

**First Baptist Church, Granite Falls, MN**  
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**January 15, 2012**

**Introduction**<sup>1</sup>

Do you know why we are here this morning? What I mean is, do you know why we are here *this* morning? Why not Saturday morning? Why not Monday morning? Why are we here on *Sunday*?

The answer is that from the earliest days of the church, Christians gathered to worship on Sunday because that was the day Jesus rose from the dead. All four gospel writers – Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John – were very clear about this. It was the day after the Sabbath, on the first day of the week, that Jesus was resurrected.

The story of Jesus Christ did not end in humiliation and shame when he died on the cross. No! Not only did Jesus rise from the dead, but forty days later, he ascended into heaven. But even this is not the end of his story. There is more, so much more to come.

This is one reason why, in our study of Paul's letter to the Philippians, we do not hear the story of Jesus Christ end with him in the tomb. This morning you are going to hear the rest of the story that we started last Sunday – and you are going to hear what makes the rest of the story so important in this part of Paul's letter:

Philippians 2:5-11 5 Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, 6 who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. 9 Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, 10 so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Remember what Paul is saying here. He's not suddenly changing the subject when he starts talking about Jesus Christ being exalted. He's still trying to tell the Philippian Christians that they should have the mind of Christ – that they should be humbly serving one another in perfect unity to live lives worthy of the gospel of Christ.

But what does the exaltation of Jesus Christ have to do with that? How does it help us have the mind of Christ? What is it about the exaltation of Jesus Christ that Paul thinks will persuade us to think like Christ did?

That is what I want to show you this morning. But before we rush to the finish line, let's slow down and pay attention to what Paul is saying here. I am going to preach this sermon in three parts. First, I am going to talk just about the exaltation of Jesus Christ, because I want you to see just how great it is. Then I am going to talk about the *reason* Jesus Christ is so highly exalted. And then, after you see that, I want to draw out the *lesson for us* in all this – the message that I think Paul is trying to get across with vv. 9-11.

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## Exposition

### **I. The Exaltation of Jesus Christ**

So first, let's look at these four verses to see just what God has done for his Son since he humbled himself so low. For the next few minutes we're going to look at everything that Paul says in these verses except for one little word – the word “therefore” at the very beginning of v. 9. I'm going to come back to that word “therefore” in a few minutes, because it is the link that joins the two parts of this passage together – the first part about Christ's humiliation, which we heard last week, and the second part, which we are going to look at now.

Here in this second part of Christ's story, v. 9 tells us what God has already done for Jesus since that day he died on the cross, and vv. 10-11 tells us what is still in store for Jesus. What is it that God has already done for Jesus? “God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name!”

Do you realize what this means? The Christians in Philippi do. It means more to them than you may know. Let me tell you about it.

Remember what I told you about Philippi being a Roman Colony? Well, I only told you part of the story. The part I told you was that the Roman Emperor Octavian constituted Philippi as a Roman Colony to commemorate the Battle of Philippi, the final battle of the Roman Civil War. What I didn't tell you was how he changed the name of the city.

All of this happened several decades before Jesus was born. When Octavian became emperor, he renamed the city after his daughter – it had originally been named Philippi after Alexander the Great's father, Philip, but now he named it *Colonia Iulia Philippensis*. But now comes the best part. Just three years later, he added one word to that name – *Augusta* – *Colonia Iulia Augusta Philippensis*.

Do you know why he added that to the name? He did it because that was the year his own name changed once again. Already his name had been changed to Julius Caesar, but now he was Julius Caesar *Augustus*. That was his new title – *Augustus*. Do you know how important that one little word was?

The Philippian Christians did. It meant “revered one!” The Roman senate gave Julius Caesar that title when they wanted him to be their ruler. They couldn't call him a king since they were a republic, so they figured out a way to call him something even better! “Revered one!” *Augustus*! This was a title with religious significance – it meant that now Julius Caesar had power over everyone. It meant that he was to be revered by everyone. It meant that the entire empire was below him; nobody could possibly be over him.

And when he died, the Roman Senate declared him to be a god, to be worshiped by the Romans, and just six years later, they renamed the eighth month of the year *Augustus*. Yes, August! His name lives with us to this day.

Every Roman emperor that followed him bore that title *Augustus*. Every Roman knew what it meant. Certainly the Christians Paul is writing to in Philippi know what it means. They can't get away from it. It is part of the name of their city!

I think that's why Paul says what he does here in v. 9. He didn't have to say it this way. He could have said, "God has seated him at his right hand." He could have said, "God has seated him in the heavens." He could have even just said, "God has highly exalted him." But no, Paul says it this way: "God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name!"

You could get killed for saying that in Paul's day. As far as the Romans were concerned, there was no name in heaven or on earth above the name of the Roman Emperor – he bore the title *Augustus!* When they met each other in the street, they even greeted each other by saying, "Caesar is Lord!" The Philippian Christians heard it every day. The people in that city expected them to say it, too.

But Paul says, no! Jesus is higher than Caesar, higher than any earthly emperor, king, queen, or other ruler who has ever lived or will live on this earth, higher even than the angels! Not even the name of God is above his name, because Jesus *is* God, with the Father and the Holy Spirit. Caesar isn't Lord, *Jesus* is!

Just look at what Paul says next, in vv. 10-11. Paul says that the reason God "has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name," is:

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

So that *every* knee should bow! Every knee in heaven, even the knees of angels who are so mighty that if you saw one right now you would think he were God himself, and throw yourself down and worship him until he told you to stop. They bow the knee to Jesus! And every knee on earth – from the highest rulers to the lowest beggar – will bow the knee to Jesus, too, just as the knee of every demon and condemned prisoner of hell will be required to bow to him, and every tongue confess not that *Caesar* is Lord, not that *anyone* else is Lord, but *only Jesus Christ* is Lord.

And when they do, it will be to the glory of God the Father, Paul says at the end of v. 11. He will bask in the glory of begetting his magnificent Son, that great Lord over all, that one who once humbled himself so low that he became a servant, so low that he became a man, so low that he bore the humiliation and shame and degradation and insults and pain and suffering of death on that cruel cross in Jerusalem. The glory of the Almighty Father will shine brighter than the sun when that day comes.

But it hasn't happened yet. Satan is still the ruler of this world, Paul says in 2 Corinthians 4:4. Jesus is not yet on the throne God has promised him in Jerusalem. One day he will come in power and glory, and he will reign over his kingdom here on earth. And finally, Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 15:24-25:

1 Co 15:24-25 24 Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. 25 For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet.

Oh, what a day that will be! On that great day, Jesus will sit on the great white judgment throne:

Romans 14:10-11 10 . . . For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God; 11 for it is written, “As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God.”

Today, Jesus waits for that day. Today, Jesus sits at the right hand of his Father’s throne in heaven, and he says, “The one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I also conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne” (Rev 3:21).

But all Jesus is waiting for is to be recognized for who he already is. Jesus has already been highly exalted and has received the name that is above every name. Jesus is Lord! Though the world denies it, we know it to be true. And for nearly 2,000 years Christians have proclaimed it, even if it cost them their very lives, because Jesus – and Jesus *alone* – is the supreme Lord of the universe, the *Master* of all creation, *God himself!*

But what does this have to do with Paul’s main point here – that we should have the mind of Christ who humbled himself and became an obedient servant? To answer that question, we need to go back to that word I skipped over at the beginning of v. 9 – that word “therefore.”

## II. The Reason Jesus Christ is Exalted

I told you I’d come back to that word. Remember what I said about that word “therefore?” I said it is the link that joins the two parts of this passage together – the first part about Christ’s humiliation in vv. 5-8, which we heard last week, and the second part in vv. 9-11, which we are looking at now. By saying, “Therefore,” Paul is saying that it is *because* of what Jesus did in vv. 5-8 that he has been exalted the way he has – and it is because of what Jesus did in vv. 5-8 that every knee will bow before him at the judgment on the last day.

In other words, this is the reward Jesus has received for becoming a humble, obedient servant. Long ago, God proclaimed through the prophet Isaiah that this would be his reward:

Isaiah 53:12 Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors.

Jesus told his disciples, “For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again” (Joh 10:17). And in Hebrews we read that the reason Jesus has been “crowned with glory and honor” is “because of the suffering of death” (Heb 2:9b).

Now imagine you’re a Christian in Philippi hearing Paul’s letter for the first time. Imagine you’re one of those who has been grumbling and arguing with some of the other Christians there. You haven’t been humbling yourself; you certainly haven’t been a servant to those Christians you’re upset with. Or perhaps you are one who hasn’t really

been grumbling or arguing, but you are so upset with those who *have* been grumbling and arguing that you, too, have stopped acting like a servant to *them*.

What is it that you are after? We all know what it is. It is the pleasure of stroking your own pride, the horrid, ugly, shameful pleasure that we get from holding ourselves aloof from others. There is no honor in it, no true joy, no enduring reward. It is the very thing that leads to death in this world.

But the worldly person knows no other way. He knows no other joy. The worldly person lives only for this world. The worldly person does not live for tomorrow, for heaven, for eternity. The worldly mind is the very opposite of the mind of Jesus Christ.

And that is exactly what Paul is driving home, here. If you are refusing to humble yourself, if you are refusing to serve a brother or sister in Christ, then you don't have the mind of Christ. You are living only for yourself, only for this lifetime, only for the days between this day and the day you die. You aren't living for eternity.

But if you have the mind of Christ, you won't think that way at all. You will humble yourself because you live not for yourself but for God and for his children. You will serve God and his children instead of serving yourself. You will be an obedient servant of God, giving, giving, giving of yourself as you serve, even to the point of death, because you live not for this life but for the next.

### **III. The Lesson for Us in Jesus Christ's Exaltation**

And that is the lesson for us in Jesus Christ's exaltation, because just as he received a reward for being a humble servant, you and I will receive a reward for being humble servants, too.

That may sound strange to some of you. You might think it is just plain selfish to serve somebody so that you will receive a reward. After all, if I serve you so that I get a reward, aren't I really serving you for what I can get out of it?

Yet over and over in the Bible God encourages us to work for our eternal reward. Let me give you just one example. Jesus taught:

Luke 6:32-36 32 If you love those who love you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. 33 And if you do good to those who do good to you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. 34 And if you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to get back the same amount. 35 But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return, and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, for he is kind to the ungrateful and the evil. 36 Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful.

What Jesus is saying is that if you only love those who love you, there's no reward in it. Even sinners love those who love them. If you want a reward in heaven, then you need to love your enemies.

So it is good, it is right, it is God's holy and wise plan that we should work for our reward in heaven. We should not shy away from it. We should not feel ashamed to think about it. We should rejoice and eagerly reach for this reward God has promised us.

But still, how can we do this without being selfish? How can we serve one another like this and still be sincere? I think the answer is easy.

The answer is right here in our passage this morning. Remember what the ultimate purpose of Jesus Christ's own reward is? The reason is at the end of v. 11 – it is “to the glory of God the Father.”

Jesus worked for his reward not just for his own glory, but for the glory of his Father. When the time had come for him to be betrayed, Jesus “lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, ‘Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you’” (Joh 17:1). He wouldn't, he couldn't, have one without the other. Unless he could glorify his Father, his own glorification would have meant nothing to him.

So it is with us. Unless we can glorify our God, our own glorification means nothing. Unless our reward means glory to him, it is no reward at all. The only reward that is worth working for is the reward that the elders have in Revelation 4:10-11:

Revelation 4:10-11 10 . . . They cast their crowns before the throne, saying, 11 “Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created.”

So this morning, as the apostle Paul challenges us to have the mind of Christ, to humble ourselves and serve one another for the reward that has been set before us, remember that the reward you are working for is the greatest reward you could ever hope for – to cast your crown before his throne and give him all the glory for what he did in you and through you during your lifetime here on this earth. If you think this way, it is impossible to be selfish, because what you care about more than anything is the glory of your Lord. Your reward is to enter into his reward.

And suddenly, every one of your brothers and sisters in Christ matters to you. Every one of them is someone who will dance with you before the Lord. Is it selfish to want you to join me in the dance?

No! This is the mind of Christ. When Jesus prayed that prayer in John 17, he prayed, “Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world” (Joh 17:24).

Do you hear what I'm saying? If you are, then right now your heart is burning within you. You want this. You want it more than anything. You want to have this mind of Christ, and humbly serve one another in perfect unity. How could anything get in your way?

But it is for good reason that Paul has said all that he has here in Philippians 2:5-11. Paul hasn't just told about the reward Christ received. He started by talking about the tremendous sacrifice he made – the tremendous sacrifice of humbling himself, of letting go of more than we have ever imagined, of lowering himself farther than we ever could,

of suffering worse than we ever will. Paul tells us all this because we aren't just supposed to serve one another when it's easy. It may cost you. It may cost you time. It may cost you money. But from day to day, it may simply cost you your pride.

We aren't just supposed to serve when it's comfortable, when it makes people smile, when it makes people like us. We're supposed to serve when it hurts.

You're not just supposed to serve your brother or sister as long as they're being humble. You're supposed to serve them when they're being proud, stuck-up and treating you like dirt. "Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves" (Php 2:3).

You're not just supposed to serve your brother or sister as long as they're being nice to you. You're supposed to serve them when they're being mean:

Luke 6:27-31 27 "But I say to you who hear, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, 28 bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. 29 To one who strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also, and from one who takes away your cloak do not withhold your tunic either. 30 Give to everyone who begs from you, and from one who takes away your goods do not demand them back. 31 And as you wish that others would do to you, do so to them.

You're not just supposed to serve your brother or sister as long as they're saying nice things about you to other people. You're supposed to serve them when they're gossiping about you. "Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins. Show hospitality to one another without grumbling." (1 Pet 4:8-9).

You're not just supposed to serve your brother or sister as long as they're ministering in the kitchen or in prayer or in the choir – or anywhere else – the way you think they should. You're supposed to serve them when you think they should be doing things much differently:

Romans 15:1-3 1 We who are strong have an obligation to bear with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves. 2 Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to build him up. 3 For Christ did not please himself, but as it is written, "The reproaches of those who reproached you fell on me."

You're not just supposed to serve your brother or sister as long as they listen to you. You're supposed to serve them even when they throw away all your suggestions and even complain about them to other people:

2 Timothy 2:24-26 24 And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, 25 correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth, 26 and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will.

You're not just supposed to serve your brother or sister only when they've apologized to you for something they've done. You're supposed to serve them even when they never do. "Jesus said, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do'" (Luk 23:34).

And it may hurt. It hurts being a doormat and getting walked all over. If you live for this life only, you won't be willing to do it. You won't be a doormat for anybody. You'll stroke your pride for all the pitiful pleasure it will give you in the few years you have on this earth. But if you have the mind of Christ and live for the life to come, you will. Jesus Christ lowered himself to much lower than a doormat, and he did it without complaining because he was looking for his reward in heaven:

Hebrews 12:1-2 1 Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, 2 looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

This is the mind of Christ that we ought to have, Brothers and Sisters.

2 Corinthians 4:17-18 17 For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, 18 as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

When Paul wrote that to the church in Corinth, he was talking about physical pain. But the same principle applies to emotional pain, the pain of being disrespected by others, the pain of being ignored, the pain of being gossiped about. Have the mind of Christ. "Look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen." Look forward to the reward that you will receive in heaven, and pray that God will bring that difficult brother or sister into the same reward you hope for.

In the words of Jim Elliot, who gave his life to share the gospel with the native people of Ecuador, "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose."

### **Conclusion**

So as we gather here Sunday after Sunday, let us remember what happened that day Jesus rose from the grave. He entered into the reward he worked for. He went from the lowest of lows to the highest of highs.

Have that mind. Have the mind of Christ. Fix your sight upon the glory that is before you. Humble yourself to become an obedient servant even to your enemies. Some of them may stay your enemies, but some may join you in the dance of Christ's reward.

Let us have the mind of Christ!