, because they have trusted not in themselves, but in Jesus.

The second type of confessor is those who have not trusted in Christ, but will bow the knee and declare Jesus is Lord, because the presence of his overwhelming glory demands that they do nothing less. C.S. Lewis puts it this way what is the good of saying you are on his side? Then, when you see the whole natural universe melting away like a dream and something else, something it never entered your head to conceive, comes crashing in something so beautiful to some of us, and so terrible to others, that none of us will have any choice left for this time.

It will be God without disguise, something so overwhelming that it will strike either irresistible love or irresistible horror into every creature. It will be too late, then, to choose your side. There's no use saying you choose to lie down, but it has become impossible to stand up. That will not be the time for choosing. It will be the time when we discover which side we really have chosen. Whether we realized it before or not.

Now. Today, this moment is our chance to choose the right side. You can enter into the hope of glory right now. If you have not, you can turn in faith to trust Christ tonight. He who left the same glory to die for your sin, and by his resurrection to take you to glory. That no eye has seen, ear has heard, or as yet entered into the heart of man, that Jesus. No sin is too far from forgiveness. No turning away is beyond returning from no darkness can overcome the light of God's glory in the face of Christ. So humble yourselves tonight in repentance and faith, because it is the way to glory.

Let's pray. Father, thank you for the gift of Jesus, the light of the world, and thank you that you humbled yourself. Jesus. And I pray that there is any here who has not humbled themselves to trust you in repentance and faith, that right now, your Holy Spirit would do that work and you would get glory in Jesus name.

Amen.