

I know that I'm repeating the lament of many others when I say that Christmas has become very commercialized. But as much as it has become commercialized, it has also become **sentimentalized**. I read a guy named Matt Redman talk about this reality a few days ago.

“We have it sunk deep into our **collective cultural consciousness that Christmas is for the happy people**. You know....

- the idyllic family situations where everyone circles up around the hearth on Christmas Eve.....
- the healthy people who have lots to laugh about.....
- The successful and the beautiful.....
- those who have not gotten lost on the way because of the GPS they got last year.
- They are beaming after watching a Christmas classic curled up on the couch as a family in front of their ginormous flat-screen.
- We live and act as if this is who should be enjoying Christmas.

But this is backwards. Christmas—the great story of the incarnation of the Rescuer—is **for everyone, especially those who need a rescue**. Jesus was born as a baby to know the **pain and sympathize with our weaknesses**.

Jesus' **first recorded worshipers were not of the beautiful class**. They were **poor, ugly shepherds**, beat down by life and labor.

Christmas is **really about the gospel of grace for sinners**. Because of all that Christ has done on the cross, the **manger becomes the most hopeful place in a universe darkened** with hopelessness.

In the irony of all ironies, Christmas is for those who will find it the hardest to enjoy.”  
Matt B Redman

So, today, I'm praying that as we look to our text about a Humble God.....you will find **grace for you...hope for you**. **And it won't be in the sentimentalized version** of Christmas we have all imbibed. Rather, I hope it will be in the true story of a God who became a baby for broken people like us.

### **The Humility of God**

At the **very heart of Christmas is the story of humility**. Humble people. And a humble God.

Our text for today is Philippians 2, but first quickly notice from Mary's song of praise in **Luke 1.51-52**:

He has shown strength with his arm;

he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts;  
[52] he has brought down the mighty from their thrones  
and exalted those of humble estate;

Mary knows that God's prefers the humble, and exposes the proud.

Just **consider the sorts of people** that God made the major players that first Christmas:

- It was to **Shepherds** that the news of the King's birth first came.
- It was **a poor, single teenage girl** that carried the King in her womb.
- Could God have been any clearer about his preference for humility than when He **sent wise and rich men to bow down** before the poor baby?

At Christmas, **Humility is Highlighted**.

Read Philippians 2.3-11

I'm sure you noticed the **basic structure of the text** as we read it:

There is an exhortation in verses 3-4 for us to be humble.

And then in verses 5-8, Paul sets out the humility of God to us as our example of what humility looks like.

And then in verses 9-11, Paul tells us about the exaltation of Jesus.

### **1. Be Humble**

Now, the first thing there—the exhortation for us to be humble, is **pretty straightforward**. Humility means **thinking of others** as more important than yourself; it means **considering what is good for others**; as much as you think of what is good for you.

Of course, that is **easy enough to understand**. Its very difficult to accomplish.

Its very **similar to the 2<sup>nd</sup> great command** in the Bible: love your neighbor as much as you love yourself.

But we **get that all messed up**. We live day to day, as though **life were about us**: our wants; our feelings; our preferences; our good; our improvement.

I read through CJ Mahaney's book "Humility" this week in preparation for this message (that's not as big of a feat as it sounds...it's a very short book). As I read through it I tried to write down every contrast I could see between humility and pride as seen from the Scriptures:

Here are **10 contrasts that I came up with**:

**1. God is decisively drawn to humility; He is radically opposed to pride.** (Isaiah 66.2, James 4.6)

**2. Pride is logic-defying**, and has a blinding effect on us. By this I mean—you're assessment of yourself is inflated. **Humility, is an accurate assessment** of reality. (Romans 3)

**\*ill.\*** I think it's like the old story told about Muhammad Ali. It was back in the 1960s and Mr. Ali, who was still **Cassius Clay**, was a rising star of boxing, on his way to being champ. One day he was on a plane, going to a big bout. He was feeling good, laughing with friends. The stewardess walked by before they took off, looked down and saw that his seatbelt was unfastened. She asked him to fasten it. He ignored her. She asked him again, he paid no attention. Now she leaned in and issued an order: Fasten the seatbelt, now. Mr. Clay turned, looked her up and down, and purred, "**Superman don't need no seatbelt.**"

She said, "**Superman don't need no airplane. Buckle up.**" And he did.

**3. Pride is Satanic and demonic in its origin. Humility is Christ-like** and a fruit of the Spirit (Isaiah 14). The first sin, Satan's, was rooted in pride.

**4. Pride bring God's judgment**, Proverbs 16.5 says, "*Everyone* who is arrogant in heart is an abomination to the LORD; be assured, he will not go unpunished." God hates pride. **Humility positions us to receive and benefit from God's kindness**—"this is the one to whom I will look, he who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word." Isaiah 66.2

**5. Pride aims to dethrone God.** You, when you are walking in pride, are aiming to dethrone God. **Humility rejoices in the truth** that God has served us through Christ. (Mark 9.35; 10.35-37; Philippians 2.3-11)

**6. Pride is for the glory of self.** Do you know who I am, what I have done, what I have, who I know. **Humility exists to bring glory** to God.

**7. Pride compares itself to others.** If to those who are above us, we are angry and unhappy. If to those below us, we are arrogant. When we are **humble, we compare ourselves to Christ**, and run to him for grace.

**8. Pride destroys the church**, and brings disrepute on the gospel. **Humility builds** the church, and displays the character of God through the church. (Proverbs 16.18, Hebrews 12.15)

**9. Pride insists on being served.** Humility **seeks to serve**. Mark 9.35

**10. Pride uses Jesus** as a means to some other end. **Humility sees Jesus as the end**, and is just happy to be caught up in His mission. (Mark 10.35-45)

**John Stott said**, "At every stage of our Christian development and in every sphere of our Christian discipleship, pride is the greatest enemy and humility our greatest friend."

**\*ill.\*** (Franc Chan) Suppose you are an **extra in an upcoming movie**. You will probably scrutinize that one scene where 100s of people are milling around, just waiting for the 2 seconds when you can see the back of your head. Maybe your mom and your closest friend get excited about the 2 seconds with you...maybe. But no one will realize it is you. Even if you tell them, they won't care. Let's take it a step further. What if you rent out the theater on opening night and invite all your friends and family to come see the new movie about you? People will say, "you're an idiot! How could you think this movie is about you?"

Many Christians are **even more delusional than the person I've been describing**. So many of us think and live like the movie of life is all about us.

Now consider **the movie of life**:

God created the world.....were you there for that? Did he consult you?

The crossing of the Red Sea?

The resurrection?

**This movie is about God.** He is the main character. How is it possible that we live as though it is about us?"

In our pride we are **renting out the movie theater of life** for our 2 seconds of fame. And we look like idiots.

Humble people live as bit actors in God's movie, seeking to do good to those around us. To humbly live for their good, and not our own.

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Now notice with me quickly that this **command is only fully obeyed as it is obeyed by us as a congregation**—verse 5, "have this mind among yourselves...."

It can only be fulfilled congregationally. The Apostle Paul **isn't just calling on you, Christian, individually to pursue humility**; he is asking you to pursue Christ-like humility congregationally.

The goal here is that humility would **mark our corporate personality**. Our corporate character. When it does, the **character of God is put on display** among us.

Now, **don't get a big head here**, but I think we are making good progress in the pursuit of humility as a congregation.

Here's humility that I've seen here recently in this congregation:

- I've seen **parents who rejoice** at the success of someone else's child, rather than resent it. They just cheered it on.
- I've seen brothers and sisters in my **Application Group** saying, "I blew it this week with my family, please pray for me."
- I've seen **secret generosity**. No name attached. No nameplate on the side of their pew.
- I've seen men who **could be my father**, seek input from me.
- I've seen people **receive correction** w/o getting angry or retaliating.
- I've seen people who don't have children, **changing diapers**.
- I've seen people get **passed over for a position** in the church, and cheer on the one who filled the position.
- I've seen very theologically astute **people who major on love rather than knowledge**.
- I've seen people with **different convictions** walk together as friends—what to do at Halloween, how to school the kids. Strong convictions, charitably held. Its humble to not insist on our way being the only way. I've seen that here.
- I've seen people in the **midst of deep trial** who have not begun to blame God or angrily ask why they deserved the difficulty.
- I've seen people go out of their way to **encourage others**.

So, humility is alive and well here. Yes, we've got work to do. Areas to improve.

God's character is being put on display through your humility.

Keep pursuing that. Keep killing pride.

And don't get a big head about it.

CJ Mahaney has well said, "**I'm a proud man pursuing humility** by the grace of God." That is how we should think about ourselves.

So if we are going to continue pursuing.....we'll need Christ before us, and in us. We'll need to be sustained by admiration for his humility.

## **2. Admire God's Humility**

I really believe that the miracle of the **incarnation**—God taking on human flesh and bones; joining his divine nature to a human nature is the **greatest miracle in all of history**.

The fact that the infinite, omnipotent, eternal Son of God could become man and join himself to a human nature forever is the most profound mystery and miracle in all the universe.

That the one who **Mary gave birth to, gave Mary breath** is absolutely astounding.

I want us to see the humility of Christ from this text in 5 ways:

a. First, we see his humility by understanding who he is. You can't appreciate the miracle fully until you see the distance from who Jesus is, to what he became. He is God. He became a man. He became the God-man.

**\*ill.\*** Its one thing to say, well **President Obama**, the president of the United States came to Glenkirk Elementary school to read children's books to the classes. Wow, how he condescended. He is the most powerful man in the whole world. He makes decisions about wars, and policies of the greatest nation on the whole planet, and here he was....reading stories to 2<sup>nd</sup> graders. Wow, that was so humble.

Ok, that would be true. **Apart from the reality of the political stunting involved** when any politician shows up at an elementary school to read books.

But here in the incarnation of Jesus we are seeing something **much more humble**. We see the one in the **FORM of God, become a man**.

Now, this is a doctrine as important as any other in the whole Bible. **Jesus was God. Fully God**. This is the thing that **offends.....** Good man; good teacher; inspiring individual who spoke truth to power. Ok, everyone is fine with that. But to say that this man was God offends. But, its essential. Don't compromise on this truth.

Now, let's **think together for a moment about that word, 'form'**. What does it mean there.....he was in the FORM of God. When that word is used in the Bible it is **not talking about outward appearances**. It is talking about **inner nature**.

So for example:

**Romans 8:29** "Whom He foreknew, them He predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son."

**2 Corinthians 3:18**, it says, "As we look on the glory of the Lord we are transformed into His image."

What are those verses saying? Are those talking about **what we look like outwardly**? No, they are talking about something inward.

So in Philippians 2.6 for Jesus to be in the form of God means that **substantively and essentially in His deepest inner man and nature He was in the form of God**. He is God. That is the basic affirmation of the Christian faith.

**Colossians 1.19** affirms this truth when it says, that "in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell."

Now, let's look at that **next phrase in verse 6**, "[He] did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped,"

What does that mean?

It means that **equality with God was not something He had to snatch to get and it wasn't something He had to hang onto to keep**. Do you see? This is affirming that Jesus is God—in his inner and essential nature. Its to the point that he does not have to seek after it. And its to the point that He never feared He'd lose it. He's God.

**\*ill.\*** all around us are people who desperately wish that they were **American citizens**. It is something that they are grasping for; snatching for. But many of you in this room were born as American citizens. So its not something that you think of, or wish for. You have it; its yours, and there is no losing it.

In the same way, Jesus did not grasp for equality with God, because he **already had it**, and there was **no threat of him losing it**.

With this in mind—Jesus is God—we now have the ability to see how great his humility was.

**b. The second thing I want you to see is that Jesus did not insist on having what he rightly deserved**. We see this in verse 7, "but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant."

When he came into the world, he **did not demand that the world treat him as he deserved**.

When he arrived, he could have used the **same voice that spoke** the world into existence and commanded the winds and waves to obey him, and he could have **declared, "I AM," and the whole world would have fallen** to the ground before him.

Now.....I'm not making up such a scenario. **That exact scenario played out**. Do you remember what happened on the night Jesus was betrayed?

The Roman soldiers come to find Him in the garden, and in the dark of night they didn't know which was the disciples and which was Jesus, and so Jesus asks them, "Whom do you seek?" And you remember what Jesus said? "I am." Now, you probably remember that it was God in the OT who often spoke of himself this way: the I AM. So when Jesus is saying it, he is revealing his divine nature.

And you remember what happened there in the garden when he said "I AM"? The entire troop of soldiers fell to the ground. They are there to arrest Jesus, and instead they are on the ground, stammering, stunned, and under the power of a force they have never before reckoned with. They've come face to face with something much more powerful than the mighty Roman Empire.

**They've come face to face with their maker**. And they **could not stand up** in front of the revelation of him as Maker.

The **simple force of the revelation of God**, very God, elicited a sort of forced worship in the soldiers. The same worship, they will one day give when every knee, in heaven and on earth and under the earth will bow the knee to this same Jesus.

I love that scene because it gives a **picture of Jesus as he is rather than the pale, passive, weak, nice Jesus our culture** has painted on children's Bibles for us. Here we get a glimpse of the **heroic King, the mighty warrior.....the conquering one**.

But **when Jesus came he did not insist that he be treated this way**. He humbled himself. He, God, very God, I AM, the Maker and Sustainer, in whom all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell—He humbled himself, made himself nothing, and took the form of a servant.

c. **the third thing to see here is that Jesus willingly humbled himself.** Notice again in verse 7, “He made *himself* nothing.” “He *took* the form of a servant.”

This is not something that was forced upon him. And really you need to know that a more literal translation of that word servant is *bondslave*.

You may know, in Israel most slaves or servants served not for life, but for a period of time. **Seven years, maybe.** And at the end of the seven years, when the Jubilee came, those servants were freed, if they were Hebrews.

But a bondslave was a servant who had come to his master and said, ‘Master, I want to serve you forever. I always want to be attached to your house.’

And as a sign of this willingness the bondslave would be taken to the doorpost of the house, and **his ear would be nailed to the doorpost.**

It is as if Jesus went to the Father and said, ‘Father, I want to be the permanent servant of Your people.’

Oh, the humility of the Son of God—he took upon himself the form of a bondslave.

d. **Fourthly, we see his humility in that he incarnated himself as a man...** a human man. Verses 7-8, “being born in the likeness of men. [8] And being found in human form...”

God could have come as a **hurricane; or as a firestorm.** Instead he came as a **fertilized egg. God as a fetus.** He slept, and stretched and floated around in the **amniotic fluid of a teenager’s womb.**

- The one who **filled the galaxies, was confined to the peasant girl’s womb.**
- The God who right now is holding the universe together with the word of His power got 2 lungs, a heart, a liver.
- He got sick, felt fatigue—emotional and physical.
- He probably hit his thumb with the hammer.
- The God who roared and **ordered armies and empires** about like pawns on a chessboard, **became dependent** on Mary for food, and drink, and diaper changes.
- He learned. He grew. His voice changed.

As Paul said in 1 Tim. 3:16, "**great is the mystery of godliness: God was revealed in the flesh!**"

**Maybe you resist the idea of thinking of God like this.** Don’t. Its only because he entered the **muck and mire of our world**, that he’s able to pull us up out of it.

Sam Storms says it well, “It was an expression of the depths of his love for you that the Word entered the depths of human ugliness, human weakness, human humiliation.”

e. **Fifth and final, we see the humility of God in his humble death.** This is the second half of verse 8, “he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.”

**We spend all of our lives trying to protect ourselves** from shame and embarrassment. Jesus came into the world for the **very purpose of suffering the awful humiliation of death**, even death on a cross.

Maybe you are here this morning, and pride has defined your life for some years.

Than this text we’ve been looking at this morning is for you. But maybe not in the way you think. Because one way to misread this text would be to see its challenge for you to be humble, and then to see the description of Jesus humility as an example for you, so that you can try harder to be a humble person.

Now, its true that Jesus is a good example of humility. And there are some ways in which you can emulate him: not insist on certain honors; serve others willingly. But there is something about his humility that is utterly unique. Something that you very much need, but cannot emulate.

You see in his death, he was not so much an example, as he was a substitute. He was your substitute. By that I mean that you deserved the awful suffering that Jesus took. The awful suffering was for your sin. You have done wrong things that deserve to be judged. Jesus did nothing wrong. But he loved you so much that he took the judgment for your sin.

If you are here and not a Christian, you may need to believe on the Lord Jesus for the first time.

If you are here and are a Christian, you may need to take the truth of his humble life and death deeper down into your soul so that you quit walking in pride.

### **3. Boast About Jesus**

Now, there is a final thing in this text, and I want you to see it quickly. Because this in my mind captures the ache that is in your heart. We have to join this note to the note of humility we've been playing, and then we'll have harmony.

Let's read verses 8-11 again.

This text calls for humility. There is no getting around that. But there is also no getting around the reality that you heart yearns to worship something. It yearns to have something to boast about. Something to brag on. To say it more colloquially, you want to have something to shout about.

The problem of the human soul is that we enter the world seeking to shout about ourselves, and craving the experience of everyone else doing the same.

Humility slays that monster. But it does not slay the need and desire to shout, to boast, to brag.

Good news: God doesn't want you to stop bragging. He wants you to join in with the song and shout of all creation in boasting about Jesus—the exalted one.

God has highly exalted him.

God has bestowed on him the name that is above every name.

One day every knee will bow to him. Willingly or by the force of God's power.

But right now, today, you get to make him your boast.

The Bible has a lot to say about boasting. The word occurs 79 times in the Bible. More often than not, it is condemned, because the boasting is about man.

But not always:

#### **Jeremiah 9.23-24**

23 Thus says the Lord: [y](#)“Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, let not the mighty man boast in his might, let not the rich man boast in his riches, 24 but [z](#)let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the Lord who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth. [a](#)For in these things I delight, declares the Lord.”

#### **Galatians 6:14**

But far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which [1](#) the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.

This Christmas, let's humble ourselves. Let's quit acting like the movie of life is about us. And let's make our boast in the exalted Son of God, Jesus Christ.

Amen.

We know your coming back. For good. Finish this thing, King Jesus. Finish. Exalt yourself.