

Sermon Text: Philipians 2:5-11

"Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, 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, and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things in earth and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

(prayer)

Dear Father, graciously send forth your Holy Spirit, that by Your Word we may be strengthened and sustained in true faith towards You and in Christian love for one another. This we ask in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, Amen.

Beloved of God,

In a few days, the Lord willing, we shall come together once again for worship service on Good Friday. On that day we shall make our way to Calvary.

There as we look upon the great work which God performed in Christ Jesus, our eyes are first cast down in grief and shame, but then they rise up to the throne of grace in heaven. First we see our dear Redeemer in the depths of humility for us, then in the height of glory for us.

On this, the threshold of Holy Week, let us consider:

"THE TWO STATES OF CHRIST'S WORK OF REDEMPTION FOR US"

Firstly: In the state of humiliation and  
Secondly, in the state of exaltation.

In the first two verses of the first chapter of John we read:

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made."

and in the 14th verse of the same chapter, we read:

"And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the Only-begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth."

And in Colossians 2:9 we read:

"...in Him (Christ) dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead  
bodily

These Scriptures clearly reveal to all that from eternity Christ Jesus is God and possesses the divine nature. Furthermore, from these passages, as well as the testimony of numerous other passages of Scripture and the miracles which Jesus performed; turning water to wine, restoring sight to the blind and hearing to the deaf, the complete healing of the ten lepers, the feeding of the 5000, the raising of Lazarus from the dead, and many, many more; we know that during His entire sojourn in the flesh, Christ Jesus never once laid aside His divine nature. He was, indeed, true God and true man.

So when did Christ's humiliation begin?

Contrary to the teaching of the Reformed and Catholic churches, Christ's humiliation did not consist with His assuming human nature. If this were so, Christ would have had to shed that human nature in the state of His exaltation and we know from God's Word that the same Christ Jesus that lived and died for us is ascended to the right hand of the Father, where He makes intercession for us.

No, Christ's humiliation began when He, the incarnate Son of God, humbled Himself, voluntarily relinquishing being seen by man in the form of God and "made Himself of no reputation" by refraining from the full exercise of His divine majesty and power as His office as the Servant of God and Redeemer of man demanded.

In other words, Christ's humiliation does not consist in His becoming man, but rather in voluntarily becoming a lowly man and in the interest of His work of Redemption, voluntarily limiting the use of His divine power.

He COULD have appeared in all His divine majesty and glory, as Lord and King, but if Christ had appeared in the form of God, obliging all men everywhere to exclaim, "There is God, walking on earth!", His parents and relatives, the Jews, the high priests and their servants, Pilate and his mercenaries, would have fled in consternation from His presence. He could not have been made under the Law and suffered and died for us.

Rather, it was only on certain occasions, in the wholly selfless interest of His divine mission of service to God and man, that He let some of His divine power and glory shine through, namely when he performed His miracles.

No, unlike earthly kings, who delight in making great show of their power and glory, Christ emptied Himself.

That is, He presented Himself, not as the God-Man, but as an ordinary man, and this to such a degree that the public regarded Christ, in spite of His many miracles, as John the Baptist, Elias, Jeremias, or one of the Prophets.

If Jesus Christ had not emptied Himself, thus, but had used His equality with God as He did on the Mount of Transfiguration, He would not have been seen as an ordinary man, but would have been hailed as the God-Man.

However, to be lauded and hailed as the God-Man was not His purpose on earth. For Christ did not come to be served by man, but to serve man and to give His innocent life's blood for him.

As we read in Matthew 20:28,

"Even as the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister and to give His life a ransom for many."

Yes, sinless Christ Jesus, true God and true man, took upon Himself the form of a servant and being found in the fashion of man, with all the weakness and frailties of man, lived an earthly life like unto all other men.

In the face of all the trials and temptations of earthly life, He did not sin, but kept the Law perfectly in our stead.

Sinless though He was, He was brought before the Roman authorities of His day as a criminal.

Close your eyes.

See the soldiers beat Him and spit upon Him.

See the crown of thorns forced into His skull.

See Him carry the heavy cross upon which He is to be crucified through streets crowded with hateful, jeering people, the very people He came to save.

And He suffers not only in His body, but also in His spirit.

For He takes the sins of the whole world, your sins and mine upon Himself and He is utterly forsaken, abandoned by God, on account of our sins.

Yet through all His suffering and near death, Jesus still trusts in the Father, and fulfills His mission, becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

So that through His wrestling with the power of the devil, His facing the horror of death and bearing within Himself the agonies of the damned, the whole world might be saved from sin and eternal punishment in hell.

And all this He did, not because of any merit or worthiness on our part, (for we indeed deserve nothing but punishment on account of our many sins,) but He did it because He was obedient to the Good and Gracious Will of the Father.

Christ humiliation, then, designated by Scripture in Hebrews 5:7 as "the days of His flesh", include all the events of His earthly life and reach its culmination with His burial.

But this is not the end of the Gospel Story, for Christ's state of humiliation is followed by His exaltation by the Father.

Yes, God the Father raised Christ up from the dead, therewith placing His seal of approval upon Christ's work of full atonement for sin, and the complete reconciliation of the whole world to God.

This gracious reconciliation is clearly taught in Romans 4:25 where we read that Christ,

"... was delivered for our offenses and was raised again for our justification."

Christ's resurrection, therefore, took place as an actual absolution from sin.

For as God the Father punished our sins in Christ, upon whom He laid them and to whom He imputed them, as our Bondsman, so the Father also, by the act of raising Christ from the dead, absolved Him from our sins imputed to Him, and so The father absolves also us in Christ.

And more, for after showing Himself to His disciples, our Lord Jesus ascended into heaven, not as to a place of rest, but in His exalted humanity He is ascended and enthroned at the right hand of the Father.

Ephesians 1:20-23 tells us that God

"...raised Him from the dead and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come; and hath put all things under His feet."

There according to His human nature, He has laid aside the form of the servant and makes full and uninterrupted use of His power and majesty. He does not rest, but is active in His dominion as our Prophet, Priest and King.

So exalted is The Son of God, that now and forevermore at His Holy name, all Angels, all human beings, all fallen spirits, and all the damned must bow before Him and confess His Lordship, willingly or unwillingly.

Thus did God Himself place the stamp and seal of His approval upon the work of redemption, for which the Son of God was made man and for which the incarnate Lord made of Himself no reputation.

What a comfort to all who feel the sting of the Law! You are washed in the blood of the Lamb! Receive Him in faith as your Savior!

And what a source of strength to those who are in distress this day!

For our Lord is not in heaven wringing His hands, as though He is helpless to provide for us, helpless to protect us, or helpless to sustain us in our struggles in this life. Turn to Him, Jesus your Lord and King in the day of trouble and He will deliver you. You have His own promise on that.

On this Palm Sunday and on every day, let us give thanks to God our King for His selfless sacrifice of love.

May His love be for us the foundation of our salvation and may we be of this same mind-set and attitude which was in Christ Jesus, that we live our lives in humble obedience to the Father and in selfless loving service to our fellow man. Amen.

And now, may the peace of God, the Love of Christ and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you always. Amen.