

Riches to Rags (Part 1)
Philippians 2:5-8
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Tom Pennington, Pastor
Countryside Bible Church

Well, for most of us, we grew up in high school and college studying the history of western civilization. And I certainly think that's something important since we are, in fact, in western civilization. However, most of us didn't get much training or schooling in the history of other cultures. For example, you probably know very little about Russian history. Well, I'm going to give you a short summary of the end of an important episode in Russian history this morning, and there will be a quiz at the end of the message.

Olga Romanov was Russia's last Grand Duchess. She was born in 1878. When she was born, church bells rang all across Russia. She was the sister of Nicholas the II, the last czar of Russia. Olga grew up in incredible privilege. In fact, she lived in the Imperial Palace. The Russian Imperial Palace had nine hundred rooms. Now I know what you ladies are thinking, "how do you keep that clean?" Well, don't feel too bad for them because there were five thousand indentured servants who kept the Imperial Palace. That's five per room. I think that was probably adequate. That's the circumstance in which Olga, who was fourteen years younger than her brother, Nicholas the czar, grew up enjoying the best of everything.

But then came the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917. Olga was one of the few members of the royal family that escaped execution by the Bolsheviks. She fled immediately for asylum to Denmark, and there she stayed for a number of years until after the Second World War when she began to be concerned about the growth and interest in Communism on the continent. And so, she fled from Denmark to Canada. She immigrated to Canada. In 1960 Olga died at the age of eighty-two. Olga Romanov, the last Grand Duchess of Russia, died in poverty. She lived in a small rented flat above a hair salon in the worst side of Toronto, the worst section of Toronto.

When we hear about someone like that, someone who goes from a wealthy beginning with all privilege and then, through a series of tragic circumstances, they are reduced to nothing, our hearts just go out to that person. Why is that? Well, it's because in our conception of a just and perfect world the story is always one that goes from rags to riches. We just can't imagine anything being right or fair or just about going from riches to rags. And yet, in the text that we'll

look at this morning, or begin to look at this morning, we find recorded in Philippians 2:5 through 8, the most profound riches to rags story in all the universe. But what makes it remarkable is that Christ didn't lose everything because of an accident, or because of a revolution, or because of an embezzlement of some kind, or because of His own ineptitude, Christ gladly, freely, voluntarily gave it all up for us.

Let me remind you of what we've studied so far in this brief Philippians 2. You remember that we started by looking at the first five verses and those verses deal with the theme of unity, unity among brothers in Christ. Verse 1 tells us the basis for that unity, that is: because we share some common spiritual realities, we can be unified. Verse 2 tells us about the essence of that unity. We can be of the same mind which means to maintain the same love, to be united in spirit and to have one cause intent on one purpose. Beginning in verse 3 we saw the enemies of unity, those two terrible twin sins of selfishness or selfish ambition, and empty conceit. And then beginning in the middle of verse 3 through verse 5 we saw the mindset of unity, that is how we should think if we want unity to be what we as a church are known for. And essentially the mindset of unity can be reduced to one virtue, and that is the virtue of humility.

That brings us to verse 5. Verse 5 is a kind of hinge on which this chapter and this passage swings. It takes us back to the issue of unity and humility, but it also takes us forward to verses 6 through 11 where we will be introduced to the supreme example of humility. If we're going to be united, we've got to all be pursuing humility. And if we want to be humble, then we need to look at the supreme example and learn from His example, and that is the person of Jesus Christ. Notice, he says in verse 5 have this attitude, this mindset of humility, this regarding of one another is more important than yourself, this pursuing of the interests of others before your own. Have this mindset, it's the same one Christ had, and it's crucial for unity. Notice he says, have it in yourselves or literally among yourselves. In the community of the church have the mindset Christ had. And then Paul sets out in the verses that follow to illustrate exactly what that mindset looks like.

Let me read the passage to you, we're just going to begin it today, but you follow along as I read it beginning in verse 5, Philippians 2. Paul writes,

Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by

becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.’

It’s very possible that a portion of that text I just read to you was part of a hymn that was sung in the early church that Paul and the Apostles and others, who loved Christ, lifted their voices together in song in praise of Christ. It’s theme is obviously the Lord Jesus Christ as the supreme example of humility. And Paul urges us to follow His example, in how we relate to each other. But what exactly is the example of Christ? Well, Paul illustrates the humility of Christ by showing us His great condescension. He explains where Christ started and how far down He came.

It’s interesting when you read this passage. It’s exactly the opposite of the mindset and attitude of Satan. You remember Satan who was created as the son of the morning, one of the shining creatures, perhaps the one who oversaw the angelic hosts of heaven. He decided that he should exalt himself above God. And the Scripture says that because of that God will send him to the lowest hell. Christ, on the other hand, started at the highest point in the universe as God Himself and voluntarily, willingly humbled Himself down to our level to become like one of us. Christ was everything that you and I are, except for sin. And He even went lower than us because He subjected Himself to something you and I will never be subjected to, and that is the incredible indignity, torture, and torment of the cross. He died as a common criminal for our sakes.

Theologians describe the act of the Son of God becoming man, being incarnated, that is taking on flesh, they describe that action as His condescension. He condescended from the greatest height to be one of us. But then when you talk about the fact that Christ now as a man was willing to humble Himself, even to the point of dying as a criminal on a cross, theologians call that His humiliation, His humiliation. But when theologians describe the reality that after His resurrection He ascended into heaven and now He is exalted at the right hand of God waiting until all of His enemies be made the footstool of His feet as the psalm says that’s His exaltation. This passage records all three of those amazing realities. His condescension, His coming down and taking on the form of one of us; His humiliation, His going beneath us and being persecuted and tried and put to death as a criminal; and then His being exalted again into the heights of heaven, His exaltation. We’re going to look at each of these.

But today we're going to begin our study by looking at the first half of that, verses 6 through 8. These verses that detail the amazing condescension and the unthinkable humiliation of Jesus Christ. And as we examine these three verses this week and next, I want us to see the four giant steps down that Christ took to reach you and me. Four huge steps of condescension as He descended from what He was to become what we are, and then to stoop even below us to reach you and me. And in so doing, as we look at this incredible journey of Christ, it's intended to be an example for us.

Let's look together at step number one, His first step. We'll call it this: what He always was, what He always was. Notice verse 6, "who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped," You see this marks the place where Christ's journey started. This is where His condescension began. This is what He always was.

Notice the pronoun "who." It's very interesting because it refers back to the end of verse 5 "Christ Jesus." Christ, of course, being the name of Messiah, the Anointed One and Jesus being Christ's earthly, human name. It simply means Yahweh saves, Jehovah saves. But it was His human name, because Paul wants us to understand that the one that he's writing of is the Jesus of history. It's the son of Mary, and as it was supposed, of Joseph. It's the one who was born in Israel in the tiny village of Bethlehem, who grew up as a boy in Nazareth, who all of His neighbors knew as the boy who worked with His father in the carpenter shop, the one who became in time, as He grew into maturity and manhood, a famous rabbi who traveled across the country teaching, and who eventually was crucified by the Romans in AD 30, and who eyewitnesses say rose from the dead. It's that Jesus, the historical Jesus, about whom I'm speaking Paul says.

Compare that with some of the things we've been subjected to in recent years from the television in the search for the historical Jesus. Paul says this is the historical Jesus, and let me tell you who He is. Regarding that historical person, Jesus of Nazareth, Paul makes an incredible claim, notice it, "He existed in the form of God." What makes this claim remarkable is that these assertions are about a man who had lived a mere thirty years before. People were still living who had heard Him teach, who had seen His miracles, who knew Him. What if you received a letter from someone who lived in 1974, and the letter claims that someone both of you knew existed in the form of God?

But the Philippians understand this, they take it, they have come to believe and accept it. Notice the NAS says, "He existed." This is not the usual Greek word or Greek verb for "to be."

Instead, it's one that speaks of continued existence; and the tense of the verb, we could translate it like this, Christ Jesus who "continually existing in the form of God." Now that statement is awkward, but there are two very important conclusions or implications of it. "Who was continually, or is continually existing in the form of God." The first implication is that Christ existed before He was born in Bethlehem. This is what theologians call His preexistence. He existed before He showed up in the womb of the virgin Mary. The other implication is that His full unabridged deity continued after He was put in the womb of the virgin Mary. He continued to be. He is continually existing in the form of God. Theologians have often put it this way through the centuries. Remaining what He was, that is in the form of God; He became what He was not, and that is man.

Now the problem in understanding what Paul means here in this passage is our English word "form" because, when we hear that word, it's confusing. We often use their English word "form" in contrast to substance. When you're talking about the law, you're talking about making sure that you're following the law, whether it's the IRS regulations, or whether it's what the local governments expect. We talk about they want, substance over form. They want to make sure that you are in substance obeying the law and not merely seeming to in form. That's how we use our English word, and so that confuses it. It makes it sound like Christ was, well, kind of like God at least in some ways.

But the Greek word is the word "morfeý." You see that word in some English words. It's the basis for some English words. It simply means this, "that which fully characterizes something, the essential characteristics of something." It's not merely talking about outward form or appearance, but that which corresponds to the internal reality. Let me give you a little illustration.

When we talk about someone as a human being, the "morfeý" of human beings is humanity, their shared characteristics of humanity. But that can take on different outward forms. For example, on our campus this morning we have those who have the "morfeý" of humanity who are over crawling around in the nursery. We have toddlers, we have young people, we have young adults, we have middle-aged adults, and we have the "my you're looking well" adults. We have the whole category. Those outward manifestations are all different, and, yet we all share in common the "morfeý" of humanity, what the essential characteristics of humanity. That's what this word means. It always signifies a form which fully expresses "the essential characteristics of what it's describing."

So, what is Paul saying? Well, remember God has no outward form. We're told that He is invisible in 1 Timothy 1:17. Christ tells us in John 4:24 that God is a spirit. There is no outward appearance or form. And so, when Paul says, that before the incarnation Christ was in the form of God, it can't be anything external. It can't be anything outward. He's not saying Christ sort of looked like God. He, saying that internally, in the essential characteristics, He was an exact representation of God. He means that Christ was exactly like God in the divine attributes. He was God.

Well, Paul makes a second statement just in case we didn't get it, just in case we missed it that He was in the form of God. He says not only was He in the form of God but notice verse 6, He was equal with God. This is what He always was, equal with God. Now you know this Greek word for equal because we use it in a number of contexts in English. It's the word "isos." For example, if those of you who are currently in school or some of you need to sort of rattle around a little bit and pull up your geometry from high school or college, you'll remember that we talk about an isosceles triangle. An isosceles triangle is a triangle in which two sides are exactly equal. We use the word "isomer" which refers to a molecule that has slightly different structure from another molecule but is absolutely identical in its chemical elements and its atomic weight. Isometric means simply equal in measure, it's exactly the same. Listen, the Greek language has no better way to say that Christ is exactly equal to God than this. He is exactly equal. Isn't this what the Jews accused Him of? You remember in John 5 as Jesus was ministering, turn for a moment to John 5. You remember that he begins the chapter, John does, by talking about a healing, and what really bothered the Jewish leaders was that Jesus chose to do it on the Sabbath. And so, they confront Him about this, and of course, this is what escalates the tension between Jesus and these religious leaders. And verse 16,

For this reason the Jews were persecuting Jesus, because He was doing these things on the Sabbath. [Verse 17, He responds to them] But He answered them, listen "My Father is working until now, and I Myself am working."

Now to us with a sort of western mindset, we kind of scratch our heads and say what did He say I mean what does that mean? Well, look at the response of the Jewish leaders and you'll get it. Verse 18,

For this reason therefore the Jews were seeking all the more to kill Him, because He not only was breaking the Sabbath, but He also was calling God His own [unique special] Father, making Himself equal with God.

That's what He was saying "I'm equal with God." They got it, and they wanted to kill Him because of it. In fact, He goes on in verse 19 following to identify the reality that not only am I equal with God, but I am one with God. He gets to Chapter 10 of John, and He says that "I and the Father are one."

For the life of me, I can't understand how people can read the Gospels and say, "well, you know Jesus never really claimed to be God. No one really thought that about Him." Where have you been, what book are you reading? You see exactly what the Jews accused Christ of, and what He said Himself, is what Paul is saying in Philippians 2. He is equal with God. Perhaps nowhere in Scripture are there more direct and concise statements about the deity of Jesus Christ than in Philippians 2, and yet the Scripture is permeated with similar claims.

We don't have time this morning to chase them all down, but let me give you a few of my favorites. Colossians 1:15, Christ is the image, the icon of the invisible God. He is the icon of the God who is invisible. Hebrews 1:2 and 3,

God in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom He made the world. Nothing was created without Jesus Christ. And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature.

Scripture is crystal clear about who Christ is. He's God. But, I think my favorite passages about the deity of Jesus Christ come in the Gospel of John. John just drives this home time after time. It's because of his purpose. You remember at the end of the book of John, John tells us why he wrote it. He says these things have I written unto you that you might believe in the name of the Son of God and that believing you might have life in His name. I want you to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God.

And so, he lays out his case, and he doesn't lose much time. Notice Chapter 1:1. "In the beginning was the "logos," the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God." Verse 14, "And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten Son from the Father, full of grace and truth." Verse 18, "No man has seen God at any time; the only begotten God that's a reference to Jesus Christ 'the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him."

John pulls no punches. This is the way it is. But, I think my favorite in all the Gospel accounts

is in John 8, John 8 notice verse 51,

Jesus says “Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps My word he will never see death.” [The Jews said to Him, wait a minute,] “Now we know that You have a demon. [Because] Abraham died, and the prophets *also*; and You say, ‘If anyone keeps My word, he will never taste of death.’ “Surely you are not [saying you are] greater than our father Abraham, who died? The prophets died, too; who exactly do you make yourself out to *be*?”

Verse 56, Christ gets to the point.

Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, he saw *it* and was glad. [Well, as typical, they misunderstood,] So, the Jews said to Him, “You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?”

Notice what Jesus says next. If you’d never read it before, it would be shocking. Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, verily, verily, aman, aman, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am.” [Jesus takes the ineffable name of God, that name of God that when Moses said, “Who shall I say is sending me?” to the people of God, God said tell them, “I AM.”]

Jesus takes the name that the Jews wouldn’t even speak, but when they came to it in the reading of Scripture they would read, instead of the name Yahweh they would read the name Adonai. And He takes that name that they wouldn’t even pronounce, and He takes it on His lips, in reference to Himself. They got it. Verse 59, “Therefore they picked up stones to throw at Him ...”

They were going to stone him on the spot because He was claiming to be Yahweh, the God of the Old Testament. “Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple.” One more passage in John, John 12 where John makes this point. Notice verse 38, but let’s start in the middle of verse 36:

... Jesus spoke [all of these things, and they went away and hid themselves from them or] He went away and hid Himself from them. But though He had performed so many signs before them, *yet* they were not believing in Him. *This was* to fulfill the word of Isaiah the prophet which he spoke, “LORD, WHO HAS BELIEVED OUR REPORT? AND TO WHOM HAS THE ARM OF THE LORD BEEN REVEALED?” [from Isaiah 53.] For this reason they could not believe, for Isaiah

said again, and then He quotes Isaiah from another spot, “HE HAS BLINDED THEIR EYES, [AND] HE [HAS] HARDENED THEIR HEART, SO THAT THEY WOULD NOT SEE WITH THEIR EYES AND PERCEIVE WITH THEIR HEART, AND BE CONVERTED AND I HEAL THEM.”

Now watch what He says in verse 41.

“These things Isaiah said” what things – the things in verse 40. Where are those words recorded in the prophet Isaiah, Isaiah 6. Now watch what John says, “These things Isaiah said because Isaiah saw His glory,” that is the glory of Christ ‘and he spoke of Him.’

Now flip back for a moment to Isaiah. To really understand and appreciate what John is saying you have to look at Isaiah 6. You remember this incredible vision Isaiah gets, verse 1.

In the year of King Uzziah’s death I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple. Seraphim stood above Him, each having six wings [And he describes these magnificent creatures.] Verse 3, They’re calling out to one another saying, “Holy, Holy, Holy, is Yahweh of hosts, The whole earth is full of His glory.” ... the foundations ... tremble at the voice of him.

Verse 5, Isaiah responds, “Woe is me, I am ruined! Because [I live] I am a man of unclean lips, And I live among a people of unclean lips;” [Watch this,] “For my eyes have seen the King, YAHWEH, of hosts.”

When you see the Lord in all caps, it’s that special Hebrew name for God that’s translated “HE IS.” When God speaks of Himself, He says “I AM.” When we speak of Him, we speak of Him as “HE IS.” That’s the translation in the Hebrew, but it’s Jehovah, it’s Yahweh. So, Isaiah saw Yahweh. John says he saw Christ. John’s making it clear that Jesus, in fact, is God. Listen, we embrace that don’t we? But throughout history there have been those who have hated the gospel of Jesus Christ who have attacked this very point.

I’ll never forget when Sheila and I first arrived in California sixteen years ago. Shortly after we arrived we went over to Fuller Seminary, and we were going to look around the campus and we went in the bookstore and, as most of you know, Fuller has long since become very errant and aberrant in its theology in most cases. And I was shocked, though, when I walked in the

bookstore, and I saw featured in the bookstore a book written about the origin of Jesus Christ. And essentially the thesis of the book, and this was featured, it was one that they had a large stack of books hoping to sell them all. The thesis of this book was that Jesus was not the virgin born son of Mary, but instead He was the product of an illegitimate relationship between Mary and a Roman soldier.

That's what the liberals believe, they attack the person of Christ. To Joseph Smith and Mormonism, Jesus is simply the spirit brother of Lucifer, both of whom came from the union of Yahweh with a woman. To Jehovah's Witnesses, Jesus is the first created being in the universe. To many ordinary Americans, Jesus was just a highly moral man, a good teacher, a wonderful example to follow of how to give your life for others. I love the way C. S. Lewis addresses this sort of common attitude of Jesus as a great teacher in his book, *Mere Christianity*. Listen to what he says.

“You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon, or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come up with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.”

You see, no good man claims to be God as Jesus did. If He's not God, then He's not good. He's not a good teacher.

Perhaps the saddest of all are those who embrace ostensibly the deity of Jesus Christ, who take a survey and say, “Yes, I believe Jesus is God.” And yet they refuse to bow their knee in submission to Him. To many in our country, and perhaps some here, they would say “Yes, Jesus is God.” But, to them, Jesus is more like a genie that they take out once or twice a year and sort of rub the bottle to get what they want. Listen, Jesus, the eternal Son of God, the great I AM, the One who bears the form of God, who is in every way exactly equal to God, who is God, will not be domesticated.

The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe describes two girls, Susan and Lucy, who asked Mr. and Mrs. Beaver to describe Aslan. To those of you who aren't familiar with the Chronicles of Narnia, Aslan is Lewis' allegorical depiction Jesus Christ. And when they asked about Aslan, the response they get is that Aslan is a lion, the son of the great emperor beyond the sea. So Susan and Lucy, their immediate response is this, when they find out he is a lion, “well, is he safe?” Mr. Beaver's immortal reply was “who said anything about being safe? Of course, he isn't safe,

but he's good. He's the king I tell you."

That's where Christ's unthinkable journey down started. He was in the form of God and exactly equal with God.

The second step Christ took marks the beginning of His dramatic descent. Not only have we learned what He always was, but secondly Paul tells us what He freely chose, what He freely chose. Notice the middle of verse 6.

who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself.

Through the inspiration of the Spirit, Paul tells us what the preincarnate Christ was thinking. He did not regard, that is He did not think or consider His equality with God a thing to be grasped. Many of us grew up with the King James Version. We still remember the wording "that Christ thought it not robbery to be equal with God." Where did that translation come from, and how did we get from that to "something to be grasped?"

Well, let me give you a short history of the word, the Greek word. It's really quite interesting, it originally meant "robbery." It meant to steal, to take something. But then it came to mean not the act of robbery, but "what you took, the plunder that you took, the spoil that you took." And then from there the word lost the whole connotation of robbery, and it came to describe a highly prized possession. And then eventually the word came to mean to clutch something greedily, to hold onto something at all costs.

What's going on here? Paul says Christ was equal with God in every sense. But Christ did not treat His equality with God, all the privileges that that equality brought Him, He did not treat it as a prized possession to be greedily clutched and ostentatiously displayed for His own advantage. Christ didn't use His privileges for His own personal advantage. He didn't decide to hold onto them at all costs. Instead, He chose, while still remaining equal with God, to lay aside some of those privileges and to humble Himself and, as John says, to take the towel of a slave. Remember the context of this. Paul is using Christ as an illustration of what it means to humble yourself. So, this expression "did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped," is an illustration of how Christ, verse 4, did not look out for his own personal interests.

Here's the application. Christ didn't cling to His own privileges and to His own rights, but

instead, He decided that He should be eager to give them up to serve us. And Paul says that's how we're to think. Are you willing to give up your status, your position, your rights, your privileges, whatever they are and to put on the towel of a slave and serve the people around you? Are you willing, not only to serve, but to be treated like a slave? In some ways that's the greatest test of our servanthood, isn't it? Like our Lord, we must be willing to lay aside everything to serve one another. And let me say, folks, that starts at home. Are you serving the people that live in your household, or are you waiting to be served? The same thing is true when you come to church. Do you come to church to be served or to serve?

What about the people that you know around you who are in need? Are you giving up your own rights and privileges and your own interests to serve them? That's what Paul is saying. It means that we should consider others as more important than we are, verse 3. It means we should put the interests of others before our own, verse 4. That is exactly how Christ thought. He refused to hold on to at all costs, to selfishly cling to His rights and His privileges as God. But instead, verse 7 says "but He emptied Himself." The Greek conjunction "but" is a very strong one. It says "but" in absolute contrast to seizing and greedily clutching His rights and privileges He emptied Himself.

Now the verb "to empty" is the Greek word "kenao." I tell you that because you'll recognize the familiar theological word "kenosis" comes from this word "to empty." This one Greek word has caused a lot of trouble through the years because it raises the question, "He emptied Himself of what?" There have been some terrible even heretical answers to that question. Some of them are fairly harmless, like Wesley's great hymn that we all love and sing, "And can it be," when he says Christ emptied Himself of all but love. You don't believe that, and neither do I, but we sing it.

There are primarily two wrong views of what Christ gave up in the incarnation. These are views you should not hold. Number one, what's called the "kenotic view," kenotic, the kenotic view. This says Christ gave up certain of His divine attributes, especially those omni attributes, you know omnipresence, omniscience, and omnipotence. That Christ left those in heaven as it were. More radical forms of this view say He gave up all the divine attributes, and He became only man. But whatever form it takes, this view is a denial of the deity of Jesus Christ because, at any moment in time or eternity Jesus was anything less than God, then He ceased to be God, an absolute impossibility. Hebrews 13:8 says, "Jesus Christ is" what "the same yesterday, today, and forever."

In the gospels we find it clear that during His earthly life, Christ exercised those omni attributes. For example, His omnipresence, you remember in John 1 when He sees Nathanael coming and He states about Nathanael that he is a man in whom is no guile. And Nathanael says, well wait a minute, how do You know me, and He says before you ever came I saw you sitting under the fig tree. We'll talk about this more next week, but Jesus as God well, in all of space He was omnipresent. As man, He was located in one small country in the Middle East.

He also exercised His omniscience while He was on earth. In John 2:24 and 25, we find that He knew what was in man. He didn't need anybody to tell Him what was in man. He knew what people were thinking before they spoke. He knew, and He exercised that omniscience. Notice John, turn for a moment to John 16. His apostles, His disciples affirmed this. John 16:30, "Now we know that You know all things," These were the men that were closest to Christ, and they understood that He exercised omniscience. And, of course, in His omnipotence He did many miracles. So, Christ didn't leave those attributes in heaven, He brought them with Him.

The second wrong view is not only the "kenotic view," but the second wrong view of what Christ gave up in the incarnation is what is called the "View of Anselm," the famous theologian. He said Christ acted like He didn't possess any of the divine attributes. He still had them. He just didn't use them at all. But the orthodox doctrine of the kenosis is that Christ surrendered absolutely no attribute of His deity. So, the question is, what did He give up, what did He empty Himself of, what is the biblical doctrine of the "kenosis?" Well, let me give it to you very briefly. In the incarnation, Christ emptied Himself in two ways.

Number one: He veiled His preincarnate glory. He veiled His preincarnate, that is before He became man, glory. Look at John 17:5. On the night before His crucifixion, He is praying to His Father, and He says in verse 5, "Now, Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was." You see when He took on human flesh, He didn't lose His glory. He veiled it so that it wasn't always clearly seen and obvious. And then He's asking His Father to restore it to its full splendor. I say He didn't lose it. He didn't absolutely surrender it because there were a couple of occasions in His life when it was obvious. You remember one was at the Mount of Transfiguration. Matthew 17:2 says, "... He was transfigured before them; and His face shone like the sun, and His garments were like bright lightning."

Just for a moment, the veil of His humanity slipped away and those three of His disciples got to see Him in His glory. The same thing happened in the Garden of Gethsemane on the night of the crucifixion. Interestingly enough, it was not portrayed in the movie The Passion of Christ. But it

is when Christ asked them who they were seeking, and you remember the soldier said, “Well we’re seeking Jesus and He says I am.” And the Scripture says the soldiers fell back. They got just the slightest glimmer of the glory of Jesus Christ. But during His earthly life, He veiled His glory.

The second way He emptied Himself is He voluntarily restricted, and I have to use this language carefully, He voluntarily restricted the use of some of His divine attributes. In other words, He willingly chose not to constantly exercise certain attributes. For example, He never used His omnipotence as God for His own ease. Have you ever thought about that? I mean Jesus Christ chose to suffer all of the inconveniences of His day even though He knew every human device for convenience that would ever be invented. And He could have spoken them into existence, and yet He didn’t do that. The most obvious example is when Satan said to Him, “why don’t you, you’re hungry, you’ve been without food for forty days. Why don’t you just speak and these stones will become bread.”

When Jesus took a long journey, he became, he walked everywhere He went, and He became fatigued as you and I become fatigued. He didn’t just sap Himself where He needed to go. And I speak it respectfully, He didn’t just speak a Mercedes into being so He could track down the dusty roads in a little bit of comfort.

Some friends encouraged Sheila and me to watch a PBS series called Frontier House. Some of you may have seen it. The premise of this series is that several families from today are given some basic supplies, moved to a prairie and then forced to live in every way as if it were the 1800’s. They could have absolutely no contact with the outside world, no contact with twenty first century people. The program details how difficult that is. Well, imagine these people know, I mean they’ve lived like we live with the conveniences we have and now they’re going back, they’re building their own houses, growing their own food, making their own food, doing everything as it was done in the 1800’s. And it was interesting in that one of the two times Sheila and I saw the program one of the couples decided that they had had enough, they couldn’t make it. They weren’t going to make it by winter to have everything ready, and so they clandestinely broke the rules and went and made contact a few miles away with some of their twenty first century neighbors and got some supplies they needed. They cheated to survive.

Christ didn’t cheat. He acted just like the people in the world around Him acted. He didn’t use His power for His own convenience. He didn’t survive living in the world by constantly using His power as God to make life easier. Oh, He used His power often, but it was always to

advance His message and His ministry, never for Himself. So, He gave up the exercise, the independent exercise of the attribute of omnipotence.

It's the same thing with omniscience. We know that He exercised omniscience while He was on the earth. He knew what was in man and yet we're told in Matthew 24:36 that during His earthly life, He voluntarily restricted His knowledge about the timing of the second coming.

So, those are the two things that are involved in what Christ gave up. He veiled His glory and He gave up the independent exercise of His attributes. But while those things are true, that's probably not what Paul means in Philippians 2. The word "kenao" has to be interpreted in the context and in the context, it's probably just a simple metaphor. It's used in secular Greek for pouring out. It probably means that Christ poured Himself out.

Christ's self-emptying is defined and explained by the phrases that follow that we'll look at next week. He emptied Himself how, by taking the form of a slave and by being made in the likeness of men. In this case, emptying was adding. He added the form of a slave, and He added the likeness of men. It refers to His condescension. That wonderful condescension of Christ is put in a different metaphor in 2 Corinthians 8. Turn there briefly. Second Corinthians 8:9, Paul says here he doesn't say He emptied Himself he says,

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.

The metaphor of wealth and poverty, this describes what Christ accomplished. Well, you can see that Philippians 2 is filled with theology, but Paul's point is not theological but practical. And in a couple of minutes let me give you the three practical applications of what we've learned today. Three very practical applications of Christ's great condescension, of His emptying of Himself.

Number one: It should change our perspective about our Father. Remember Christ said, "I came to explain God." So Christ's actions show us what God is like. Think about that. The fact that Christ gave it all up to come to serve us says that our God, our Father is not a grasping, seizing God. But He's a God who gives of Himself for us. You remember that great verse in Romans 8, "if He gave you Christ how shall He not with Him" what? "freely give you all things." It's the nature of God to change our perspective about our Father.

Secondly: We need to dwell on what Christ decided to give up for us. What He gave up, think

about it, think about what Christ gave up and when you do it will produce in you gratitude and service, faithful service to Christ. That's what Paul said in 2 Corinthians 5:14. He said my knowledge of the love Christ had for me is what compels me in ministry. Are you having trouble getting involved in serving the people around you in your home, here in the church. Are you having trouble using your gifts and getting involved in service? Then start thinking about what Christ gave up to serve you, and then you'll start giving up what you have to serve others.

Thirdly: And this brings us finally to the main application of Philippians 2. This is the point Paul wants to make. He's saying this, just as Christ willingly laid aside His rights and privileges for us, we should follow in His steps. It's an argument from the greater to the lesser. He says, listen, if the Lord of glory, if the eternal Son of God refused to cling to all that was His and to use it for His own advantage, if He was willing to become like one of the creatures He made, if He was willing to stoop so low to become one of us, to serve us, then we should be willing to serve one another, to put the interests of others ahead of our own.

As I was preparing this message I was struck with this simple reality. Any excuse you and I give for not serving others rings hollow when you compare it to Jesus Christ. I mean what are we going to say? Well, you don't understand my life, I'm just too busy. Busier than God? Well, you know, it just takes too much time, thirty-three years? Well, it's demeaning, I mean you got to know who I am and what I've achieved in the world. You mean your reputation is better than God's? Well, you got to understand the people I'm serving. I mean they don't really deserve it – and you and I do? Every excuse rings hollow. That's why Paul says. "Have this attitude or this mindset among yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus."

Let's pray together.

Father, thank You for Your Word. Thank You for how it speaks to our lives and our hearts.

Lord, forgive us for exalting ourselves when Your Eternal Son humbled Himself and girded on the towel of a slave.

Lord, help us to have hearts of servants, serving first those we live with and then those in the church and everyone around. Help us to give our lives for others even as we have in the example of our Lord. Help us to put on the clothes of humility.

We pray in Jesus Name, Amen.