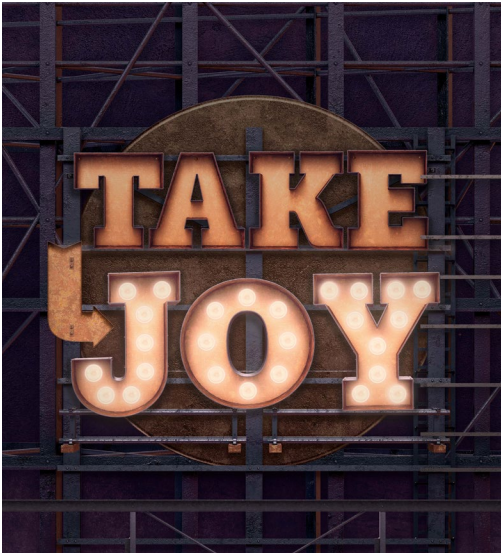




Sermon Growth Guide

January 29, 2023

Jesus Is Lord



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Take Joy - Jesus is Lord

Philippians 2:1-18

Key Verse: Philippians 2:10-11 “That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

Big Idea: Jesus is Lord. Joy is discovered along the path of humility and acknowledging His lordship over everything.

Foundations

What does the pathway of power look like? How might one find their way to the top of the heap? The world would teach us that it's by might and exercising power in order to gain the upper hand.

When it comes to holding the trump card of power, God is the ultimate source. And Jesus, being in His very nature God, could have come as an obvious omnipotent tyrant, ready to wield lightning bolts at any moment.

Nevertheless, when the time came for Him, Jesus didn't remain up and away, exalted and aloof. Jesus left His heavenly home and came down. God became flesh, not to be served by those who dwelt among Him, but to serve them wholly—even unto death. Jesus humbled Himself, made Himself nothing and became the ultimate sacrificial servant for those He loved. In doing so, God raised Him out of the grave and exalted Him to the highest place.

Jesus shows that the way up is to come down. The high way is found by going low. Ultimate triumph is gained through a life offered in humility, obedience and self-sacrifice.

Understanding God's Word

Read together Philippians 2:1-4. What are the preconditions that Paul raises at the beginning of this passage? Why are these significant? Why do you think he's raising them to the church in Philippi at this time?

Read Philippians 2:5-11. What word or phrase in this section seems to surprise you or even catch you off guard? Discuss why that is as a group.

Applying God's Word

Check out verse 14 and consider your life. Where are you tempted to succumb to complaining or arguing? Where might you invite the Spirit of God to show you a different way?

Witnessing God's Word

Share these areas of struggle with your group, taking time to pray for one another.

What was your first job? Mine was Peter Piper Pizza. When I was 16, I worked at Peter Piper Pizza down next to the old Sears in Southgate. I made minimum wage and learned a lot, mostly about humility. Scraping old cheese off 150 pizza pans at 10 o'clock at night using the three-sink method can be humbling. Especially when your manager finds one dirty pan and says, "Do them all again." It's hard to get all that cheese off. But humility is a good thing. It was not celebrated in Roman or Greek literature. It was a liability in most cultures, and it's considered a liability in ours. But under Jesus, in the way of Jesus, humility is a virtue.

What if the way up is down? What if our natural order of priorities (Me, Others, God—I think that's our natural order of things), what if our natural order is upside down and the actual order is God, Others, Me? "Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up" (James 4:10). The first part of that is something we do; the second part is something God does, something we have done to us, for us. We are active in the first and passive in the second. As Jesus said multiple times, "For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted" (Luke 14:11). It's the way of Jesus.

There are Scriptures before which all preachers tremble. I tremble a little before all Scriptures! But today we have Philippians 2, one of the most beautiful, profound, theologically rich, philosophically inspiring, debated, discussed and celebrated texts in all the Bible. You could study this for the rest of your life and not plumb the depths. I have about 20 minutes to say a little something. The really remarkable bit is what we call the Christ Hymn, verses 6-11. Most scholars agree Paul is quoting a song here. To make the point that we should be humble as Christ was humble, Paul drops in a praise song. Think about that. Here's this song written by some

worship leader, that the churches had learned to sing—maybe Paul had sung it in the church at Philippi and that's why he could quote it as a reminder to them—and in God's amazing workings, a praise leader writes a praise song that gets quoted in a letter that becomes Holy Scripture, the inspired Word of God. It matters what we sing, and the inspiration of Scripture is truly amazing. But also, if the church was singing this... Listen, people argue that Christians made up the idea that Jesus was divine and added it in much later to give authority to the moral teachings of Jesus. Nuts to that. Paul wrote this letter less than 30 years after Jesus and he quotes a song the church is already singing, so much it can be cited as common Christian belief! And what does it say? It says Jesus of Nazareth is God Almighty come in the flesh to save humanity and all the fallen world. It says **Jesus Is Lord**.

Paul is talking to the church about unity. The single-mindedness, mission unity of the church is what Paul says will make his joy complete. "Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind" (Philippians 2:1-2). Not always easy, is it? It's hard in the best of Christian communities to hold together through disagreements and misunderstandings. How will they do it? Paul says, above all, think of others more than yourself. "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others" (Philippians 2:3-4). God, Others, Me. Humble yourself to be lifted up. In fact, he says, just like Jesus. Just like Jesus did. Just like we sing about Jesus.

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And what did the church sing about Jesus? What is it that the church believed so strongly, so deeply, so universally that it sprang from the lips of the worshiping community? What was the church possibly singing in Philippi in 49 AD when Paul came? What were Lydia and the women in her prayer meeting by the river already singing just 15 years after the resurrection of Christ? What is the faith of the church about Jesus? Think like Jesus, “Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness” (Philippians 2:6-7). Jesus, a man many in these communities would still remember seeing in person walking around, Jesus was “in very nature God.” This man is also God. Jesus preexisted with God eternally. But this Jesus went on a rescue mission. In the event of the incarnation, Christmas, Jesus in His own mindset “did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage.” He didn’t cling to the glory of divinity, but instead stepped down out of heaven. He “made himself nothing.” He emptied Himself out, it says. Theologians have wrestled with this for 2,000 years. Bottom line: He didn’t stop being God, but He set aside the outward glories of divinity (otherwise He would have walked around with His face shining like the sun, like Peter, James and John witnessed in His transfiguration) and He drew into Himself the nature of humanity. He drew into Himself human nature, Himself being God. This is a mystery. Jesus is fully God and fully human at one and the same time.

What does that mean? It means God became one of us so that we could be one with God. No other religion claims anything close. God didn’t send a map or a method; God sent a man—God became a man. Jesus did not consider His divinity something to cling to over

the needs of fallen humanity but took to Himself our human condition. “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14). This is a Christmas passage today. God, in Jesus, became like us in every way. “For this reason he had to be made like them, fully human in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people” (Hebrews 2:17). “For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin” (Hebrews 4:15). In Jesus, God became just like us, with us, one of us, to save us. He became vulnerable. That word comes from the Latin *vulnus*, meaning wound. He became woundable, hurttable, suffering. Why? It’s the only way He could die for us, in our place.

“And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death— even death on a cross!” (Philippians 2:8). On the Cross, having committed no sin of His own, all our sin was put on Him, imputed to Him, as His righteousness would be imputed to us. He bore our sins. This is why we hear Jesus cry out on the cross, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Matthew 27:46). Do you understand? Because in that moment, the sinless Savior took on the sinfulness of all humanity. “God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Corinthians 5:21). In this state, He died to pay for all that sin—an atoning sacrifice. In this state, He went down to death, down to hell, lower than any of us will ever go. Imagine the worst sinner. My son, Peter, had an exercise in high school while reading Dante’s *Inferno*. He was asked to describe a wrongdoer and imagine

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a punishment worthy of their crime. Imagine the worst sinner in Hell. Jesus is 6 billion times the sinner, because he has taken on the debt of 6 billion sinful souls. More like 12 billion, and however many more there are to come.

Even under there, the truth could not change. Even under there, Jesus was the obedient Son. Billions of fathoms below in layers of sin and death, Jesus is Lord. Up He rose again. Gathering His body in the tomb, up He rose further. Meeting with His disciples and teaching in His resurrection body for 40 days, up He rose again. “Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Philippians 2:9-11). He went where you will never have to go. He is now where you will one day be. Jesus. No one has ever descended lower. No one will ever rise higher. That’s the song we sing.

Paul says, try that. Try the Jesus way. Instead of selfish ambition and vain conceit. That’s an interesting term, “vain conceit.” It’s a word that means “empty glory.” We fill our lives with vanities that are ultimately empty. Jesus emptied Himself in humble obedience and rose to fullness of glory—and that for us. Instead of selfishness, what if you followed Jesus into a new way of life? God, Others, Self. You might just find you shine like stars. “Do everything without grumbling or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, ‘children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation.’ Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky as you hold firmly to the word of life” (Philippians 2:14-16). You will shine like light from a star as you hold firmly and hold forth the word of life. Light and Life. Remember where we started? What if God gathered 3,000 citizens

of heaven and said, “You’ll be living in Colorado Springs in 2023. Make the most of it. Let that city see more of Jesus by the end of the year. Be light. Hold forth life.” Should you or I ever happen to find ourselves in the midst of a warped and crooked generation, this just may be a good strategy.

But what cause for joy? How do we **Take Joy**? Well, we’ve set aside a few causes of misery. Chasing after empty things, selfish ambition and vain conceit that only leave us empty and sad and lonely. A call to greater community, love and communion with God and others. Paul says it would complete his joy, make his joy full and mature, if he heard of the church living together like that. But there is greater joy still. Jesus is Lord. Jesus is Lord. Jesus has gone lower than you or I will ever go. No matter how low you feel, Jesus has been down lower than where you are now. Down there, Jesus was still Lord. Jesus rose higher. With Him all who call on Him will rise. He is already there, and He calls us toward Him—the upward call—and all who call on Him in faith know already a taste of the heaven to come.

God gave Him the name above all names. This name is all authority. To this One, all knees will bow. All will kneel. Will you drop to your knees in awestruck praise or be driven to your knees, forced to acknowledge the Lord you denied? All will kneel. Some drop, some are driven. Sing the song of Jesus now, taste the joy now, until that song rises in all creation and the glory of the Lord fills the earth as the water fills the seas. “So you too should be glad and rejoice with me” (Philippians 2:18). Let’s pray together once again. Have you seen Jesus this morning in a new light? Follow me in prayer: *“Lord Jesus Christ, You are the Lord, the more I deny that the more I suffer, the more I believe that the more I thrive, You are my Savior, You are my Lord, You are the Lord forever and ever. Amen.”*

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