

The Humility and Exaltation of Christ

Scripture: Philippians 2:6-11

Code: 90-280

As we think about divine truth tonight, as we think about the Scripture, the Bible, the Word of God, we're going to turn to a portrait of Christ. That's what's kind of on the schedule for these special Sunday nights, portraits of Christ. And I want to have you, if you have a Bible with you, turn to Philippians chapter 2. If you don't have a Bible, you might find one in the pew there somewhere. Philippians is over there in the New Testament and it's a brief letter written by the very well-known Apostle Paul. And in this letter is one of the great portraits of Christ in Scripture. Philippians chapter 2 and I want to read the text of Scripture to you, this is the word of the living God, the inspired Word of God written down by the Apostle Paul but every word from God so that it is the truth as God desired it to be communicated. And in this wonderful second chapter we read the name Christ Jesus at the end of verse 5. Verse 5 ends with Christ Jesus. And with that name, the next important section is launched. Christ Jesus...and then it goes on to describe Him in these words:

"Who although He existed in the form of God did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself taking the form of a bondservant and being made in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore also God highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name that the name of Jesus every knee should bow of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father."

That is one of the great portraits of Christ in the Scripture. Jesus asked the question one day of His own followers, He said, "Who do men say that I am?" And the question, "Who is Jesus Christ?" is the most important question to be answered. Who do men say that I am? And they responded, "Some say you're Elijah, or Jeremiah, or one of the prophets."

"But who do you say I am?" And on behalf of the apostles, Peter answers, "You're the Christ, the Son of the living God." That, of course, was the right answer. And Jesus said to him, "Flesh and blood didn't reveal that to you." That didn't come from a human source. "But My Father who is in heaven revealed that to you." And that is the great revelation of Christianity that Jesus is God in human flesh...not just a good man, and not just a prophet, not even a great prophet, not the reincarnation of a prophet, or the resurrection of a prophet like Jeremiah, or even Isaiah, or any other prophet, but that this Jesus Christ is none other than God the Son. That is to say the eternal God

become a man.

C.S. Lewis, a great British thinker and writer, with immense imagination, has a section in a book that he wrote called *Miracles* and it looks at this incarnation of God in human flesh in, I think, a wonderfully fresh way. This is what he writes. "In the Christian story, God descends to re-ascend. He comes down, down from the heights of absolute being into time and space, down into humanity, down to the very roots and seed bed of the humanity which He Himself created. But He goes down to come up again and bring ruined sinners up with Him." Lewis says, "Once-- one has the picture of a strong man, stooping lower and lower to get himself underneath some great complicated burden, he must stoop in order to lift. He must almost disappear under the load before he incredibly straightens his back and marches off with the whole mass swaying on his shoulders. Or one may think...writes Lewis...of a diver, first reducing himself to nakedness, then glancing in mid air, then gone with a splash, vanished, rushing down through green and warm water into black and cold water, down through increasing pressure into the death-like region of ooze and slime and old decay. And then up again, back to color and light, his lungs almost bursting till suddenly he breaks the surface again holding in his hand the dripping precious thing that he went down to recover. He and it are both colored now that they have come up into the light. Down below where it lay colorless in the dark, he lost his color, too." And Lewis goes on to say, "The doctrine of the incarnation is emphatically at the center of Christianity, that the Son of God came down." He says, "No seed ever fell so far from a tree into so dark and cold a soil as the Son of God did."

This is the central miracle of Christianity. This is the defining reality of our faith. It is about the incarnation. It is the most grand and the wondrous...the most wondrous of all miracles, that's why it is the highpoint miracle in C.S. Lewis' book on *Miracles*. It is the theme of the text that I just read to you. This text is about the descent of God the Son, the second member of the Triune God, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. It is about the descent of God the Son. And it's a very straightforward portion of Scripture and I want to just walk you through it one phrase at a time, to help you understand the heart and soul of Christian truth.

Let's look at verse 5, the end of the verse, "Christ Jesus, who although He existed in the form of God," let's stop there.

This is a profound statement. He existed in the form of God. Now I want to take you a little bit into the language here. The Bible is written in two languages, two ancient languages. The Old Testament originally written in Hebrew. The New Testament originally written in Greek. And so to get back sort of under the surface of our English vocabulary, we need to consider what the Greek words meant for they are the original words for the New Testament. The Word existed, He existed, *huparcho*. This is a word that was used to express the continuance of a state or condition. In fact, one could say, if I can stretch your vocabulary a little bit, it was used to express the continuance of an

antecedent state, of something that already was and still is and always will be. It is not the common Greek word for being. It describes the very essence of a person. That which is true of a person that can't be changed. That which a person possesses inalienably and in such a manner that it can never be taken away from him. To say He existed is to touch His essential nature. It describes that part of a man, says one writer, which in spite of all the chances and the changes of life and all the circumstances remains the same. It touches on inalterable nature. Paul is saying that He existed as to the essential unchangeable nature in the form of God.

So when you ask the question: who is Jesus Christ? The first thing you have to confront is the statement of Scripture that His essential being, His unchanging, unaltering nature is in the form of God. Now that brings up the issue of what does form mean? This is also crucial to our understanding, it's the word *morphe...morphe*. Morph meaning form, even in English, but *morphe* in the Greek language always signifies, listen, a form which truly and fully expresses the being which underlies it. That is to say it is a form true to the essential nature. It is a form true to the essential nature. And here it is applied to God. Whatever the *morphe* of God, whatever the form that God takes, it is a reflection of His deepest being, what He is in Himself. It is the essential nature and character of God visible, manifest, revealed.

Let me help you with that a little bit. Two Greek words for form. One is *morphe*, the word used here, and the other is *schema* from which the English word scheme comes, schematic. In the Greek they both mean form. But...but they mean two different kinds of form whereas in English we only have one word to translate both *morphe* and *schema*, so we translate them form. And that doesn't help us. *Morphe* is the essential form of something, that which is true to its nature and cannot be altered. *Schema* is the outward shape that changes.

Now how can I illustrate that to you? I can illustrate it to you by saying the *morphe* of a man, like me, the *morphe* is my manhood, my male humanity. That's...that's the *morphe*, that's the essential being that is attached to the nature of what I am. And that has never changed. I have always been a male human being. However, the *schema* has been changing constantly. I started out as a baby and then I became a child and then I became a boy and then a young man and then a middle aged man. And...you can conclude the rest. But I've never stopped being a man. And God as to His manifest *schema* may appear as shining light in the garden, known as the *Shekinah* glory. He may appear as fire. He may appear as a cloud. He may manifest Himself in a number of ways. God the Son even manifested Himself in the Old Testament as an angel called the angel of the Lord, taking on a visible form. But in this case, the *schema* was the *schema* of a man but the essential form was the unchanging *morphe* of God.

The first thing we learn about Jesus Christ, and this is essential to Christian theology, is that Jesus is in the essential form of God. That is to say He is an unalterably God, His essence, His unchangeable

being is divine. He never has been and never will be any other than God. He didn't become God, He doesn't cease to be God. His outward *schemalike* mine changed. He was a fetus in a womb. He was an infant born. He was a baby. He was a child. He was a youth. He was a young man. He was an adult. His *schema* changed, His *morphenever* changed. Paul is saying here, Christ Jesus exists as to His nature in the unchanging character of God. He possesses the being and nature of God unalterably. This is to say unambiguously that He is God. He has equality with God because He is God. And so He can say, "I and the Father are one." Or He can say, "If you've seen Me, you've seen the Father." He is the Word who created the world in John chapter 1. He is the Word who was with God. He is the Word who was and is God. He is the Word who became flesh, the *morpheof* God becomes the *schemaof* humanity. In Hebrews, that wonderful epistle, it tells us about Him with these words, "God after He spoke long ago to the fathers and the prophets in many portions in many ways," speaking of the Old Testament, "in these last days has spoken to us in His Son whom He appointed heir of all things through whom also He made the world." And listen, "And His Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of His nature." He is the exact representation of the nature of God.

You have all these people trying to figure out who Jesus is, and here it's crystal clear who He is. Colossians 1:15, "He is the image of the invisible God." That's where you start. When you ask the question...who is Jesus Christ? The first answer is, He permanently exists as God. Secondly, if you go back to verse 6, from that glorious presentation of the deity of Christ, the Apostle Paul begins to track the incarnation. He establishes that He is God as Scripture clearly says in many places. And now he says, "Even though He is God, although He is God in true nature and essence," he secondly says, "He did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped." He did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped. Regard is the word to consider, to think. Equality with God literally means being equal with God. And he uses the word *isos*, exactly equal in number or size or quality.

So what it's saying is, although He exists in the form of God and is therefore exactly equal with God, and so here again you have this second statement essentially reiterating the first point, He is equal to God, the being equal with God, *isos*. We use the word *isos*, you use it in ways you don't even know. Have you ever heard the word isomer, isomorph, isometric? How about an isosceles triangle, anybody remember that? An isomer is a chemical molecule having a slightly different structure from another molecule, but being identical with it in terms of its chemical elements and weight. An isomer has the exact same chemical composition as another molecule. Isomorph means to have the same form. Isometric means to be in equal measure. An isosceles triangle means to have two equal angles. Jesus is *isos*with God, He is equal to God. The language here is so very important. He, possessing the very nature of God, is isomorph, the same as God, equal to God, but He did not regard that equality with God a thing to be grasped. And here you begin to see the condescension take place. Grasped means just that, started out as a word meaning robbery. The robber runs in, grabs and runs, clutching his stolen treasure. It came to mean something clung to, something

clutched, something held tightly because it starts out with the robber who's hanging tightly to whatever it is that he has stolen. Jesus in the very being of God in every sense equal with God refuses to cling, refuses to cling to that equality, refuses to cling to the privileges and the rights that go along with that equality, refuses to grasp and clutch those wonderful, heavenly glories. The incarnation then begins with unselfishness. It begins with Jesus being willing to let go of the glory that He had with the Father before the world began which is the way He expresses it in His prayer in John 17. When it's almost over He says, "I want to come back and I want to have the glory I had with You before this all began." He is unselfish.

And in His unselfishness you come to the third statement, verse 7, "He emptied Himself." Rather than clinging to His heavenly glory, rather than clinging to His heavenly privileges, He divested Himself of them. This is a profound statement and it's introduced by a Greek word, the word but, *alla*, *a-l-l-a*, which means not this but this. The being equal with God did not lead Him to fill Himself up with those privileges, but to empty Himself. And in the Greek it's Himself to empty...which puts the emphasis on Himself. The verb "to empty" is *kenoo* from which we get this great theological term, the kenosis. We say the incarnation is the kenosis, the self-emptying of Christ. It's a graphic term. He emptied Himself of the privileges and the prerogatives and the rights that were His by His divine nature in an act of self-denunciation and a refusal to cling to what rightfully was His. He refused to hold it to His own advantage but emptied Himself in order to advantage others.

Now please understand. When it says He emptied Himself, it does not mean that He emptied Himself of His deity. He didn't say to anybody, "I used to be God, but I'm not anymore." He did not empty Himself of His deity, He would have ceased to exist. That is His nature and that is unchanging. He is and always has been and always will be God. And since God cannot die and God is eternal, He is eternally God and never less than God. Even when He was on earth, Matthew 17, Luke 9 records that He took His disciples up to a mountain and on one occasion He pulled back His human flesh and the shining glory, the blazing light of God was manifest. Peter, James and John were there and they fell over in a coma, traumatized by what they saw. He put His *doxa*, doxology, His glory on display. He never did exchange deity for humanity. He didn't cease to be God. Even hanging on the cross in the midst of His suffering, even in the moments when He was under the judgment of God His Father, even when He was bearing the weight of sin and the wrath of God against that sin, He did not for a millisecond cease to be the mighty God Himself hanging on that cross.

The issue is not that He divested Himself of deity, but that He did not demand His rights as deity. He set aside His prerogatives, His privileges, His rights. In John 17 He says He set aside His heavenly glory to come to this sin-stained planet. In John 5 He says He set aside His independent authority and He acted only according to the will of the Father. He set aside His prerogatives when He said that I have the right, I have the power, I have the authority to do things which I do not do because of My humiliation. Because He had willingly humbled Himself, He set aside things that He was entitled

to. For example, He says, "Of the day and the hour when He will come again, no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son." He set aside the prerogative of omniscience on occasion and then other times He knew what was in the heart of man because He was omniscient. He self-limited His omniscience. He self-limited His omnipotence, His great power. If He wanted to, He could have called a legion of angels to rescue Him from the crucifixion, right? But He didn't do that. It was not that He ceased to be God, it was that He set aside the prerogatives of deity. In heaven He was rich, but for our sakes He became poor. He divested Himself of the riches of heaven. He divested Himself of the constant company of holy angels and came down where He was constantly beset by demons. He even came all the way down to endure an unfavorable relationship with the Father when all He had ever known was an eternal and divine love. That's why He cried, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" Yet in all the things that He set aside, He was always God.

The next statement explains this self-emptying. It says in verse 6, "He did not regard equality with God something to be grasped, held onto, clutched, He emptied Himself and taking the form of a bondservant." This is the character of the self-emptying. It's a kind of service. It's a kind of slavery. Paradoxically Christ who is God and never ceases to be God becomes the servant of God. And He says, "I only came to do what the Father shows Me to do. I only do what the Father shows Me to do. What I do the Spirit does through Me." His kenosis was not a subtraction of His nature but it was a subtraction of His privileges. He voluntarily became a slave. See the word "form" there? Taking the form of a bondservant, or slave, *doulos*? Form is *morphe* again. He didn't just superficially take on the shape of a slave. He didn't dress like a slave and act like a slave or a servant. He became one. And the only other New Testament use of *morphe* other than here is in Mark 16:12 where it describes His resurrection body which is His permanent state even now.

He literally took on the form of man as a part of His essential being so that even after the resurrection He is still the God/Man and He ascended as the God/Man visibly into heaven. He is now seated at the right hand of God as the God/Man and He will come back the same way and every eye will see Him and He will reign on earth as the God/Man in Jerusalem for a thousand years, and then with His people forever in the new heaven and the new earth and always He will be the Christ that was manifest in the New Testament in human form. He will have a glorified, resurrected body. He came as a bondservant to serve the will of God, the purpose of God, to submit to the Father. And He said in Luke 22:27, "I am among you as one who serves." And He said in Matthew 20 and Mark 10, "The Son of Man has not come to be served, but to serve and give His life a ransom for many." And His service was rendered toward God. He became the bond slave of God, the servant of God. He came down so far as a servant that if you read John 13 you'll see Him washing the filthy feet of the proud argumentative selfish disciples.

He humbled Himself all the way to becoming a servant. He even said He had nowhere to lay His head. He had only the clothes on His back. He divested Himself of heavenly riches. He was always

borrowing. He had to borrow a place to be born. He had to borrow a place, He said, to lay His head. He had to borrow a boat to ride in and preach from. He had to borrow an animal to ride into the city of Jerusalem. He had to borrow a room for the Passover. He had to borrow a tomb to be buried in. He is of all people who ever lived the one who had the greatest rights but waived them. He is the heir to David's throne. He is King of kings and Lord of lords. But He came to serve His Father and those who were His Father's children by faith.

And that's not all. Verse 7 also says, "Emptying Himself, taking on the essential nature of a servant, He was made in the likeness of men." And the language here again is very important. "Made in the likeness of men," *homoios oimate(???)*, it means that He was given the essential attributes of humanity. He was given the essential attributes of humanity. He was human in the fullest, truest sense. I think some people assume that if He indeed was God in human form, He was a few months old lying in His mother's arms as the Creator of the universe and He was looking up at her and thinking, "Boy, Mary, you haven't got a clue who's here." No. He thought like a three-month old, and He thought like a six-month old, and He thought like a year old and two year old, and a child. It wasn't until He was twelve years old that it really fully dawned on Him when He grew in wisdom and stature and favor with God and man that He was to do His Father's business. He was truly human in every sense. And He was at all points along that human chronology tempted like all people are tempted, yet He was without sin. It says He was born of a woman, born under the Law, subject to the law of God like all other men are, born of a woman like all other men and women are. Colossians 1:22 says of Him, "He has reconciled you in His fleshly body through death." A real man in a real body dying as a true substitute for sinners.

And a wonderful statement is made in Romans 8:3 concerning the humanity of Jesus. It says, "For what the Law could not do because the Law can't save anybody because nobody can keep it, what the Law could not do weak as it was through the flesh, God did sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh." He sent His Son in the likeness, not in sinful flesh, but He was made like all the rest of us who indeed possessed sinful flesh, yet He never sinned. He was holy, harmless, undefiled, He was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.

Who is Jesus Christ? He is, says the Scripture, the one who is in every sense God but who did not regard equality with God something to cling to but emptied Himself of His privileges, prerogatives and rights. Took the form of a servant to serve the purposes of His Father and came down to become like men. But He didn't just come down to be a good example. He didn't just come down to show us how men ought to live. Verse 8 takes it further. "And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on the cross."

Let me just take that verse apart for a minute. Again these are all critically important components. Verse 8 begins, "And being found in appearance as a man," this advances the last point. Having

become man, Christ was then recognized as such by those who saw Him. In the days of His flesh, as the writer of Hebrews calls it, He was viewed as a man. As they looked at Him, they saw the appearance of a man. And that is a reference to His outward *schemati*(?). They saw that He appeared as a man. They couldn't see His deity. And so He appeared to be nothing more than a man...nothing more than that. That was the judgment of the world that He was nothing but a man. That's what He looked like and that's an affirmation of His true humanity. The fact that they rejected Him as God, that they rejected His claim to deity, the fact that they thought His claims to deity were blasphemous, whenever He said He was God they picked up stones to stone Him, the Jews being so infuriated by a blasphemous claim to be God, indicates that they saw Him as nothing more than a man. He was in the true *morpheof* God and in the true *morpheof* man but to them the God part was invisible. It wasn't that they couldn't see that He was God by His works, they couldn't know that He was God by His profound words and by the character of His life, it's that they refused to believe that and so they were left with all that they could see with their blinded eyes, and that was His humanity. He appeared to the world as nothing but a man.

That's still the world's primary judgment on Him. The world still looks at Him as perhaps a well-intentioned man, a good man, a noble man, a religious man, a peaceful man, or a peace loving man, a man who wanted to help, etc., etc. Somewhat misguided man. As the DaVinci Code would put it, "Just a man who fell in love with Mary Magdalene and had a baby." Another blasphemous idea. But He did appear as a man. And that's testimony to His true humanity. There have been people through the years who said He wasn't ever a man, He was just a floating spirit, came in and out of a body. Look, they saw Him as a man, fully human.

But there was more. "Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself." He was already humiliated when He was born. He was already humiliated when He lived as a child and a young man. He was already humiliated just being on this planet. He was already humbled when He came down, but He wasn't humbled as far as He was going to be humbled. He didn't get down here and say, "Look, that's as far as I'm going, I'm here, I'm not going lower than this." He didn't fight back. He didn't blast His rejecters and His detractors and His enemies and those who plotted His death. He didn't fight back. Even when they took Him into the mock trials, a sequence of trials prior to His crucifixion and they had false witnesses and trumped up lies and false testimony, He never ever responded. When He was reviled, he reviled not again. He never said to God, "That's enough humiliation, I'm not taking anymore." He humbled Himself below taking on the form of a servant, belong being in the likeness of men, below appearing as nothing more than a man. In verse 8 it says He became obedient to the point of death. This is something completely foreign to God. God is life. He cannot die. But the depth of this humbling, the depth of this condescension is that He comes all the way down not just to being human, not just to being a servant, but to death. This was His ultimate "yes" to God. This was His ultimate act of service. "God, You want Me to die to pay the penalty for the sins of those who believe? I will die."

This is His lowest hour. It was not a natural death either. It was an execution. It was really a murder. It was an unjust slaughter of the Son of God. And it wasn't just death, he says going further, "It was death on a cross." And we're still going down, folks. We started down with the phrase, "He didn't regard equality with God a thing to be grasped." We went down when he emptied Himself, down when he became a bondservant, down when He became a man, down when all that could be seen was His humanity, down when He comes to the point of death, and down further because His death is death on a cross. And that's why the text says, "Even death on a cross." This is the most shocking feature of Christ's humiliation. Crucifixion, you see, was the most horrific way to die. Developed and perfected by the Persians, the Romans had picked up this form of execution. It was the most painful, the most humiliation and the most cruel form of death imaginable. A person basically was nailed by hands and feet to a cross, a wooden cross which was then dropped into a socket, ripping and tearing the flesh. They hung suspended like that, the body slumping and being held basically only by two wounds through the hands. The feet usually nailed together with one nail against a little block had some leverage to push up so that the victim could breathe, otherwise suffocation would take place. So against the wounds and the feet, the victim hanging on the cross is pushing up, pushing up trying to catch breath. The sun is blazing, the mouth is parched, the blood loss through those four great wounds is immense, the blood loss through the crown of thorns adds to the horror. This is an unthinkable inhuman way to execute people. And some people would hang like that for several days, depending upon their strength and the configuration of their crucifixion. Crucifixion was only for the scum, the riff-raff, the non-Roman citizens. The only way a Roman citizen could be crucified was if they committed a crime against the state. It was hated by the Jews, they despised it because there was one occasion where hundreds of Pharisees were crucified. And the Romans had filled Israel with crucifixions. Some historians think there were as many as 30 thousand people crucified around the time of Jesus. That's how the Romans kept everybody in line. You step out of line, that's where you end up. And they lined all the highways with crosses and they stripped the land of trees to make them. No dignified person would ever be put on a cross, only the rankest of criminals, the lowest of the low, the worst of the worse.

To put somebody on a cross was unthinkable. The Jews on occasion did put a body on a cross, but only after it was dead. If the body was a body of a blasphemer because Deuteronomy says, "Cursed is he that's hanged on a tree," but they would never crucify a living person, too horrific. It was the ultimate in human degradation. But Jesus came all the way down to that...all the way down to that. And He who knew no sin bore the punishment of sin for us and the just one was crucified for us, the unjust. And He was wounded for our transgressions, as the prophet said, He was bruised for our iniquities. He died in our place.

No one could ever imagine that God would do such a thing. If...if we had planned the arrival of God in the world, it wouldn't look like that, would it? We would want to make sure that He arrived in a palace, not a manger. We would want to make sure that He was born into wealth, that He was educated in the finest schools, prep schools, universities under the most elite teachers. We would want to make sure that He was cared for and nurtured and attended to and honored and loved and lifted up and exalted and believed in. We'd never let Him be born in a stable. We'd never let a bunch of stinking low-class shepherds around Him. We'd never let Him come into a family of poverty, a carpenter's son. We would never let God come down with no earthly goods, no formal education and then surround Him with a rag tagged bunch of no name, nobodies with no worldly qualifications to do anything. We would never let God be that humiliated. We'd certainly never let Him be cursed, we'd never let Him be mocked, we'd never let Him be spit on, we'd never let Him be crucified. But then we'd never be saved. This is the incarnation. This is who He is. This is why He came.

The story doesn't end in verse 8, by the way. Verse 9 says this, "Therefore also God highly exalted Him." What a statement. God highly exalted Him. What did God do to exalt Him? Well what did He do three days after He was crucified? The Father raised Him from the dead, didn't He? First point of the Father's exaltation was the resurrection. And by God raising Christ from the dead, God affirmed the validity of His sacrifice. And He raised Him from the dead to say what Jesus had said on the cross, "It's finished." And then the second thing happened forty days later, He ascended into heaven. First His resurrection, then His ascension. And when He reached heaven, He sat down at the right-hand of the Father in His exaltation. The Bible says that when He went to heaven, He sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high, He took His place on the throne. He was exalted in His resurrection. He was exalted in His ascension. He was exalted in His coronation. And He's also exalted in His intercession, for He ever lives to intercede for all who come to Him. God highly exalted Him.

And then verse 9 says, "God gave Him a name, He bestowed on Him a name which is above every name." Some people think that's the name Jesus. That's not it. The name Jesus is just like the name Joseph. The name Jesus is just a name. That's not the name above every name. The name above every name is Lord, sovereign. And He gave Him a name which is above every name, that name is Lord, and Lord of lords. He sat Him on the throne, verse 10 says that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow...at the name of Jesus. The name of Jesus, not Jesus but *kurios*, Lord. At the name given to Jesus, the name Lord, every knee bows. You bow beneath the Lord, which means the Master. You bow, every knee should bow...every knee will bow...every knee must bow and He means every knee. Those who are in heaven, angels, cherubim, seraphim, ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands of angelic beings. And the saints, the glorified saints who are there, every knee in heaven bows. And on earth, men and women, they don't all bow by choice, some do, most will bow by compulsion. The day will come when those who refuse to bow to Christ as Lord in life will bow to Him in judgment. And even those under the earth, demons, damned fallen angels, they bow...they bear His wrath, they feel His fury forever. Everybody bows eventually.

And eventually, verse 11 says, every tongue confesses Jesus Christ is Lord...everybody. Nobody escapes that. You do it willingly, or you're forced. You do it now and you're forgiven and you will gladly bow in heaven. You reject Him now and you will bow one day at the seat of judgment and feel His wrath forever. The word "confess" is to acknowledge...to acknowledge. Every tongue will one day acknowledge Jesus as Lord. That's who He is. He is the ruler. That is the most important confession in the Christian faith.

You want to be a Christian? Here's how. Confess with your mouth, Romans 10:9, Jesus as Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, which is the affirmation of His lordship. That is the heart of Christianity. He came down that He might go up. All of this, it says, to the glory of God the Father.

Back to C.S. Lewis for a moment. He suggests that in a unique way God has sort of written into our lives and the world in which we live this idea of descent and re-ascent, that is most significantly true of our Lord. He says it's the pattern of all vegetable life. It must belittle itself into something hard, something small and deathlike, a seed. It must fall into the ground and thence the new life re-ascends. It is the pattern of all animal generation. There is descent from the full and perfect organisms into the spermatozoon and ovum and in the dark womb a life at first inferior and kind to that of the species which is being produced. Then the slow ascent to the perfect embryo to the living conscious life. It is so...he says...in our moral and emotional life. The first innocent spontaneous desires have to submit to the deathlike process of control and total denial. But from that there is a re-ascent to fully formed character in which the strength of the original material all operates but in a new way. Death and rebirth, death and rebirth, death and rebirth, go down to go up, it's a principle in life. Through this bottleneck, he says, through this belittlement the high road is found.

We live in a world where you go down before you go up. And certainly the greatest truth in that regard is the condescension, the incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ. The question then is this, Jesus is God, the God/Man who came all the way down to die on the cross to pay the penalty for your sins. God was so pleased with His sacrifice that He exalted Him to heaven, made Him Lord over all and will cause every person who has ever lived and every angel who ever has been created to bow to Him, either willingly or unwillingly, either in the joy of heaven, or the punishment of hell. Everyone will confess Jesus as Lord. You do it now, to your eternal blessing. Or you do it later, to your eternal cursing.

Who is Jesus Christ? The text could not be more clear. The question then is what will you do with Christ? That is the question that was asked, you remember the Roman's leader says to the people, "What shall I do then with Jesus?" That's the question you have to answer, too. What are you going to do with Him? You either acknowledge Him as Savior and bow your knee willingly, or you reject

Him and one day you will acknowledge Him as judge and bow your knee unwillingly. Join me in a word of prayer.

As we, Lord, have contemplated the glory of Christ, the greatness of this Scripture that opens up for us the wonder of the incarnation, it comes right down to our lives. It's not something at a distance, it's not something obscure, far off, it comes right down to everyone of us because every knee will bow...every knee, in heaven, on earth, under the earth. Every one every where, every conscious created being will bow to the One who is Lord. And You will give us, Lord, the opportunity to do so even now, to confess You as Lord and thus to be delivered from judgment, forgiven of sin and given eternal life so that we can enjoy the heaven of which we sung earlier tonight. We pray, God, that You would be gracious to people tonight who are here who have not bowed their knees, may they willingly confess You as Lord, believing that You died for them and rose from the dead, turning from sin to embrace You and to obey You, even as You obeyed Your Father and humbled Yourself we would do the same. We pray, God, that You would be gracious to every heart here and that You would produce in them the conviction of sin and the confidence in Christ that leads to faith in His death and resurrection so that no one here will of necessity be forced to bow under the weight of divine wrath and judgment but that all will bow under the offer of grace. And so we commend this to You in the name of Christ. Amen.

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