



THE INCARNATION

Eternally Begotten - Philippians 2:1-11

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

*(Leaders, please use these questions **as a guide for discussion**. Please don't feel like you have to go through every one!)*

Connect: What is one practical way (this advent) that can help you to grow in the wonder of the incarnation?.

Warm-Up

1. Think about the most humble person you know. Why do you think they were like this?
2. What does our culture think about humility?

Read Philippians 2:6-11

3. How do you react to these verses? Any initial thoughts, observations, or questions that arise for you?
4. How does Paul describe what Christ has done for us in these verses?
5. What was the nature of Jesus before he became human? How does this make the incarnation all the more wonderful?
6. What did he do with his high position of being with God? How is this different from people in authority here on this earth?
7. How did Jesus make himself nothing? In becoming human, how was this Jesus emptying himself?
8. What did Jesus empty himself of? Why did Jesus have to become human?
9. Why is it important that Jesus didn't become any less God or any less of a human? How is this of great comfort for you?
10. In what ways has our God served us? How is this distinct from other human religions?
11. If you were to ask your friends who don't know Jesus yet what they thought Christianity was all about, what do you think they would say? Does this align with the picture we see here?
12. How could you let them know of the reality of what Jesus has done for us?

Read Philippians 2:1-5

13. What would make Paul's joy complete? Why do you think that this should be a high priority and hope for the church?
14. In what ways might we be tempted to do things for our own praise or our own selfish ambition?
15. As we interact with others, what should be the lens through which we think of serving them?

Apply: How could we grow in our service to others to be more like Jesus over advent?

PRAY: Lord God, thank you for the awesomeness of the incarnation, that Jesus would step down from his high position to become human and serve us. Help us in our interactions with others to be like him. Amen

TITLE: INCARNATION: Begotten, Not Made - Philippians 2:1-8

LOCATION: St John's Wishart 9AM

BI: In the incarnation, Jesus "stepped down" and humbled himself from the glories and perks of the heavenly realms to become truly human.

STRUCTURE:

- Every Way God [v.6]
- Humbled Himself to Servanthood [vv.7-9]
- Called to Follow [vv.1-5]

- In his fantastic book Knowing God - the great theologian J.I. Packer writes this in his chapter on Jesus:
- "God became human; the divine Son a Jew; the Almighty appeared on earth as a helpless human baby, unable to do more than lie and stare and wriggle and make noises, needing to be fed and changed and taught to talk like any other child. And there was no illusion or deception in this: the babyhood of the Son of God was a reality. The more you think about it, the more staggering it gets. Nothing in fiction is so fantastic as is the truth of the incarnation." J.I. Packer, Knowing God.
- Nothing is so fantastic as the truth of God becoming human.
- That's why leading up to Christmas we are looking at this topic.
- Christmas is when we celebrate this great news and so our great hope and prayer is that over these next few weeks, we may see once again, just how incredible this news is!
- Today we'll see just how amazing it is, that he would humble himself in this way.
- Because in the incarnation, Jesus stepped down and humbled himself from the glories and greatness of the heavenly realms with God, to become truly human and even to die.
- Today we'll see that Jesus was:
 - o Every Way God [v.6]
 - o But Humbled Himself to Servanthood [vv.7-9]
 - o And we are Called to Follow [vv.1-5]

- **EVERY WAY GOD**
- So before Jesus became incarnate, before Jesus took on flesh he was always there.
- We explored this more fully last week so if you missed out on listening to the sermon, please catch up online
- We saw There was never a time when the Son was not OR there was never a time when the Son didn't exist.
- And before he became flesh or became human or became incarnate, he was in every way God. He wasn't a subordinate of God; he wasn't a lesser state of God, no. In every way he was and is God. He is of the same substance of God and of the same essence of God.
- The stuff that God is made of - the Son was made of!
- In fact, this is what we affirm in the words of the Nicene Creed:
- "God from God, Light from Light, True God from True God, begotten not made, one in being with the Father"
- Yes, The son is a different person from the Father, but is still in every way God as the Father is God.
- Just as the Spirit is a different person from the Father and the Son but is in every way God as they are God.
- 3 Persons, One God.
- The theological name for this belief or this doctrine is the Trinity.
- Now unfortunately today, we don't have time to go into the inner workings of the Trinity, nor can we ever really get our heads around it.
- But where Paul begins in these verses about Christ or this early church hymn about Christ - is that

- Jesus was in every way God.
- That means that before he came down and became human, Jesus existed. He was “brought about” by God eternally or begotten by God. He wasn’t created but was always there.
- And also, in being God, this came with all the attributes and the glories of being God as well!
- He was glorious, he was eternal, he was immortal, he was existing in the heavenly realms in all its holiness and majesty!
- He wasn’t part of the creation that humanity made a mess of through our sin but was with the Father in all his perfection and awesomeness.
- It’s really quite difficult to come up with the words to describe just how amazing this would have been. But it would have been incredible!
- But Paul’s focus isn’t on what the Son had before the incarnation but with what the Son did with his high position.
- What did he do?
- V6 “who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped,”
- Even though he was the eternal Son, the second person of the Trinity, God from God - he didn’t see his high position as something to taken hold of! Or something to be grasped, or something to be exploited!
- He was the one with all the power and authority but didn’t consider using it to his own gain or own profit.
- And if anyone did have the credentials to do this, it’s him! If he wanted to use it for his own gain - he could have done it! He’s God!
- But he didn’t! He didn’t think of himself or his own comfort or own high position. But said no to these things.
- Jesus is unlike anyone that we have seen before. –
- Usually, people in power and authority in this world aren’t really like this are they?
 - ○ *For my birthday in 2006 I was given tickets to go see U2’s Vertigo tour in Sydney. And not just*
 - *any tickets, but A-Reserve.*
 - ○ *Because of various reasons, the concert was delayed by 8 months or so, so to make up for it,*
 - *the A-Reserve people were invited to pre-show drinks in Acer Arena.*
 - ○ *And you know, I felt pretty special in my A-reserve Arena. Drinking as many Cokes out of glass*
 - *bottles as an 11 year old could handle.*
 - ○ *Using my high position for my own gain! Not mixing it with the other people...*
- – But more seriously and sadly - people in authority usually love their power and love grasping at it and love taking hold of it!
- ○ *Use up all the perks, fly in first-class, use the private helicopter, get that corner office in the high building with the great view, don’t mix it with the “average joe!” And even worse - don’t even care about the everyday person but exploit them for their own power gain.*
- *Human history is absolutely littered with leaders using and exploiting people for their own advantage.*
- However, Jesus didn’t consider his position of authority to be used for his own gain.
- Jesus wasn’t selfish with his position. Jesus wasn’t selfish with all the perks and majesty.
- But in his graciousness, he lovingly said the big “no” to all of these.
- He was totally self-less.

- He humbled himself; he lowered himself; he condescended himself to take on the very nature of a servant. He became a human being.
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- **Humbled Himself to Servanthood [vv.7-9]**
- - V7 “but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.”
- He Emptied himself, in order to become one of us.
- Jesus denied himself of the privileges of being with God in favour of instead stepping onto this earth.
- Now it’s important to note here, that in doing this, Jesus didn’t become in any way, shape or form, less-God. He didn’t pour out or empty himself of any deity.
- But rather he did empty himself of the majesty and the high position of the heavens that came with being God!
- We could say that His divine capacities were restrained.
- On the other hand, it’s equally important to note that he didn’t become any less human. It’s not like in the incarnation a new type of ‘being’ was created!
 - Jesus wasn’t 50% God and 50% human - like a semi-God-man hybrid.
 - Nor was Jesus just God appearing in a mask of human skin - like some kind of actor; or as if he just was dipping his toes into what it was like to be human.○
 - No - Jesus was 100% God, 100% human. Undividable. We’re going to be looking at that more fully next week But for now, let’s keep it in our minds that when it says here “he made himself nothing” - Jesus was still fully God but in comparison to his pre-incarnate state of living with God, becoming human was becoming nothing.
 - *There used to be a TV show called ‘Undercover Boss’ where a high flying CEO would go and see what life was like on the frontlines on their company.*
 - *So they would get make-up and prosthetics as a disguise themselves, and then go and work in various areas in the company...But then at the end of the day go home to their normal high-flying life.*
 - *They would ‘dip their toes’ into the life of their employees but never fully enter it.*
- But Jesus wasn’t like this...he is 100% one of us and 100% God.
- But he didn’t just become a human who lived in a palace with lots of servants ordering people around no, he took on the nature of a servant.
- Let’s remember the status of a servant in the first century - they were the lowest in society. They didn’t have autonomy over themselves but were answerable to their owners! They didn’t have the privileges of a free person.
- This is the mindset that the son had when he became human! He came not **to be** served but **TO** serve.
- And in becoming human, this enabled him to serve!
 - It enabled him to serve us by letting us know who God is and how he wants us to live!
 - It enabled him to serve the Father in obeying the Father’s will.
 - It enabled him to serve the whole of creation by redeeming it in his death and resurrection.
 - Instead of remaining immortal - he put on mortality in the incarnation to be able to die and rise for us!
- Rather than letting his creation and people wallow in sin and continuously reject him, God had compassion and love for us in serving us in this way.
- If Jesus hadn’t come to serve us in this way, we would have no salvation, no life, no hope.

- But instead, the great and glorious, the immortal and the unchangeable “I AM” whose hem of his robe filled the temple and who angels can’t look upon because of his greatness, became dependent.
 - ○ He became weak.
 - ○ He became helpless.
 - ○ He became mortal when he became human.
 - – He valued us above his own comfort. He stooped down to our level - not condescendingly or mockingly - but lovingly and compassionately.
- *It’s like a loving parent who has seen their child get hurt in someway. And they get down to their level, kneel down, and wipe away their tears.*
- But he ultimately gave up his life for us in order to destroy sin and death and reconcile us to himself.
- Even in the most humiliating way known to humankind - even through death on a cross. – He actively and purposefully and graciously humbled himself by becoming human for us.
- This is how it’s put in 2 Corinthians 8:9
- “For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.”
- What other “god” serves their people?
- Classically, people will do all sorts of things for their gods. They may pray in certain ways at certain times several times a day; they may fast for long periods of time; they may burn incense; they may do all sorts of things to appease or please their gods and serve them.
- In our western culture - people will do all sorts of things to serve their gods of career and money and prosperity and even happiness, by prioritising work over all sorts of human relationships and interactions in order to climb the ladder - and please their ‘gods’
- People may think that this is what Christianity is all about - that if we serve God by doing good things, he is happy but if we disappoint God by doing bad things he is angry.
- But here, these verses completely flip this type of thinking on its head doesn’t it?
- Because with Jesus it’s not about what we can do for God, but it’s about what God has done for us.
- Which means that we can be free from trying to be good enough, we can be free from struggling for perfectionism; we can be free from vying for God’s love or approval.
- Because God has already served us in becoming human and redeeming us.
- V8 “And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.!”
- He has given us everything we need in Jesus.
- Which means that then...we are free to serve him and live for him out of love for him as people who have been served BY him.
- We are free to serve him and live for him out of love for him as people who have been served BY him.
- Because just as Jesus has served us, we are called to serve others in the same way.
- **Called to Follow**
 - – Now, let’s go back to the beginning of the chapter here.
 - – What’s going to make Paul’s joy complete?
 - ○ Imagine - you’re writing this to a church, make my joy complete by...

- ○ By having perfect doctrine? Nope
- ○ By having great music? Nope
- ○ What about by making lots of converts, surely that's it! But no - that isn't it either!
- But let's look at V1-2: "So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. "
- Paul's greatest hope for the church in Philippi is that they would be united in love! That they would be truly one in Jesus! That they would love and serve one another. - And the primary way for them to do this is to be humble.
- Do nothing out of selfish ambition. Not one thing that we do should be for the praise of our own selfish selves.
- We shouldn't be ambitious for the glory of our peers or ambitious for high positions in structures or ambitious for power over others.
- No selfish ambition!...//
- Now - Yes it is okay for people to thank us for serving in a particular way and yes, the church does set apart people for leadership and put people in authority - but nothing that we do should be done **FOR gaining** these things. We shouldn't do stuff for the praise of others.
- And the best way to do this is to value others above ourselves. Serve them.
- Look out for the needs of others, for the interests of others.
- Put their comfort above our own; and put their needs above our own.
- And yes - this may sometimes be hard. It may cost us time, it may cost us our comfort, it may cost us our finances. it may sometimes be inconvenient, it will be sacrificial BUT it's also an amazing joy and privilege to be able to serve one another
- Because this is exactly what Christ has done for us.
- Before we count the cost of how much it's going to be to serve another person, we should think about how costly it was for Jesus to serve us. And then use that as the measure to which we serve and love each other.
- It was costly for Jesus to become human. To put it lightly - It was inconvenient for him to become dependant and needy as a baby. It was costly to take off not needing to rest and putting on a frail human body that had to nap in the stern of a boat.
- And in the end it cost him his own life in order to serve us.
- And because he served us, we are called and commanded to serve and love each other in the same way that Christ has served and loved us.
- And if we become a people like this, a church like this - then others should be able to look in on us and see God's love and self-sacrificing humility at work in and amongst us.
- V5 "Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus,"
- Jesus who was in every way God, stepped down and humbled himself to become human to serve.
- "The more you think about it, the more staggering it gets. Nothing in fiction is so fantastic as is the truth of the incarnation." J.I. Packer.