

Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

The Theology of Christmas

Scripture: Philippians 2:5-11

Code: 80-354

To put it mildly, Christmas is a little bit confusing to the watching world, I'm pretty sure. I never really get over that. Year after year I'm struck by the paradoxes of Christmas, the strange juxtaposition of Christianity and a kind of carnival mentality, the humility and poverty of the stable confused with the wealth and indulgence of selfishness and gift giving, the quietness of Bethlehem with the din of the shopping mall, the seriousness of the incarnation with the silliness of the party spirit and party attitude, the blinking colored lights juxtaposed with the star of heaven. Just a confusion designed certainly by the enemy of men's souls, cheap plastic toys mixed with the true gift of the wise men, angels confused with flying reindeer, an ox and an ass in a stable confused with a red nosed reindeer, of all things, the filth of the stable confused with the whiteness of fresh snow. And so it goes and you're familiar with all of that. Mary and Joseph and North Pole elves...kind of hard to look through this and see the reality.

But it reached epic proportions for me, this confusion, when I read an article written by a leader in the Episcopalian diocese of Los Angeles, a diocese, by the way, led by a lesbian woman who was recently appointed. And this representative of Episcopalianism wrote this. "There are few causes to which I am more passionately committed than that of Santa Claus. Santa Claus deserves not just any place in the church but the highest place of honor where he should be enthroned as the long bearded ancient of days, the divine and holy one whom we call God."

He's not done. "Santa Claus is God the Son...'You better watch out, you better not pout, Santa Claus is coming to town, he knows whether you've been bad or good, he slips into the secrets of the heart as easily as he slips down the chimney.' Santa Claus is God the Father, the creator of heaven and earth in whose hand is a pack bursting at its seams with the gifts of His creation. Santa Claus is God the Holy Spirit who comes with the sound of gentle laughter, with the shape like a bowl full of jelly. And he comes in the night to sow the seeds of good humor. Santa Claus indeed deserves the exalted and enthroned place in the church for he is God the Son, God the Father, and God the Holy Spirit. I've seen him in the toy store, I even saw him in his car on the freeway the other day. And when I saw him with his crazy beard and his baggy suit, I saw more than the seasonal merchant of cheap plastic toys, I saw no less than the triune God. I hope you can see him too."

Huh? I mean, have you ever heard anything more convoluted than that? Incredible. What chaos and what confusion, after all, what is Christmas about, what is the celebration of the birth of Christ really about? We could approach it from the standpoint of the Old Testament prophets, we could approach

it from the standpoint of Mary or Joseph. We could approach it from the standpoint of the angels or the shepherds or even the wise men who came later. We could approach it from the standpoint of the inn keeper. We could approach it from the standpoint of Herod who had a lot at stake in his own mind. But I want you to look at it from the view past the event that is given to us by the beloved Apostle Paul. So open your Bible to Philippians chapter 2...Philippians chapter 2. Here is the theology of Christmas, okay? The Theology of Christmas.

My intention today is to be straightforward and just tell the real story of the birth of Christ and have you make no mistake about its genuine significance. In Philippians chapter 2 verse 5 ends by identifying Christ Jesus. Then Christ Jesus becomes the theme of the next few verses. So let's listen as Paul writes. "Christ Jesus, who although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped or seized, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a slave and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. For this reason, also, God highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name so that at the name of Jesus, every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father."

If we just squeeze those verses together, it's pretty clear that we're talking about one who is God, that's how it starts, and is Lord, and that's how it ends. That's the real message of Christmas, that Jesus Christ is God and He is Lord.

But let's break that down a little bit and see the component parts. This paragraph really in some ways stands in unapproachable majesty. This is one of the pure jewels in the New Testament, its beauties, its depths are beyond human comprehension, and yet to understand it is necessary at least to the degree that is possible by the aid of the blessed Holy Spirit.

What this section explain to us is the condescension of the Son of God to come to earth, to die, and then to return in exaltation to glory. So again I say, it's the theology of Christmas, it tells us what happened from the divine side of the story. And I want to just give you five simple steps by which we can walk through this tremendous portion of Scripture. And we're just going to get a kind of a light view, I wish we could deep digger, but that would take weeks and weeks and weeks to do. But for this morning, we'll at least understand the reality of it, if not all of the potential elements that could be examined.

Five steps as God enters the world...five steps as Jesus comes to Bethlehem. Number one, He abandoned a sovereign position...He abandoned a sovereign position. Go back to verse 6 and this identifies His person, His nature, His character, His attributes in eternity before He came. In a word, His sovereign position. It says in verse 6 that He existed in the form of God thus He did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped or seized.

We're talking about Christ Jesus, who is identified at the end of verse 5. And this amazing statement captures His essential nature. Literally it reads this way, "He being in the form of God...He being in the form of God." Just take the word "being" for a moment. Being denotes the person's essential nature, essence, that which is inalienably unchangeably true about Him, that He possesses this nature as God. That's His being, that is who He is. This refers to His innate, unchangeable, unalterable essence, His nature is that of God.

It describes that part of a person which we all understand, His very being. It describes that part of a person that can't be changed, it is essential to His very existence and it always remains the same. For Jesus Christ, it is to say that He is in being God and that is unchangeable and unalterable. That is why we're instructed in the gospel of Matthew that His name was to be Emanuel which in Hebrew means "God with us," *EI* being the name or the word for God. He is God with us. He was God, He is God, He will always be God. "In the beginning," writes John, "was the Word, the Word was with God and the Word was God." That is unalterable, that is unchangeable. That's why He said in John 8:58, "Before Abraham, I am." Before he ever existed, I was in existence. We had just, at the beginning of the service, heard Tom read that marvelous opening statement in the letter to the Hebrews in which it says, "Jesus Christ is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of His nature.

In Colossians chapter 1, a similar testimony is given in verse 15, "He is the image of the invisible God." That is to say He is a direct representation, a direct reflection of the invisible and eternal God. This is where you start with the person of Jesus Christ.

Now that's the word "being," but let's just look again at this opening statement. It says, "Being in the form of God," and that adds another component. That's the Greek word *morphe* and it refers again to the characteristics or the qualities, or the attributes of someone. The English really doesn't capture this word very well. The word "form" doesn't work very well. The word "form" has the connotation of something on the outside, something changeable, something that can be altered. That's not what this word means. It means the essential, abiding characteristics or attributes that belong to someone. It is translated in the New Testament "conformed," or even "transformed." In 2 Corinthians 3:18, "We being transformed into the image of Christ." It doesn't mean that we are physically, externally made to look like Him. It means we are internally, and by characteristic and attributes, being conformed into what He is. That's the concept of *morphe*.

Paul even says, "I want to gain Christ. I want to be conformed to His death." Literally, "I want to become like Him. I want to be like Him in terms of characteristics, attributes, attitudes, not exterior.

So we begin then with the fact that Christ Jesus as to being is eternal God. As to form, He possesses all the attributes, all the characteristics that belong to God. He is no less than God in the fullest sense. And you remember the Jews condemned Him in 5:18 because He was making Himself equal with

God. There was no mistaking about that because that's precisely what He was doing.

Now back to verse 6. Even though that is His essential nature and He possesses all the attributes and all the characteristics that belong to God, the next phrase says, "He did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped." That's a very interesting statement and it can carry a couple of connotations. The verb "grasped" has a rather broad possibility of interpretation. It can mean to seize something, to snatch something, to take hold of it and pull it away. Or it can mean to hang on to something, to cling to something, to clutch something.

So let's look at it both ways. There was in heaven a being by the name of Lucifer, right? Lucifer was the worship leader of heaven. He was the anointed cherub, he was the highest of angels. But that was not enough to satisfy him. And according to Isaiah chapter 14, he said, "I will be like the Most High. I will be like the Most High."

What did he want? He wanted equality with God. He wanted equality with God so equality with God for Lucifer was something to be seized. It was something to be snatched and he tried to snatch it unsuccessfully, didn't he? Tried to seize it and he was instantly cast out of heaven and turned in to the devil and Satan.

Jesus didn't need to do that. For Him equality with God was not something He needed to snatch. It was not something He needed to seize. It was not something He needed to rip away from someone to whom it legitimately belonged because it was His by nature...by nature.

Secondly, you can interpret it this way, that having equality with God was not something He clung to. The fullness of that equality with God is described in John as *proston theon*, a Greek phrase that means face-to-face. It's talking about absolute equality and fullness. He possessed equality with God but He was willing to let go of it.

So on the one hand, it wasn't something He had to snatch because it didn't belong to Him. And on the other hand, it did belong to Him but it was not something that He clutched with a death grip, if you will. He was willing to give it up. So willing that verse 7 says, "He emptied Himself...He emptied Himself." That is just a powerful statement. The Greek verb means to pour out until it's all gone, to pour out until it's all gone.

Just exactly of what did He empty Himself? Well some people might think He emptied Himself of His deity but He didn't because He couldn't. That's His nature...that's His being...that's His essence. And some might think He divested Himself of the form of God and became only a man. That's not possible because the very essence of God's nature is manifest inseparably from its characteristics and attributes. So He didn't give up His nature as God and He didn't give up His attributes as God.

Well what did He give up? Of what did He empty Himself?

Well the New Testament lays it out for us. He remained fully God but, for example, John 17:4 He said, "Father, give Me back the glory I had with You before the world began." He emptied Himself of His glory, His divine glory. His glory in this world was veiled. On the Mount of Transfiguration, He pulled His flesh back and gave them a little glimpse of His glory, you remember? But He veiled His glory when He came into this world. He set His glory aside and gave up His honor. According to Isaiah 53, there was no beauty in Him that men would desire Him. He was despised, He was rejected. And we know that unfolds in the New Testament. He was hated. He was treated with scorn. He was shamed. He was spit on. He was beaten. He gave up His honor, gave up His riches.

Second Corinthians 8:9 says He was rich, but for our sakes He became poor. It doesn't mean He was earthly poor, it means He divested Himself of all the treasures of heaven and came down and lived in a humble village and ate with the rest of the people in His family and walked the dusty streets and lived divested of incomprehensible limitless heavenly treasures. He even...he even gave up the independent exercise of His own will. He said, "I came not to do My will but he will of Him that sent Me," John 6. He said, "I only do what the Father tells Me to do. I only do what the Father says. I only do what I see the Father do. I do what pleases My Father."

So He gave up His own personal authority, His own independent exercise of that authority. He gave up the use of His omniscience. He said, "I don't even know when the Second Coming is going to happen. No one knows but the Father, not even the Son of Man."

He gave up the use of His omnipotence. He could have called a legion of angels to defend Him, but He did not do that.

So He gave up His glory, His honor, His riches, the independent exercise of His will. He even gave up a favorable relationship with His Father eventually because He was hanging on the cross, made sin for us and He said, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" Those are the things that He emptied Himself of. It's a deep mystery of wisdom and power, but it's true. This is the nature of His humiliation. This is the nature of His love.

Just as a footnote to that. Say it this way, "He gave up His privileges...gave up His privileges." It's hard to do. Willingness to do that, even on a human level, of course, is a very, very difficult thing. If you want to find out what a person is really like, if you want to do a test of leadership, if you want to do a test of character, give somebody privileges, give him privileges. And the more privileges you give them, the more they will reveal their character.

If you give somebody responsibilities, they will do them if you pay them. Right? If you pay them, they'll do them. That doesn't give you any indication of character. People want money and so they do what they're responsible to do. Give them privileges and you'll find out whether they have character. A noble person will use his privileges to help others. A noble person will somehow take those privileges and spend them on other people. A lesser person will use his privileges to separate him from other people, to elevate himself.

Jesus had all the privileges of being God and He chose to set those privileges aside to serve sinners in the Father's will. So He's like a king and takes off His crown, and takes off His majestic robe and puts on the rags of a slave and comes out of the palace to help the poor, destitute paupers survive.

So the story of Christmas begins with the Son of God abandoning a sovereign position. Secondly, He accepted a slave's place...He accepted a slave's place. Back to verse 7, "Taking the form of a slave." It's *doulos*, slave and there's no such word as bondservant in the Greek, it's the word for slave. He came down. How far down? He didn't come from being the King of heaven to being a King of earth or a King of Israel. He will eventually be the King of Kings and the King of Israel, but for this occasion in His incarnation, He came to be a slave. He took off the robes of majesty and put on the apron of a slave. This, of course, is what the Old Testament promises.

Look at Isaiah, the last part of Isaiah where the Messiah is designed to be the servant of the Lord...the servant of the Lord. He is called that again and again and again and again. He is a slave. He takes on the form of a slave. Here's that word *morphe* again, He takes on the attributes, takes on the characteristics of a slave. He literally becomes a slave, a slave of God and a slave of sinners, if you will. He came not to be served, but to serve. "I am in the midst of you as one who serves," Luke 22:27. The Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve.

And how? By giving His life. And so He takes on not just the masquerade as a slave, not just a superficial costume, not just the garments of a slave, He takes on the very attributes, the very characteristics of a slave. And what is that which is characteristic of a slave? Absolute, total submission to the will of another. In His case, it was the will of His Father that He gladly submitted to. He became the slave of God that He might serve us at the point of our deepest need.

So He abandoned a sovereign position, accepted a servant's place and, thirdly, He associated with sinful people. He associated with sinful people. We begin to get to the depth of His slavery in verse 7. It says, "He was made in the likeness of men." There would have been a lot of ways to serve God. Maybe He could have provided redemption by becoming an angel. Maybe He could have been the slave of God, obeying God like an angel obeys God and he holy angels are the slaves of God, they obey God. They do His will at all times, at all points.

Maybe God could have designed that redemption be accomplished by angels. After all, it was angels that brought the Law. Maybe it could be angels that brought salvation. But not in the plan of God. He came down as a slave. He came all the way down to being made in the likeness of men. And it repeats it in verse 8. "Being found in appearance as a man." Being in the likeness of men, that's...that's again the verb to be, being, *ginomai*, that's being. He literally became human. He became human. Likeness, *homoiomate*. *Homo*, the same...the same as humanity, a real man, true man, 100 percent human as 100 percent God. This is the mystery of the incarnation. He's not half God, half man. He's not all God masquerading as a man. He is fully God and fully man. He takes on the likeness. That's why I say, He approached a sinful people. He, verse 8, tells us that this likeness to men was not only true on the inside, He was truly human, but it was manifest on the outside. "Being found in appearance as a man." Here's the word *schema*.

Schema simply means the external...the external. It is not the same as *morphe*. *Morphe* describes the attributes, the inside, what is true of a person by nature or by attribute, characteristic. This word...this word is the word for the exterior, the outer manifestation. "Being found in fashion as a man." *Schema*, we get the word scheme, or schematic from it. He was made in the likeness of men but He also looked like a man. He also looked like a man.

This is important for us to be reminded of. Jesus didn't walk around, by the way, with a halo on His head. He didn't walk around with a gold aura around Him. He didn't walk, or He didn't float a foot off the ground. He didn't glide that way through life. He didn't have a robe that never got dirty or feet that never needed to be washed. He looked like a man. He talked like a man. He acted like a man because He was fully human both in terms of attributes and characteristics, and also in terms of appearance.

Nobody knew that He was God by looking at Him. He didn't stand out in a crowd like He does in medieval paintings which are silly. He looked like everybody else looked. And He experienced the things that human beings experience.

Had they come into this world through the natural process of a mother's womb? So had He. Had they changed over their lifetime from being an infant to being an adult and all the stops in between? So had He. Had they originally when brought into the world been wrapped in cloth? That's what they did with babies. That's what everybody does with babies. Read it in Ezekiel 16:10, they were doing it way back then. That's always been the way. Well He was wrapped in cloth.

Did they have brothers and sisters, these human beings? So did He, born to Joseph and Mary. Did they work? So did He. Did they learn a trade? So did He. In fact, for 30 years He plied His trade in the little village of Nazareth, working in a family business with His father who was a carpenter. And nobody knew who He was. Nobody knew who He was. You couldn't tell by looking at Him.

Was He hungry? Of course He was hungry. Was He thirsty? Of course He was thirsty. Did He go to bed at night and sleep? Of course He went to bed at night and slept. We know that at one time He was so tired, He fell asleep in a boat in a storm, as we shall soon see.

Was He ever angry? Sure. Was He ever grieved? Yes. Did He ever shout because He was angry? Yes. Did He ever cry because He was grieving? Yes. He was a human being. He dressed like people dressed. He put His sandals on, He put His robe on. He had an undergarment and that's the way everybody looked in that day.

That Christmas carol says, "The cattle are lowing, the baby awakes, but little Lord Jesus no crying He makes." I don't buy it...I don't buy it. Crying is a signal that all babies have given them by God to let Dad know he better go get mother, if nothing else. It's code to the father that you have just reached the end of your usefulness. Of course He cried, but it wasn't a sinful cry. He was fully human and would be seen as fully human.

Born in an insignificant manger in an insignificant inn, really in an insignificant village, raised in a humble cottage, a lowly mother, a tradesman father. And even when He embarked upon His ministry, nobody knew who He was. John had to point to Him and say, "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world," or nobody would have recognized who He was. And even after John said it, most people didn't believe it because there was nothing about Him, there was no aura about Him. And even when He spoke He spoke with a man's voice. And even though He said things no one had ever heard, they still didn't believe He was God and even though He wielded power that raised the dead and cast out demons and healed diseases, and fed multitudes out of food created by His very words, they still weren't sure He was God. In fact, the party line of the Jewish leaders was, "He has this power, that's undeniable. But it comes from hell."

No, He came down, He abandoned the sovereign position, accepted a slave's place and associated with the sinful people.

Fourthly, He adopted a selfless posture. How selfless was He? Back to verse 8, "He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross." How selfless...how selfless. He prays in the Garden as He begins to feel the cross coming on Him and He knows on that cross He's going to bear the weight of all the sins of all the people who would ever believe throughout all of human history. He's going to bear an infinite amount of sin in a few hours. He's going to feel the wrath of God, the likes of which we could never comprehend.

You ask that question, "How can Jesus in a few hours absorb all the necessary punishment for all the sins of all the people who will ever believe in the history of the world, and absorb it in a few hours when it takes eternal hell and still the sins of sinners who are there are not going to go be paid?" The

wrath of God was beyond comprehension. "How could He receive all that wrath in a short time?" Because He is an infinite person and therefore had an infinite capacity to be punished. The selflessness shows up in the Garden when He says, "Father, let this cup pass from Me, nevertheless not My will but Your's be done." And He even says, "For this I was born, to go to the cross and die." He humbled Himself.

Early in His life He humbled Himself in Nazareth. Nobody knew who He was and there He was as a little boy and His father had probably taught Him how to make a yoke for the oxen, for the local farmer. His father probably taught Him how to make a chair for somebody, a table for somebody else. And He was the one who made the universe. Nobody knew. He washed the feet of the Twelve and He is the one at whose feet all the angels of heaven bow. He came down, but He didn't just humble Himself to come into this world and humble Himself to work in a carpenter's shop. He humbled Himself all the way to death, and the worst possible death, the excruciating death on the cross. Some historians have said, "Anybody who died on a cross, died a thousand deaths."

Augustine, summing up the incarnation of Christ, said, "The maker of man became man that He, the ruler of the stars, might be nourished at the breast, that He, the bread, might be hungry, that He, the fountain, might thirst, that He, the light, might sleep, that He, the way, might be wearied by the journey, that He, the truth, might be accused by false witnesses, that He, the judge of the living and the dead, might be brought to trial by a corrupt mortal judge, that He, justice itself, might be condemned by the unjust, that He, discipline itself, might be scourged with whips, that He, the foundation, might be suspended upon a cross, that He, courage personified, might be weakened, and that He, security, might be wounded, and that He, the very life itself, might die."

Augustine went on to say, "To endure these and similar indignities for us, to free us unworthy creatures. He who existed as the Son of God before all ages, without a beginning, deigned it to become the Son of Man in these years, did this though He who submitted to such great evils for our sake had done no evil and although we, who were the recipients of so much good at His hands, have done nothing but evil."

He became obedient, even to the death of the cross. He stooped all the way to die for our sins. Death on the cross was painful, shameful. You were accursed, Deuteronomy 1:23 says, "Cursed is anyone who hangs on a tree." Paul quotes that in Galatians 3:13. Christ became a curse for us, absorbing the wrath of God on our behalf.

Someone wrote, "Still, O soul, the sign and wonder of all ages see, Christ your God, the Lord of glory, on the cross for me." That's the marvelous reality.

There's a final point. He abandoned a sovereign position, accepted a slave's place, approached a sinful people, adopted a selfless posture and finally, He ascended a supreme Prince, verses 9 to 11.

He ascended a supreme Prince. "For this reason also." What reason? "The reason of His submission, the reason of His humiliation, the reason of His obedience to death, even the death on the cross, for this reason because He perfectly obeyed the Father and accomplished redemption, God highly exalted Him."

God raised Him from the dead, it tells us in the New Testament. God raised Him from the dead as a sign of God's satisfaction over His death, and then God exalted Him to His own right hand and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name. In fact Hebrews tells us in chapter 1 and verse 3 that God exalted Him to heaven and He sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high.

He was given then a name. What name is that? It's the name "Lord." It's not the name Jesus, that's an earthly name. People name their sons Jesus. That's not the name above every name. The name above every name is Lord. God now highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the name...the name which is above every name so that at that name which is given to Jesus, every knee will bow of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

His humiliation complete on the cross, followed immediately by His exaltation. Raised from the dead, lifted to the right hand of God, restored to full glory, full honor, full privilege, full expression of attributes, full use of His own independent will. He accomplished our redemption and God exalted Him.

It says in verse 10 that every knee will bow to Him in heaven. That would be those that are there. On earth, that would be those that are here. Under the earth, that would be those that are in hell. They will all...they will all acknowledge Him as Lord, every tongue, in verse 11, will confess Jesus Christ as Lord to the glory of God the Father, whether they confess it in heaven, whether they're confessing it on earth, or whether they confess it in hell. Don't think for a minute that the people in hell don't know Jesus is Lord. He is the Lord of hell, they know it. And hell is defined as the terrible, inflicted suffering of those people who denied Christ what He deserves, and that is the affirmation of His lordship and appropriate submission and worship. That's what sends people to hell, because they reject Christ.

Every tongue will confess Jesus as Lord. If you do it in this life, what happens? Romans 10...Romans 10:9 and 10, "If you confess Jesus as Lord with your mouth, and believe in your heart God raised Him from the dead, you'll be saved." Saved from hell, from sin, from judgment. Better to confess it now and go on confessing it forever in heaven than to go on confessing it in bitterness and remorse forever in hell. Every tongue will confess it.

And God has given you the opportunity, even today, to make that confession now. If you make it now, you will joyfully make it forever and He will exalt you to His own throne and you will be a joint-heir and share in all His heavenly riches.

He is God, giving Himself away, yet remaining God. He is God, putting on a King's robe, and then taking it off and taking a beggar's rags. He is God, the judge, rising from the bench and going to the gallows as a criminal. He is God impoverishing Himself, begging Himself, exposing Himself to evil's spite, never sparing Himself until He makes it all the way to a cross on Jerusalem's hill, and that cross becomes the sum and the sign of His utter selfless humiliation, and He did it for us. Confess Him as Lord. Receive the salvation He offers and you'll go on doing that forever.

Father, we thank You again for Your Word. We thank You for the truth concerning our Savior. These are wonderful days to go back and think deeply about the coming of Christ. Thank You for the wonderful morning we've had of worship. Our hearts are full to overflowing. The music rings in our ears, music which exalts Christ which offers praise to You for this unspeakable gift. But it doesn't mean anything unless we confess Him as Lord.

May there be no soul in the hearing of this voice of mine today who will wait to confess Him as Lord in the fires of hell. May You be gracious and open their hearts to confess Him as Lord today and now, here on the earth, that they may do it forever in heaven. May we demonstrate our love to You in that we follow the example of Christ. Paul said, "Have this mind in you which was in Christ Jesus." May we as those who know Christ and love Christ humble ourselves to do Your will no matter what it costs, knowing that to those who obey there will be an exaltation. Jesus is the pattern for us as well. If we humble ourselves, You will one day exalt us. We thank You for this great grace. We rejoice in it. We celebrate it with grateful hearts in Christ's name. Amen.

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