

## Sermon – Humble Servant

(9/1/22) - SD

We have just celebrated Christmas - the coming of Jesus into the world as a baby at Bethlehem.

But - who is Jesus? What is the significance of what we have borne witness to?

This morning we are going to grapple with truths that are so great, so wonderful, that to fully understand them would blow our minds!!

If we can grasp something of the divine truth of the incarnation expressed in this passage from Philippians it should so affect us, that our lives will be changed radically!!

I am going to do my best

I want to start with verse 6 of our reading [can we have it on the screens, please]

*[Jesus] who, being in very nature God,  
did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;*

Let me read to you this verse from the Amplified Version of the Bible:

*who, although He existed in the form and unchanging essence of God [as One with Him, possessing the fullness of all the divine attributes—the entire nature of deity], did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped or asserted [as if He did not already possess it, or was afraid of losing it];*

Jesus is, always was and always will be, part of the divine Trinity - Father, Son and Holy Trinity - he is God in every way, with the nature, power, knowledge and character equal to the other persons of the Trinity. Being God was not something he had to attain or cling on to - it was his, he was it – divine, God.

Verse 7

*rather, he made himself nothing  
by taking the very nature of a servant,  
being made in human likeness.*

*but emptied Himself [without renouncing or diminishing His deity, but only temporarily giving up the outward expression of divine equality and His rightful dignity]*

Jesus laid aside the rights, the privileges, the glory, the authority, his omnipresence, his heavenly dwelling. He did not surrender them or hand them over to another, they were still his. But he voluntarily, of his own decision, laid them aside for a time and a purpose.

A poor illustration is the story of the Prince and the Pauper: in which a prince leaves the castle to become a commoner for a period of time. During that time, he doesn't have access to his money, his authority, or his army. The prince becomes poor and needs to work for food. He doesn't cease to be a prince, but he does set aside those privileges for a while.

*by assuming the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men [He became completely human but was without sin, being fully God and fully man].*

He did not come as a king - though he was a King. Nor did he come as one with great power - though all power was his. But came as a servant, the lowest of ranks in society, born as a helpless baby and laid in the animals' feeding trough. His arrival was just like any other human being - he was fully human (yet lost nothing of his divinity!)

He was 100% human and 100% God: We see that Jesus had both a human nature (he grew tired, ate, slept, walked, talked, etc.) and a divine nature (healed over distance, altered nature – water into wine, power over nature, power over sickness, power over death, etc.)

This concept has teased even the greatest of theologians - so don't worry if you can't get your minds around this mystery!

Verse 8

*And being found in appearance as a man,  
he humbled himself  
by becoming obedient to death –  
even death on a cross!*

As if his appearance as a human being was not enough, Jesus went even further:

He humbled himself - he had to grow and to learn, just like every other Jewish boy - Those who have had the joy of watching a young child learn to walk, learn to talk, develop a character of their own will know the wonder of those moments. Mary and Joseph were witnesses to Jesus growing up in just the same way. He even got a telling off when he went missing for three days after his Bar Mitzvah in the Temple in Jerusalem!

But he went even further than that -  
He became obedient to death, even death on a cross!

In the ancient world, gods did not die - but Jesus did.  
This was part of God's eternal rescue plan - Jesus knew what was ahead of him, yet in the Garden of Gethsemane prayed, "not my will but yours be done." He was obedient to His Father.  
And what a cruel death it was, not just physically but emotionally and spiritually - another deep mystery that we cannot fully explain, and which we will grapple with again when we come to Easter!

Who is Jesus? This is Jesus - God incarnate, fully God and fully man, born for us and for our salvation.

*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.*

This is Jesus now! Restored to the Father's right hand in glory and worthy of the worship, and submission of each and every one of us.

If we can but grasp an element of what the incarnation means, then surely we can do nothing other than submit to him in awe, wonder, adoration and service.

“The change of location of our Lord Jesus Christ 2000 years ago from Heaven to earth, from eternity to time, from a throne to a manger, from majesty to servanthood, from Deity to humanity is a move to which we can only respond with awe and worship.”

This inspired, paean of poetic praise proclaimed by St Paul concerning the nature of Jesus comes out of his concern for his fellow believers in Philippi (go back and read vv1-4)

*1 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, 2 then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. 3 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, 4 not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.*

He concludes with the words:

*In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:*

We will do well to ponder on these great verses and seek to allow God to change us into the likeness of Christ, who

laid aside his majesty  
became man,  
humbled himself,  
was obedient to his heavenly Father  
and gave himself for us.

God incarnate.

Our Saviour, Lord and King.