

You Can't Spell HUMILITY without the WHY

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[0 : 00] Good morning. If you have Bibles, would you open them up and turn to the book of Philippians.

We're going to be in chapter 2. We're asking Kara to read verses 5 through 11.

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 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 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.

We pray together. Father, we do thank you for this morning, and we do ask that you would guide us as we look at this text today.

[1 : 19] We thank you for your word. We thank you that with this text, with this passage, we get to peek into the mysterious path that Jesus Christ, our Savior, took to save his people.

Guide us by your Holy Spirit to learn and to grow and to magnify the name of Jesus. We ask this in his name. Amen. Amen. So we continue to be in the book of Philippians, and the theme of the book of Philippians continues to be Christian unity through humility.

And as we learned last week, outward expressions that look humble don't necessarily amount to true humility. It's the humility of Christ that brings us unity because it is Christ who is gentle and lowly and humble in heart.

Today's passage begins with verse 5, which is a command for believers to genuinely imitate the humility of Christ. The humility of Christ. And then in verses 6 through 11, we hear the depth of Christ's humility.

It's an astounding text. It's perhaps the pinnacle of the entire book. Verse 6 to verse 11 is commonly called the Carmen Christi, or the hymn to Christ.

[2 : 55] And some Bible scholars, and some Bible scholars, and this is just a fun piece of trivia for you, but some Bible scholars assert that although Paul penned this Christ hymn here in the letter, the words themselves may have predated the letter.

In other words, maybe Paul wrote it first, or maybe he was referring to an already known hymn of the early church. Either way, God found it fitting to preserve it for us, and these verses serve as a summary of the entire gospel story.

Now, all great stories have two essential components, the main characters and the story arc. Now, the main character, of course, is the one the story's about, the one who drives the story forward. And then the story arc is like a line that maps out the ups and downs that the main character experiences.

Now, one popular story arc is called the rags to riches story. Have you heard this before? Rags to riches. That story arc looks like this.

[4 : 15] Starts low, and then goes high. It's called rags to riches because the main character starts in poor and undesirable circumstances, but then ends up in a way better and more desirable circumstance than the beginning.

Two of my favorite rags to riches stories were written by Roald Dahl. Have you heard of this guy? Roald Dahl? Two of my favorite rags to riches stories are his.

Charlie and the Chocolate Factory and Matilda. Thank you. Yes. The thumbs up for Matilda. So the main characters in both of these stories start out with a rough life, but they eventually end up with

everything they ever wanted.

Charlie and the Chocolate Factory starts out with poor young Charlie Bucket, who shares a tiny cold house with his four grandparents, Grandpa George, Grandma Georgina, Grandma Josephine, and Grandpa Joe.

And they eat a steady diet of cabbage water. Exactly. Thank you for making that face.

[5 : 33] That is what I would say, too. But Charlie, if you've never seen it, plug your ears because I'm going to ruin a little bit of the ending for you. But Charlie ends up inheriting a factory, fully staffed with faithful Oompa Loompas.

And Matilda, okay? Right? That begins with our main character, young Matilda, unwanted and unappreciated by her own parents.

I mean, her mummy says she's a lousy little worm. Terrible. But by the end, it ends up just fine. Rags to riches. There's another story arc that may be familiar to you. It's called the bell curve story arc.

Have you heard of this? It's kind of like rags to riches, but then it goes right back to rags. So it's called a bell curve because it's kind of in the shape of a really big bell.

[6 : 46] We might think of Titanic. Jack is very poor at the start, but he catches a break. And he gets to experience the high life on a sweet boat.

He even falls in love. But I'm going to ruin it for you who have been waiting to see this film. Titanic ends badly.

Okay? It's like a bell curve. It goes back down. But now to the real world. The entire experience of creation has one main character.

Jesus, the Messiah. From the moment of creation onward, all events ultimately point to the birth, life, atoning death, and resurrection of Jesus.

Whether you recognize it or not, Jesus is the central figure in all of creation. You may recall that when Jesus first called his disciples, one of his first disciples was Philip.

[7 : 55] And when Jesus called Philip, he said, follow me. Now catch what happened. I'm going to jump to John 1.45. Philip went and found Nathanael after this.

And he said to him, we have found him of whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote. Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.

Philip recognized Jesus as the central figure that all of creation was pointing to. And in similar fashion, after Jesus died and rose from the dead, he appeared to his disciples again, who were in despair, and he comforts them.

Listen to the words of Jesus in Luke 24 after the resurrection. Then he, Jesus, said to them, These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you.

That everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.

[8 : 57] Jesus is the central figure, the main character in all of creation. And in Philippians 2, Paul reveals to us what Jesus experienced.

And as we follow along, we can map out his unique story arc. And it wasn't rags to riches. And it wasn't a bell curve.

It was riches to rags to riches. Or we could say it was an upside down bell curve.

You picture that? That's the story arc of Jesus. This upside down bell curve informs us why our walk with God and our walk with one another must be rooted in humility.

Now think about this. Last week, we studied Philippians 2 verses 1 through 4, which answers the question, How do followers of Jesus exercise humility?

[10 : 00] You may remember, Do nothing from selfish ambition. Count others more significant than yourselves. Look out to the interests of others.

That's how we exercise humility. Now today's text answers the question, Why do followers of Jesus exercise humility?

Let's look at verses 5 and 6 of today's text. 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.

So right away we get a little bit of that answer. Why do followers of Jesus exercise humility?

Because you are followers of Jesus.

We must walk in humility because the humble Christ is our model. If we're in Christ, if we're born again of the Holy Spirit, and we're united to Christ, by faith, we are to imitate him.

[11 : 12] Yes, in actions of humility, but actions that are rooted in a humble heart. In union with the heart and mind of Christ.

So now we ask ourselves, what does Christ's humility look like? Read verse 6 again. Who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped.

Now verse 6 requires careful attention. First, we must acknowledge that the Lord Jesus, before coming in the flesh, existed in the form of God.

Remember the opening words of the Gospel of John, which described Jesus as the Word of God? Listen to this. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. So from before time began, the Word was with God, distinct from the Father, yet fully God. The Word was God.

[12 : 21] Wow. For all of eternity, the Lord Jesus has possessed the fullness of God. The story arc of Jesus, this upside-down bell curve, starts as high as high can go.

Though he was in the form of God, he did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped. Now let's carefully walk through that second part. Verse 6 has just told us of Christ's nature, his divine nature as God himself, and his status prior to the incarnation.

And when I say incarnation, I mean prior to joining himself to humanity. For all of eternity, the Son was in heaven in the form of God, enjoying all the glory and the honor that accompany it.

But he didn't count equality with God a thing to be grasped. Don't misunderstand these words. We can't interpret them, or should I say misinterpret them, as some false religions do.

And when I say false religions, I'm specifically speaking to those who deny the triune nature of God. Indulge me.

[13 : 42] I'm going to give a bad interpretation for a second. Okay? But these words do not mean this. Okay? So if anyone's starting to listen to the recording, I really hope they don't start here.

I'll repeat it though. It does not mean this. Jesus is inferior to God, and he chose not to reach up for equality with God because he isn't equal with God.

No. That would be a very bad interpretation. Now why do I say that? Well, remember, Paul is pointing to Christ as a model of humility.

If Jesus is not fully God, then it's not much of an example of humility to say, look at Jesus, he's not God, and he didn't try to become equal with God. That doesn't make any sense.

Now let's say you live in Fargo, or West Fargo, or any other hometowns. Okay, well I just covered them all then.

[14 : 47] Let's say you live in Fargo, or in West Fargo, and let's just say, hypothetically, that you aren't the mayor. Are you a strong example, a strong model of humility if you don't try to take over the role of mayor?

That doesn't require a ton of humility. So instead, we understand what Paul is saying because of the whole context of the passage.

Christ demonstrated humility in that being fully God, he didn't choose to hold on to that equal status. Or as some translations render it, he didn't count equality with God a thing to be held on to for advantage. The reason that Jesus is our example of humility is because he didn't exploit his high position by clinging to it.

Instead, he chose to let go of that position of glory and honor. And hear this, not looking out for his own interest, but looking to the interest of others.

[15 : 57] That's the humility that we ought to imitate. And it's in stark opposition to human pride. Now to highlight the contrast between pride and humility, I want to draw your attention back, all the way back, to the fall of Adam and Eve in Genesis 3.

We're familiar with this story. The serpent tempted Adam and Eve, and when he did, he told them that eating the forbidden fruit would open their eyes and that they would be like God.

And by reaching for the fruit, Adam and Eve reached beyond their status, beyond their limit, and attempted to be like God. Equality with God did not belong to them.

But by reaching out and grabbing that fruit, they grasped at equality with God, resulting in sin corrupting the whole world. Pride literally came before the fall.

The prideful disobedience of Adam and Eve led to that fall, and the humble obedience of Jesus led to the salvation of sinners like you and me.

[17:13] Let's read verse 7 again. But he emptied himself by taking the form of a servant being born in the likeness of men.

He intentionally humbled himself. Do you hear the humility already? We read that Christ emptied himself. Ooh. And here we meet a very important theological word called kenosis. That's the word for emptying. Kenosis. Learned a little bit about this last week. And that word is so important, in fact, it has sparked debates and controversies over what it actually means. But why? Why would people fight about what that word kenosis or emptying means? It's because the truth of who Jesus is and the nature of the gospel itself depend on this question. What exactly did Christ empty himself of? Some argue that Jesus emptied himself of his divinity, that he laid aside that which makes him God.

[18:29] No. No. That would be a bad interpretation. Jesus did not empty himself of his divinity. He did not cease to be God. God. And hear me close.

This is a hill to die on. You see, if Jesus was not fully God in the flesh, it would have been sinful for Jesus while he was on earth to receive worship, which he did.

or to call himself the I am, which he did, or to claim the authority to forgive sins, which he did, or to call himself the Lord of the Sabbath, which he did, or to claim to be the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven, which he did.

So when Jesus emptied himself, we know that it wasn't an emptying of his divine nature. Rather, Jesus emptied himself of the glory that his divine nature warrants.

Another way to say it is that Jesus emptied himself of the glory of his high status. We know this because at the end of his earthly ministry, Jesus prayed this.

[19:49] This is in John 17, 5. Jesus said, And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed.

Jesus had glory for all of eternity in the presence of the Father before coming to earth. But that's jumping ahead a little. Right now, we're following Christ's downward arc in the upside-down bell curve.

But you might notice it's worth highlighting that Christ wasn't humbled by anyone else. He humbled himself. Listen to the action words of Jesus all the way through.

He emptied himself. He took the form of a servant. He humbled himself. He became obedient.

These are intentional, willing actions. They weren't done to him.

He humbled himself. And Christ's humble actions are not outward only, but they reveal who he is, gentle and lowly, humble in heart.

[21:00] And after living this humble, perfectly obedient life, Christ died. And he died a criminal's death for the sake of others. And it's here that Jesus has arrived at the lowest point of his upside-down bell curve journey.

Verse 8 says that he became obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. A criminal's death.

Why did Christ stoop so low? Why has the Lord Jesus chosen this path? What we would call so far a riches-to-rags story. Why would he choose this journey?

Well, Paul explains it to us plainly in a different letter. In the second letter to the Corinthians, Paul writes this. Here, verse, chapter 8, verse 9.

For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor so that you, by his poverty, might become rich.

[22:17] Do you hear it? Jesus was rich and became poor for your sake. Because of his great love, he left heaven where he lacked nothing.

And he clothed himself in rags, lowly to the point of death. Before being exalted by his Father to his rightful place once again in glory.

And because of our union with Christ, his riches-to-rags story becomes our rags-to-riches story.

And no, not physical riches, but being spiritually rich. Having everlasting life with God.

What more would we want? That is of infinitely higher value. And make no mistake, before the grace of God changes us, our starting point, spiritually speaking, is rags.

[23:18] More specifically, dead in sin. That is our starting point. But by God's grace, through faith in Jesus, our Savior, we become one with him.

He rescues us from our low status as condemned sinner. Christ starts very high and stoops way down low to where we are and then unites us to himself.

And then as Ephesians 2 tells us, God raises us up with Christ and seats us with him in the heavenly places. There is no better story arc than this.

This is Christ's humility. And it's all for our sake. Remember, verses 1 through 4 that we studied last week answered the question, how do followers of Jesus exercise humility?

humility. And again, verses 5 through 11 tells us why do followers of Jesus exercise humility? So I'll ask, why were we told back in verse 3 to do nothing from selfish ambition or vain conceit?

[24 : 35] Because that follows Jesus' example. That's what Jesus did. Why were we told back in verse 3 to treat others more significant than yourselves? Because that's what Jesus did.

why were we told back in verse 4 to look out not only to our own interests but also to the interests of others? Because that's what Jesus did. If you want to know what humility looks like, look to Jesus. He joyfully pursues our salvation at great cost to himself. The mind of Christ teaches us to define humility humility in this way.

Humility is being at peace knowing that our loving actions toward others may result in a lopsided unfair exchange.

I'll say that again. Humility is being at peace knowing that our loving actions will result in a lopsided unfair exchange. Why do I say that?

[25 : 38] Look at Christ. the innocent Christ received the wrath of God and the redeemed sinner received forgiveness, righteousness, and eternal life with God.

But the Father loves the Son and he vindicates him big time. Verses 9 through 11.

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.

Christ died for his beloved people but he rose again and he is now seated at the right hand of the Father in glory. We can rejoice in Christ our Savior's vindication and exaltation.

That is a reason to celebrate in worship. I want to read verses 10 and 11 again. 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.

[27 : 06] Now one final note here. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit Paul has just used very specific language of Jesus. Language that cannot and must not be used of anyone but God.

These words cannot be applied to anyone but God. Keep your bookmark in Philippians 2 but we're going to jump back in our Bibles hundreds and hundreds of years earlier.

You see God through the prophet Isaiah tells Israel to turn only to him and not to the false gods that cannot save.

And more than that God tells all the ends of the earth that only he the one true God can save.

So with that let's turn to Isaiah chapter 45. I'm going to read verses 22 and 23. Catch this language of God in Isaiah 45.

[28 : 11] Verse 22 says this Turn to me and be saved all the ends of the earth for I am God and there is no other. By myself I have sworn from my mouth has gone out in righteousness a word that shall not return.

To me every knee shall bow every tongue shall swear allegiance. Did you hear that language?

Do you catch what Paul just did here in Philippians 2? Paul is a servant of the one true God a Hebrew of Hebrews well acquainted with the scriptures and he has no problem taking these words in Isaiah 45 and shining them on Jesus.

Every knee that bows to Christ every tongue that confesses that Jesus Christ is Lord is to bow to God. It is to swear allegiance to God and that brings honor to the Father.

In fact all who honor the Son bring honor to the Father. So what we read in Philippians 2 verses 6 through 9 has happened.

[29 : 32] Jesus did humbly descend from his glorious throne in heaven took on flesh was perfectly obedient to the Father all the way to the point of his atoning death and God raised him up alive now and forever in glory.

And what we read in verses 10 and 11 will happen. Every knee will eventually bow to Christ.

Every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. But not everyone will do so joyfully.

There are many many who will not bow or confess until judgment. And that tragically will not result in salvation.

Church, this should cause two reactions within us. It should spark humble worship to him who has saved us and it should also spur us to action to share the gospel.

[30 : 43] have the humble mind of Christ. Focus on the significant souls of those around you. Look out for the eternal interest of others.

Do this by sharing the gospel because that is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes. This is our desire for everyone that they join us in our worship and our confession to Christ the King.

It is our desire that they will join us as we sing these words from the great hymn. When Christ shall come with shout of acclamation and take me home, what joy shall fill my heart.

then I shall bow in humble adoration and there proclaim my God how great thou art.

Let's pray. Father, we have much to be thankful for this morning. We are thankful for life.

[32 : 02] We are thankful for your word. We are thankful that your Holy Spirit continues to do the wondrous work of causing us to be born again, having faith in our Lord Jesus for all that he has done.

We thank you that we were able to see in your word that Christ being fully God chose to humbly take on flesh, live an obedient life perfectly to die in our place and that he is seated at your right hand in glory.

we thank you for the time this morning that we can worship your holy name. And Father, would you give us a spirit of boldness as we live this life as ambassadors for the glory of Jesus, that we may live humbly as Christ did and that we may have no other standing except his righteousness.

Father, we thank you for all of this. In Jesus' name. Amen.