

A Contemplation Of The Two States Of Christ For The Beginning Of Holy Week.

Text: Phil 2:5-11

Suggested Hymns:
733, 87, 15, 283, 112

- 1) Christ's Humiliation Shows That He Suffered For Us
- 2) Christ's Exaltation Makes Us Sure That He Has Fully Accomplished The Work Of Our Redemption

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Philippians 2:5–11, ⁵ *Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus,* ⁶ *who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God,* ⁷ *but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men.*

⁸ *And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.*

⁹ *Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name,* ¹⁰ *that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth,* ¹¹ *and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.* (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

Today we enter into Holy Week. In this week the holy Passion of our Lord should occupy our minds. Our thoughts should be with our dear suffering and dying Saviour, as He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, as He was betrayed by one of His own disciples, and delivered into the hands of sinners, and most shamefully abused and taken from one unjust court to another, and innocently condemned to death.

The contemplation of this sad story should fill our hearts with holy emotions; for all that our dear Saviour suffered He has suffered for us, as Isaiah says, ***“He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed.”***¹

We should say, *O my dear Saviour, how much You endured, and suffered for me to redeem such a worm as I am! Accept my thanks, O Lord, for all Your suffering, and draw me unto You that I may cling to You in life and in death, that I may live for You alone upon this earth, that I may hate and despise sin in every shape and form, and be Thine forever!*

Good Friday falls in this week. On that solemn day we shall commemorate the death of our dear Lord, and standing beneath the cross, we shall see how He brought for us the great sacrifice of His life.

It is proper that we prepare our hearts for this serious meditation, and the Epistle of the day, which deals with the two states of Christ, will direct our thoughts into the right channel that we might derive a true benefit from the perusal of the history of our Lord's suffering and death.

Let us consider *A Contemplation Of The Two States Of Christ For The Beginning Of Holy Week*. May the Lord bless our meditation.

1. Christ's Humiliation Shows That He Suffered For Us.

Christ's humiliation was, that, according to His human nature, He did not always and not fully use the divine majesty communicated to His human nature.

Our text says of the Lord Jesus Christ that, "*being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God.*" Jesus was in the form of God. Now that does not mean that He merely looked like God in His outward appearance, or that He was not God in reality, as an angel may assume a human form and appear in the form of a man, though he is not a man, but an angel.

No; "Jesus was *in the form of God*" means that He was and is true God. His form was none other than the divine form. Yet He thought it not robbery to be equal with God. He did not make an open display of His divine form upon this earth. He did not parade His divine majesty among men as a king would parade the spoils which he has taken away from the captured enemy. In this way Jesus did not think it robbery, or something to enhance His glory with and to make a show of, to be equal with God.

Our text continues, "*7 but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men.*" Jesus made Himself of no reputation, that is, He voluntarily abstained from the use of His divine power

and majesty. He acted like a king who leaves his throne and his country for a while and does not exercise his power and does not show what he really is, but travels incognito, as we say.

So the Son of God laid aside the use of His divine glory for a while and did not make use of His divine powers. He even laid aside the use of His divine omniscience and did not know when the Day of Judgement was to come, not because He could not know that, but because voluntarily He did not want to know it in the state of His humiliation.

Jesus distinctly says in Mark 13:32, ³² ***“But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.”*** He made Himself of no reputation and took upon Himself the form of a servant, as the Apostle says. The form of God He exchanged, so to say, with the form of a servant. Not as a lord and master did the Son of God appear upon this earth, but as a servant, that is, as a slave, as He Himself says in Mark 10:45, ⁴⁵ ***“For ... the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve.”***

The hymnist writes,²

His power to use He now refrains,
No crown adorns His brow;
He who as king for ever reigns
Comes as a servant now.

And ***“and coming in the likeness of men,”*** says the Apostle. This does not mean that He was not true man, but only bore the resemblance of a man, as the words have been erroneously interpreted. No; Jesus Christ is true man as well as true God. He has a true human body and a true human soul.

“He was in the likeness of men” is as much as to say: He was like us all, He was flesh and blood the same as we, He was made our brother, He assumed our human nature. There was only one thing in which He was not like us all, and that is, He was without sin.

What humiliation of the eternal Son of God that in this way He should descend to us, that the great God in heaven should abstain from the use of His power, be a servant, and become man!

But the Apostle also proceeds to show what all this humiliation of the eternal Son of God was for. He says, “⁸*And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.*” Jesus was *found in appearance as a man*, that is, His ways were the ways of men. He acted like other men, He ate and drank, He spoke, He slept, He experienced sorrow and gladness, He wept, He felt as other men do.

But in all this He humbled Himself. It was a most wonderful condescension on the part of the eternal Son of God that He should act the part of a man on this earth, that He who is the eternal Creator should be a creature and live as a creature.

But what was all this wonderful humiliation for? The Apostle says, “*He became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.*” Was it for a pastime that God sent His only-begotten Son into the world, in the form of a servant, and had Him become man, and humble Himself? No; there was a purpose to that, and that purpose was, that He should show obedience to His heavenly Father, that He should do all that His heavenly Father had decreed upon Him, that He should lead a life of suffering, a servant’s life which was to terminate in the most shameful way, in the death on the cross.

And did not Jesus lead such a servant’s life of suffering? Did he not declare that this was His mission upon this earth to do His Father’s will? Did He not submit to the Father’s will unto the end? Did He not say in the garden of Gethsemane, “*Father, not my will, but Thine be done*”?³ Was He not obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, and did He not pour out His life on the accursed tree?

But again we must ask, What was the object of this obedience in Christ’s humiliation? Why was it the Father’s will that His dear Son should be a servant and bring the great sacrifice of His life? A hint to the correct answer we find in the beginning of our Epistle, where the Apostle says, ⁵ *Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus,* ⁶ *who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God.*

Why does Paul admonish the Philippian that they should let the same mind of humiliation be in them which was also in Christ Jesus? Why does he connect

their humiliation with Christ's humiliation? It was because they owed everything to Christ, their entire salvation.

There are six stages in the state of Christ's humiliation: His conception, His birth, His suffering under Pontius Pilate, His crucifixion, His death, and His burial. Christ passed through all these stages for us. He humbled Himself for our sakes.

By His obedience He worked out a spotless righteousness for us and kept for us the Law of God which we have not kept, and by His suffering and death on the cross He bore the punishment which we have deserved for our sins.

Let us always bear in mind, then, as we contemplate Christ's holy Passion, His painful suffering and bitter death on the cross, that all this was done for us, to redeem us sinful creatures and to rescue us from eternal perdition. For this was the object of Christ's humiliation. His humiliation shows that He suffered for us.

2. Christ's Exaltation Makes Us Sure

That He Has Fully Accomplished The Work Of Our Redemption.

The Apostle, however, also speaks of Christ's exaltation, and by His explanation we are made sure of the fact that He has fully accomplished the work of our redemption.

The state of Christ's exaltation is, that, according to His human nature, He fully and continually uses His divine majesty communicated to His human nature. The Apostle expresses that in the words, ⁹ *Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name,* ¹⁰ *that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth,* ¹¹ *and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

In the state of His humiliation Christ did not always and fully use that divine majesty which was communicated to His human nature. He did use it at times, for instance, in His transfiguration, and when He performed His divine miracles. These were the rays of glory in the state of humiliation. In general, however, He refrained from the use of His divine power, especially in His last suffering.

But what do we see in Christ as soon as He entered upon the state of His exaltation? The form of a servant is discarded, and He appears in all the glory of His divine majesty.

There are five stages in the state of His exaltation: His descent into hell, His resurrection, His ascension, His sitting at the right hand of God the Father Almighty, and His return to judge the living and the dead.

What a difference between the humbled Christ and the exalted Christ! What a difference between Christ as He walked upon this earth in the flesh before His death and burial, and as He appeared after His resurrection!

It was the same human body with the print of the nails in hands and feet and the open side, which He had in His resurrection and with which He ascended into heaven. But how different was that body from what it had been before!

It passed through the thickest walls and through locked doors as the light passes through the glass; it appeared and vanished out of sight; no enemy was permitted to see it; it could float in the air, and had become thoroughly what the Apostle calls a spiritual body.⁴

Now, in His exaltation, Christ fully and continually uses the divine majesty of His human nature. Now the human body of Christ is not only endowed with all the qualities of His divinity, as it had been already in His humiliation, but He also fully uses His divine majesty in the human body.

We must not think that the human part of Christ is far away from us in heaven and that merely His divine part is with us upon this earth. No; this is the wonderful part of His exaltation that His human body is just as much everywhere as His divinity. God has now highly exalted Him, and has given Him a name which is above every name, that is, He has seated that Christ who walked upon this earth in humiliation upon the divine throne.

Now He is no more in that state in which He was not generally recognised as God, but in the state in which every knee must bow before Him. Is He not worshiped by all the angels in heaven? Is He not worshiped by His faithful people upon the earth? Must not even the demons in hell bow before Him, and will not all the unbelievers who have refused to bow the knee before Him in this life be compelled to do so on the Day of Judgement ?

But why was it necessary that Christ should enter upon the state of His exaltation after passing through the humiliation? It was because otherwise we could never be sure of the fact that He has fully accomplished the work of our redemption.

How could we know that God is perfectly satisfied with His dear Son's obedience unto death, even the death of the cross; how could we know that God has accepted the great work which His beloved Son has accomplished for us in His suffering and death, to redeem us from sin and to gain for us life everlasting, if Christ had passed through the state of humiliation only, if our Redeemer was dead, if He had ended in the grave?

Could we be sure of our redemption? Would we not rather have to think that He had failed in the attempt to save us, that His entire work for us had been in vain? What good would a dead Saviour do us?

But now God *has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name*. And what is the fruit of His exaltation? Not only was He thereby released from the fetters of death, not only was He thereby taken from prison and from judgement, as the Prophet Isaiah says,⁵ but the great fruit and benefit of His exaltation for us is, that now we have been made sure of the fact that He has fully accomplished the work of our redemption.

God has exalted Him, and thereby has accepted His great work for us, and declared that His divine justice which demanded our punishment is satisfied, and that nothing more needs to be done for our salvation. Now we can exclaim with St. Paul in Romans 8:34, ³⁴ *Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.*

Let us enter into Holy Week, then, with such sentiments, based on our dear Lord's humiliation and exaltation, that from His humiliation we gather how He suffered for us, and that by His exaltation we be made sure of the fact that He has fully accomplished the work of our redemption. And may the Lord be with us and grant us His blessing! Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

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- ¹ Isaiah 53:5
² Hymn 26 v 3
³ Luke 22:42
⁴ 1 Cor 15:44
⁵ Isa 53:8