**The 7 Demotions of Jesus Christ**

**Pastor Mike Thompson / Fish Lake Chapel / Nov 10th & 17th, 2024**

**Philippians 2:5-11**

**READING THE TEXT (2:5-11)**

**5You should have the same attitude toward one another that Christ Jesus had,[[i](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Philippians%202&version=NET" \l "fen-NET-29381i" \o "See footnote i)]**

**6 [**[**j**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Philippians%202&version=NET#fen-NET-29382j)**] who though he existed in the form of God[**[**k**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Philippians%202&version=NET#fen-NET-29382k)**]  
did not regard equality with God  
as something to be grasped,  
7but emptied himself  
by taking on the form of a slave,[**[**l**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Philippians%202&version=NET#fen-NET-29383l)**]  
by looking like other men,[**[**m**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Philippians%202&version=NET#fen-NET-29383m)**]  
and by sharing in human nature.[**[**n**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Philippians%202&version=NET#fen-NET-29383n)**]  
8He humbled himself,  
by becoming obedient to the point of death  
—even death on a cross!  
9As a result God highly exalted him  
and gave him the name  
that is above every name,  
10so that at the name of Jesus  
every knee will bow  
—in heaven and on earth and under the earth—  
11and every tongue confess  
that Jesus Christ is Lord  
to the glory of God the Father.**

**INTRODUCTION**

As an introduction I want to highlight four words from verse five. **attitude toward one another.** Last week we spoke about putting others first and that was about our attitude toward one another and toward God. Now we can see that Paul is going to show in a dramatic fashion how Jesus put the needs others before his own. In this passage Jesus is the example of what our attitude toward others should be.

I think we are all familiar with the phrase upward mobility. In sports or a job or social media influencers we think of advancing for our own benefit and glory. This idea is not new. Interest in personal promotion and personal advancement dates to the garden days of Adam and Eve. Satan tempted Eve to be like God and advance her rank. Adam went along for the ride. We know how well that turned out.

Questioning upward mobility is not something we handle well apart from the grace of Jesus. I once asked in a sermon how parents would react if their child turned down an athletic scholarship to go serve as a missionary in the middle east or south America? Would we rejoice or lament. We can see how our idea of success clashes with God’s call to put Him first while disregarding the American dream. Some are called to be in the spotlight and succeed in life and excel for the glory of Christ. But like Tim Tebow, that will not be popular with most.

I’m sure upward mobility and the American dream have a hold on us in ways we are not even aware. Rather than upward mobility, Jesus embraced downward mobility. One pastor said; “I can say without hesitation that downward mobility messages don't sell well in large numbers. Compass needles point north, not south. Human needles point up, not down.”

Through the history of Christianity, few people have been mature enough in their faith to embrace the values set forth in this passage of Scripture. Embarrassingly few Christians appreciate the beauty of the example of Jesus Christ set forth in this section. Few people follow the principles of this passage with a joyful spirit.

**Phil 2:5-11** is perhaps the most countercultural passage in Scripture - especially for our generation. I'd like to remind you of Paul's stated life goal. **Phil. 1:21. "For me to live is Christ,"** Paul says, "The focus of my affection is going to be on Jesus Christ. For me to live is to live for Christ, honor Christ, proclaim Christ, obey Christ, serve Christ and advance Christ's cause."

Paul could say that and not lie. He had a rather well-defined life goal. Christ. Paul added that to die would be even better. It would be gain because dying would allow him to be with Christ forevermore. He would be relieved of the crushing weight of his concerns for the churches and his responsibilities as an apostle. He was homesick for heaven, but he said, **"For me to live is Christ."**

What does “living for Christ” mean? Paul says in this text, "If you want to manifest full devotion to Jesus Christ, it's going to have something to do with downward mobility." In verse 5, Paul says If you want to be a real follower of Jesus Christ, then express your Christianity the same way that Jesus did. Think like Jesus thought. Act like Jesus acted. Have the same attitude, or mind, that Jesus did.

Then Paul's going to tell us, in verse 6 and following. "Do you know what the mind of Christ was? Do you want to know that his value system was? What was the attitude that I want you and me to adopt? It's a dedication to downward mobility for the purpose of giving God the glory and for the purpose of serving other people."

While living for God and serving the needs of others Jesus received **7 demotions** that pleased God the father. Our biggest challenge is to be satisfied with being demoted like Jesus so that God in the right time can promote us and lift us up.

**Demotion #1** **He did not regard a position of equality a thing to be held on to**

The secret of being great in the eyes of God, the quickest way for you to bring a smile to the face of your Heavenly Father, is to mimic the mindset and follow the footsteps of Jesus Christ. We must go about the task of dedicating our lives to the downward slope that lifts up Christ and lifts up people who are coming to know him. Verses 6 through 8 teach us the depth of Jesus' dedication to downward mobility. **Watch as Jesus signs up for seven demotions**. Watch as Jesus voluntarily descends the ladder into greatness in the eyes of God.

**Where does he start? He starts at the top.** **Verse 6 says, "Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God..."** Stop there. Where does Christ start this descent into greatness? Where does he start his trek toward downward mobility? He starts at the top. Being in the form of God means a spiritual being equal with God.

Have you ever thought about what that phrase means? Jesus was not an assistant to God. Jesus has never been a vice-president to God. Jesus has never been a junior partner to God but a full-fledged member of the godhead, equal with the Almighty Father in every way, shape, form from eternity past.

In **Is. 6**, when the prophet saw a vision of God, with the angels hovering about and bowing before God saying, **"Holy, holy, holy,"** the angels were glorifying Jesus every bit as much as they were glorifying the Father and the Spirit: three in one, yet one God - the mystery of the Trinity that no finite mind can master. Yet it's true.

Jesus was present and involved at the creation of the world that he has ruled from eternity past. All the divine prerogatives were his equally with the Father and the Spirit. Why do we stress this?

Because the first and subsequent demotions that we're going to talk about in this passage lose a bit of their significance without a thorough understanding of where Jesus, the Son of God began.

When Jesus descended the ladder into greatness in God's sight, he started at the very top. And I want you all to come to terms with the fact that we're talking about Jesus who existed in the form of God from eternity past and was fully equal with God.

Note that little phrase in **verse 6 "...did not regard equality with God something to be grasped."** **He did not regard a position of equality as a thing to be held on to.** Can you understand the impact of that statement? Jesus: enjoying the worship, the adoration, of the universe; Jesus, fully God; Jesus as full partner in the divine prerogatives - yet voluntarily, in this first kind of demotion, he relaxes his grip on those privileges.

***II Corinthians 8:9 - "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich."***

I want to ask you a question: how willing are you to relax your grip on your right to be first and held in high esteeme? How loosely do you hold your positions and possessions? Many of us would struggle if we were asked to part with something precious to us.

We're clutchers, aren't we? We clutch power when we're able to obtain it. We clutch positions and titles. We clutch possessions and resources, time and energy. Even the most mature Christians among us wrestle constantly with letting go and relaxing our grip on that which we hold dear for Christ and the kingdom. Anyone who thinks that's not true is not being honest. We're clutchers by human nature.

It's terribly difficult to relax our grip once we get it tightened around something we value. But here's Jesus, the holder of all the prerogatives of deity. Everywhere he turns in the universe the cherubim, the seraphim are crying, **"Holy, holy, holy. Worthy is the Lamb. The whole world is full of his glory!"** Think about Jesus' statement in **John 17:5 "And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began."** In that kind of heaven, Jesus says, "I'll relax my grip on all that. I'll take a demotion if in so doing I can please God the Father and serve people whom I love." So down the ladder he goes. Watch him go.

**Demotion number two** is simply described this way in **verse 7: "...made himself nothing."** He emptied himself. Demotion number one was just loosening the grip, becoming willing to downscale and decrease and demote. Demotion number two is more concrete: it's the carrying out of demotion number one. Jesus **"empties"** himself, the text says.

This does not mean for a moment that he became any less divine. He is still fully God. It simply means that he lays aside, or puts off, those divine aspects that would keep him from becoming a man. He voluntarily laid aside whatever was necessary for him to become a man.

Nobody is robbing him or stripping this away. He's not doing this under protest. He purposefully and willingly divests himself of that which would keep him from becoming man and fulfilling his mission. And that is how Paul challenges us. Are we willing to let go of all we have and all that we are to become a servant of Jesus and servant of others as our priority. Jesus set the example and calls us to follow him into the same mindset.

**SUMMARY / APPLICATION**

Today we spoke about our tendency as people to put ourselves first. We think of life as upward mobility. We celebrate promotions and success. Setting goals and excelling is not wrong by any means if we do what we do in the power and to the glory of Christ.

However, we are all called to relax our grip on power and control and the need for strokes and applause and promotion as if that will make us complete. We are called to be servants rather than celebrities. Faith in Christ means we no longer seek an audience for ourselves, but we seek to notice the needs of others and lift the name of Jesus.

Then we saw that Jesus began on top as king of the universe and king of heaven with angel blinding glory. And his demotion was setting aside his position and making himself nothing or making himself common. What a counter cultural example for us. When we humble ourselves and demote ourselves Jesus promotes us in his kingdom, and he raises us up. We don’t have to self-promote, Jesus will do that for us when we follow his example of downward mobility. We will take up the other ways Jesus demoted himself next week.

**TAKING IT HOME**

1. What are ways that you promote yourself that Jesus is calling you to set aside?
2. How are you doing at putting God and others before yourself?

**SERMON TWO – 7 Demotions of Jesus Christ**

**Nov 17th 2024, Fish Lake Chapel, Pastor Mike Thompson**

**REVIEW SERMON ONE**

Last week we spoke about our tendency to put ourselves first. We think of life as upward mobility. We celebrate promotions and success. Being promoted at a job is not wrong. Look at Moses and Joseph and Daniel. But being a self-promoter instead of having the heart of a servant is what we have been talking about. Our mindset should not be like the world’s. The mindset of Jesus was downward mobility instead of upward mobility. We become servants rather than celebrities. And even when we lead others, we consider the needs of others as a servant leader like Jesus.

Social media presents each person as a heroic mini-movie star. Look at the trick I can do. Look at how beautiful I am. Look at how smart I am when I spew out two smart sounding sentences and soundbites. Watch me punk someone and act smugly as if I have no sins or faults! Faith in Christ means we no longer crave an audience to highlight ourselves. We notice other people to observe their needs and promote the glory of Jesus.

Then we saw that Jesus began on top as king of the universe as king of heaven with angel blinding glory. And his self-demotion began by setting aside his privileges and making himself nothing. He acted common instead of royal. What a counter cultural example for us. When we humble ourselves and demote ourselves, Jesus promotes us in his kingdom, and he raises us up. Those who are last will be first. We don’t have to self-promote; Jesus will promote us in due time when we follow his example of downward mobility. We will cover the other ways Jesus demoted himself today.

Last week we saw that **demotion one** was to set aside his privileges as God and equality with the Father and Spirit; and **demotion two** was to make himself nothing (or common).

Demotions **three, four** and **five** all pertain to the incredible miracle we call the Incarnation. As I studied this text, it struck me for the first time what a dramatic transition this must have been for Jesus, the second person of the Trinity. Look at demotions three, four and five as they appear in the text in reverse order:

**For the God of the universe,**

* **demotion number three: to take on the appearance of a man.**
* **Demotion number four: to be made in the likeness of a man**.
* **Demotion number five: to accomplish the purpose set before him, to become a bondservant among humankind.**

It boggles my mind when I think about the transcendent Creator taking on the appearance and likeness of the creature becoming fully human. He does not appear on the landscape of this planet as an emperor or a king, a statesman or an investment banker, but as a baby born in a stable to a blue-collar, Jewish construction worker.

Scripture tells us that he was fully human, like us in all ways except without sin. The omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent second person of the Trinity, Jesus, was fully God, enjoying all the divine privileges from eternity. Now Jesus feels the binding confines and restrictions of flesh and bone. He's got skin around him now. He must use doors, ride animals, eat, and sleep. Think of the God of the universe saying to Mary and Joseph, "Okay, Mom. Okay, Dad. I’ll clean up my room. Whatever you say."

Now Jesus rubs shoulders with the creatures - people he created. And these people say, "Get out of my way. Move it! Who do you think you are, Jesus, somebody special? Well, you're not! You should know your place, Jesus, and you should stay in it." Can you catch a glimpse of the violence of the Incarnation to the divinity of Christ?

I've heard preachers try to give illustrations of what it must be like for the second person of the Trinity to take on human flesh. I've heard people say, "Well, it would be like a man becoming an ant, crawling around and living among ants."

The main problem of that analogy is that it is nowhere near as dramatic to become to a lower rank of creation as it is for the transcendent Creator to become a creature.

From equality with God, from this lofty and high position, down the ladder Jesus goes. He relaxes his grip. He lays aside equality with God, takes on our appearance, our likeness, and becomes a bond servant. He comes one who teaches and feeds and serves and heals and helps and saves obstinate, ignorant, arrogant, sinful people like you and me, who refuse most of our lives to even give him a second thought.

**Demotion #6 Jesus Humbles Himself and became obedient to the point of death**

Jesus isn't done with his demotions. He's got two more to go. Look in **verse 8: "He humbles himself and became obedient to death."** He humbles himself. It wasn't enough to just become a man. He is the giver of all life and yet He humbles himself to the point of death.

Jesus, who breathed life into all that lives. Jesus, who not only initiates all life in the universe, but sustains it every second of every day - this Jesus stands toe to toe with the very power of death and says with a quiet and controlled voice, "You win. This time, you win."

The eternal life-giver is giving up his life. That's just about far enough, isn't it? That's just about far enough. I can almost see the angels straining at the gates of heaven begging the Father to allow them to go to his rescue. I can almost hear their cries, "You've done enough for these creatures, Jesus! You've done enough already - no more!"

**Demotion #7 he not only became obedient to the point of death, but even death on a cross.**

Verse 8 says that he not only became obedient to the point of death, but even death on a cross. How does Jesus die? By drinking hemlock and lying back on a couch with his disciples at his side? By taking cyanide tablet that will assure a quick and painless death?

The God of the universe, giving up the divine privileges, loosening his grip, emptying himself, taking the likeness of a bondservant, now acquiesces to death on the cross. The mode of execution that didn't simply kill men, but rather tortured them slowly so that the sensation of dying would be amplified and experienced in the fullest measure. Not only this, but his friends ran from him. His own disciple betrayed him. The leaders of the very people who he came first to save crucified him between two thieves in the manner most cruel known to man at that time.

While all that was going on, common men and women would walk by, laugh, spit, pick up stones to throw at him, and hurl ugly accusations that made the hellishness complete. We started in a position that could be no higher. We end in a position that can be no lower.

It's ironic that the best-selling books in this country are the rags-to-riches books, the bottom-to-the-top books, the depths-to-the-heights books. Have your best life now. Speak your destiny into being. God wants you to be rich! Name and claim glory and honor and riches for yourself. This is the anti-Christian garbage people are hearing in some churches and given by tv preachers.

The apostle Paul says to believers, "Come on, believers, wake up. You're deeper than that, aren't you? You don't run off that fuel, do you? Your needle doesn't point that way. You have more substance in your soul now that you know Christ, don't you?"

The most important story in the world is the story of your Lord, my Lord, your Savior, my Savior. It's the riches-to-rags story: burial rags! It's a top-to-bottom story. It's a height-to-depth story. It's the story of a God who voluntarily demoted himself seven times - the story of a God who so decreased and downscaled, who lost on purpose and who died so that the penalty of your sin and mine would be paid in his blood for all eternity.

That is the greatest story you have ever heard, or I have ever told, and it's true. It happened in history, and there were eyewitnesses, and there is a written record.

Jesus did it out of love for you and me. Because he did it, look what God the Father did to honor him: In **vv. 9-11** we have one of the most majestic pieces of Scripture: **"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 confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father."**

There's going to be a day when the world will wake up to who Jesus is. He's Lord. And those who don't wake up in time are those the book of the Revelation says are going to cry out at that moment of great awareness. People shouting "I was wrong! Why didn't I believe?"

Why did Paul describe these seven dramatic demotions of Jesus? It's clear from the context what Paul is driving at: he is calling the church at Philippi and Fish Lake Chapel and every Christian that has ever lived to a life of downward mobility.

Jesus humbled himself and became a servant of humanity to save souls. He calls us to set aside our self-glory and self-serving life to become a servant of others. He might put some resources in our hands, but our call is to use them for God’s glory as we serve others. This is a call to praise God for all He has provided and then put God first and others second. We come in third place. Let’s continue to ask God to bring opportunities to show the goodness of God and generosity of God to others.

**TAKING IT HOME**

1. Is promoting yourself to others more important that seeking God’s will and being a servant like Jesus?
2. What are the things you cling to that are hardest to surrender to Jesus Christ?
3. Are you trying to use your position to prove you are important? Or are you using your position to serve the glory of God and needs of others?