

Jesus: Our Portrait of God Philippians 2:5-11

The perfect theophany is the incarnation - God in human flesh. The perfect model on which we must pattern our lives is also the incarnation. Imitate Jesus! He relinquished His rights, and sacrificially served His creatures, even to the point of suffering a cruel death so that we could have life with Him forever.

Read Philippians 2:5-8

I. Jesus knew who He was

- Jesus is God. He was God, and He knew it. Phil 2:6a
 - “existed” = always existing; present tense participle
 - “form” bad translation; implies “not the real thing”; means “that which truly characterizes a given reality” (Fee, 204); better “nature”
 - Jesus is not merely “like” God. He is God
- Consistent testimony of the New Testament – Heb 1:3; Col 2:9; John 14:8-9
- Do you know who you are?
 - Forgiven, loved, secure; redeemed, adopted, reconciled to God.
- Unless you know who you are, you cannot follow the example of Jesus. Jesus surrendered His rights; He embraced obscurity; He served and sacrificed. He could do that because He knew who He was.
 - John 13:13-14

II. Jesus relinquished His rights – Phil 2:5-7a

- Jesus was God. That means Jesus had rights.
- “He didn’t grasp equality with God”
 - Something He had, but chose not to cling to
 - Didn’t use the rights of deity for self-promotion or self-protection
 - Cast Yourself down. Stones into bread? Sure! I could have done that.
 - Mt 26:53 I could have called 12 legions (72,000) of angels...
- “He emptied Himself”
 - What does this mean? Greatly discussed. Not of deity.
 - Emptied Himself of His rights as God.
 - Phrase explained by the next clause
- “He took the form of a slave”
 - Same word as used before. “Form” of God = really God
 - “Form” of slave = really a slave. Why was this word chosen?
 - Slaves have no rights.
 - He identified not with rich and powerful, not just with poor, but slaves
 - Jesus was God; He is God. That is His nature. 2000 years ago, He did not suddenly cease to be God. Instead He added human nature to divine nature. In so doing, for a period of time, He set aside His divine rights.

III. Jesus embraced obscurity – Phil 2:7-8a

- When Jesus was born, where did the Magi go to find Him? Jerusalem. He wasn't there. Born in a manger to a peasant family.
- Incarnations in other religions – gods become men. They always become someone great among men. Majestic, powerful, unmistakable
 - Egypt – pharaohs were manifestations of god in flesh
- Jesus became just an ordinary man
 - Michael Green, *Who is this Jesus?* p. 2
- Consider the theophanies we studied. No one missed the point. Shock and awe!
 - Examples – Moses, Job, Elijah, Isaiah, Paul
 - In the case of Jesus, everyone missed it.
 - No one said, This is God explaining God. Why?
- Humanity veiled God's glory – Isaiah 53:2
- Incarnation did not only veil God's glory; it revealed God's glory
 - John 1:18 (NET). No one has ever seen God. The only one, himself God, who is in closest fellowship with the Father, has made God known.
 - "exegete, expound, set forth in great detail"
 - Revealed essential character of God. God is love.
 - God loves to give. God isn't a grasping, taking God
 - Reaches down to broken people and draws them to Himself.

IV. Jesus chose self-sacrifice – Phil 2:8

- "humbled himself"
 - never used positively in the rest of Greek literature; vice or weakness. Greeks regarded lowliness or humility as shameful.
 - Not surprising. Same in our culture. We are encouraged to promote ourselves, exalt ourselves, advance ourselves. Lift ourselves up, even if it requires putting others down.
 - British actor Michael Wilding was once asked if actors had any traits which set them apart from other human beings. "Without a doubt," he replied. "You can pick out actors by the glazed look that comes into their eyes when the conversation wanders away from themselves."
 - Come over here and sit next to me. I'm dying to tell you all about myself. Oscar Wilde.
 - Greatest enemy to becoming like Jesus Christ, like God, is yourself.
 - Ex – Halloween candy. I was a hoarder. Give away, less for me.
 - God gives. God gave His Son. The Son gave up heaven.
- "became obedient... even a cross-death"
 - "No one takes My life from Me."
 - Not just any death, literally, a cross-death.
 - Most shameful and painful form of death available in the Roman Empire.
 - Roman writer Cicero said, "The very word 'cross' should be far removed not only from the person of a Roman citizen, but from his thoughts, his eyes, and his ears." "To bind a Roman citizen is a crime; to flog him is an abomination; to slay him is almost an act of murder; to crucify him is – what? There is no fitting word that can possibly describe so horrible a deed."
 - We wear the cross around our neck like jewelry and put them on our churches like decorations. But not so in Jesus' time...
 - In Jesus' day would be like us wearing a symbol of an electric chair around ours. It was something so painful and shameful, it was reserved for only the very worst of criminals.
 - Jesus did not die a hero's death. In the eyes of the world, He died a criminal's death – a shameful death. He got what He deserved.
 - Why? Rom 5:6-8 – for us.

Paul says, “become imitators of God”; “have this attitude...”

- Relinquish your rights, embrace obscurity, choose to sacrificially serve

This is a difficult pattern to follow. How do we find the strength and desire to follow? This is the life that pleases God. This is the life that God says is good and wise. This is the life that God rewards.

V. He anticipated reward – Phil 2:9-11

- Reward offered to us is not the same as Jesus. He is unique.
- But God does promise us reward for following Jesus’ example
- **1 Peter 5:6.** Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time....
- Proper time may not be today, but the time will come.

Application

- God’s cosmic Pinterest account has snapshots of His Son everywhere. Jesus is our picture. What is this picture telling us?
 - Fullness of joy is found when we place others ahead of ourselves; when we follow Jesus and bend low to sacrificially serve.
1. Examine your heart. Committed to yourself above all else? Misery.
 2. Choose someone to serve
 3. Philippians 2:3-4. Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.