

The Life Lesson of the Incarnation

By Don Green

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Truth Community Church
4183 Mt. Carmel Tobasco Road
Cincinnati, OH 45255

Website: truthcommunitychurch.org
Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/tcomm

Scripture tells us why Jesus Christ was born in Bethlehem, and that is what we want to remember this morning. And it's not just the purpose, not just the redemptive purpose in which He came, but there is so much associated with the reality of the incarnation of Christ that we could spend a year and barely begin to scratch the surface of all that the incarnation says to us about our Lord Jesus Christ. Now at the most basic level, in one sense, Scripture tells us that Christ came to save His people from their sins. Matthew 1:21 says that the virgin "will bear a Son, and you will call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins." In a most fundamental way Jesus Christ came to earth for a redemptive purpose. He came to offer His life as a sacrifice for the sins of those who would believe in Him. He saves sinners who trust in Him, and the mere fact that that was His purpose tells us all, each one of us, that we need saving, that we are not good enough on our own. We need to be saved from our sins. Our sins have rendered us unacceptable to the presence of a holy God.

And as we start this morning, if you have never turned to the Lord Jesus Christ, I invite you to come to Him on this day when we remember His coming to save His people from their sins. Our Lord, of course, was sinless, and always was, and always will be. For those of us that know Christ, that know the forgiveness of our sins, that have been born again, Scripture says that unless you're born again you will not see the kingdom of heaven. For those of us that have been born again, the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ has massive implications for the way that our very character is formed. And Philippians 2 helps us see that. And so, if you're not already there, I invite you to turn to Philippians 2 once more for our text for this morning. You see, when Christ came to earth, He did something remarkable. He did something that is utterly contrary to the way that men in our day and age, ever since the fall of Adam, have ever acted. We are motivated by pride and self-promotion to one degree or another. We like to assert our rights. We like to be known as the one upfront. We like to be known as the one who does certain things in certain ways, and we have a certain pride about it. We have our things that we have, and what do we do with those? Well, in our Lord Jesus Christ He brings such a clarity to the way that Christians are supposed to live, and the very purpose of Philippians 2 is to help us see that.

You see, when Christ came to earth, He was not only coming for our redemption, that's central. That will always be front and center in what we say, but Scripture tells us more.

It says that when Christ came to earth, He manifested the supreme lesson in genuine humility, in genuine humility. What is humility? Humility is that spiritual virtue in which you lower your estimation of yourself for the sake of obedience to God in service to men. You consciously and deliberately put yourself lower. You put yourself under. You consciously serve with what you have, and that is what Christ was doing. And that is what Paul is speaking to here in Philippians chapter 2, as we're going to see.

Now, I'll mention this again a little later on in the service. It was two years ago this week that we had our first meeting as a congregation, soon to be born, you might say. And in the ensuing two years it has been a great delight to see the joy and the unity that marks the people that are associated with Truth Community. This is a wonderful place to be. I hope you that come regularly would agree with that. I am so blessed and glad that we are together in ministry, together for the name of Christ. There is a peace, and there is a unity that marks our life right now. That is something to treasure, something to protect, and to guard with the way that we interact with one another. Not every church is like that, as many of you know from sad past personal experience, and the church in Philippi was not necessarily like that. That's why Paul, in part, had to write this letter. You see the Philippians were troubled by internal division. There was conflict inside the body of Christ, and you can see that in the way that Paul wrote to them.

Look, for example, at Philippians chapter 1 verse 27. He sets the theme of the letter, that he's calling for the people to conform themselves to. And in Philippians chapter 1 verse 27, he says, "Conduct yourselves in a manner that is worthy of the Gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or remain absent, I will hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the Gospel." That is his theme. That's what he's trying to accomplish in this letter, is he's trying to develop that unity of spirit, and that unity of mind, and he says, "That is the mindset. That is the congregational, corporate spirit that is worthy of the body of Christ." We are under one Lord. We have been indwelt by one common spirit. We have one Word, which has been given to us. We share a common life in Christ, and Christ came to redeem a single people, corporately speaking, and so there ought to be a unity that marks the people of God. To have churches in open conflict with one another is not only a bad testimony, it contradicts the Gospel of Christ. And so, disunity in the body is a matter of grave concern. And you can see as you continue to read the book of Philippians. You can see what Paul is addressing. He even names people by name as being part of the problem. For example, look at chapter 2 verse 14. He doesn't name names here, but you can see the undercurrent of disunity that was marking the body at that time. Philippians chapter 2 verse 14, "Do all things without grumbling or disputing." Well, he wouldn't say that unless there was grumbling and disputing in the midst of the body. The reason that you give a command like that is because something is going on that needs to be corrected. And so, while there's this great common salvation that they were enjoying, there was this great Christ that had saved them. One Christ, one Lord, one baptism, Ephesians 4 speaks of. One, one, one, one.

Yet there were divisions that were not worthy of the Gospel of Christ, and I'm glad that I wasn't on the receiving end of chapter 4 verse 2 as an inspired apostle writes to a

congregation. He says in chapter 4 verse one, "Therefore, my beloved brethren whom I long to see, my joy and crown, in this way stand firm in the Lord, my beloved." Well, that sounds great! But put yourself in the shoes of these two women who come up in verse 2. "I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to live in harmony in the Lord." Whoa! Whoa! To be called out by name because of the conflict, the lack of harmony, between one another would be a cause of shame and embarrassment and rightful conviction. This is not living in a manner worthy of the Gospel of Christ to need to be called out like that. There's obviously grumbling and disputing going on. And Paul goes from the general to the increasingly more particular until he identifies two women who were in the midst of conflict with one another, and no doubt had gathered people around them within the body. And so, in verse 3, he goes on, and he says, "Indeed, true companion, I ask you also to help these women who have shared my struggle in the cause of the gospel, together with Clement also and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life." He calls on other men in the church and he says, "Get involved and bring these women who are Christians, these women who have served in the Gospel, but now are in conflict, you've got to help them. You've got to be involved in reconciling them together, because this conflict cannot continue. This is not worthy of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." And so, that gives us a little bit of background about the problem that Paul was addressing when he wrote this letter.

Now, here's the thing, and as we remember the incarnation of Christ in a particular way this week, here's what wouldn't be immediately obvious to you. Here's what wouldn't be immediately obvious to us unless God had laid it out for us in His Word: the answer to disunity is found in the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ. The answer to the petty conflicts that we have with one another is found in reflecting on our Lord Jesus. And that is what Paul is making clear in Philippians chapter 2, our text for this morning.

With all the background that I've given you so far, go now to chapter 2 verse 1. We won't spend much time here. We are really just laying the groundwork to think about our Lord Jesus Christ. Chapter 2 verse 1 says, "Therefore if there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion." He says, "If there's anything like that in your Christian life, do me a favor." Verse 2, "Make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose." Do you see how precious unity in the body of Christ is? Do you see that the inspired apostle was so concerned to see a proper unity in place? Make my joy complete. The same mind, the same love, united in spirit, one purpose. It's all speaking to a unity, a commonness of mind, a common love, a common devotion to one another, not conflict. Not conflict, but common love.

I remember many, many, many, years ago, going back a couple of three decades, maybe it was, when we were in a congregationally governed church, and it was time for a church business meeting. And those of you that have come from congregational churches and have experienced any conflict in a business meeting, I know that you're cringing even as I mention that. I'm cringing with the memory of what I'm about to describe. There was some kind of long forgotten conflict. Now, it was conflict at the time, and I stood up, and I said something and pointed to Scripture as I did. And later on in the meeting, a big

barrel chested guy with a big thick beard, nothing against thick beards, I just remember this aspect of the man's appearance, he got up, and he didn't like what I had said. And he said, "There's been a lot of Bible thumping going on in this church, and I just want to set it straight," kind of thing. And then he went on and said whatever he had to say. Well, look, that had a rather chilling impact on the expression of love in the body for somebody to say that, to speak that way in public. And it's not that it was directed at me, I don't care about that, but it's just a matter that to speak that way in the body of Christ, to address one another with such condescending, demeaning terms, to impute bad motives simply because someone said the Scripture says such and such. Oh, we see, don't we, that that is not the way the body of Christ is supposed to function. We gather together as sinners redeemed under the blood of Christ. As sinners equally humbled at the foot of the cross. As sinners now saved by grace, indwelt by a common spirit. Saved by, mark this, saved by the love of God in our Lord Jesus Christ. Having been the recipient of such amazing love and grace, would we turn and bear fangs against one another? The very thought is horrendous! That's not how Christians act! That's not how a body of Christ should conduct itself, and this is what Paul is addressing.

We want to understand, as believers here this morning, we want to understand that what Paul is laying out here is supposed to be the spirit that marks every true body of Christ. Every local assembly of believers is to be marked by this spirit of which he speaks. This common, united spirit and purpose. And so he goes on in verse 3. How do you get there? How do you go from this kind of conflict to this kind of reconciliation, this unity? Well, follow him as he unfolds his commands and his instruction. He says in verse 3. "Do nothing." Look at Philippians 2 verse 3 with me. He says, "Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility," there is our word, "but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others." Now, what he's done here is he's given us a command. He said, "Here's how you're to think. Here's how you're to conduct yourself and to adopt this attitude of humility in which you lower yourself. You consciously put yourself underneath the considerations and needs of someone else. You put other people first instead of insisting upon having it your way. That is part of the fundamental attitude of being a Christian."

Now, watch this. Watch this in the text. It would be one thing, and those of you that have been parents, I'm quite confident that you have failed in the same way that I have in which I'm about to describe. Your kids are fighting. This doesn't apply if you've only got one, unless, you know, there's something really unusual going on there. But you've got more than one kid, and they're in conflict. And it's so easy to want to just step in and authoritatively dismiss it without addressing the underlying problem. "Stop fighting! Don't do that! Go to your rooms" or whatever. And you trust by authoritative declaration, try to end the conflict and bring a superficial peace to it, just so that the headache of it all will go away. Well, look. Look at this passage in Philippians chapter 2 and watch what Paul does as he speaks to the church. He's trying to get them to stop the conflict, but he doesn't simply say, "Stop fighting with one another," and then move on to discuss something else. He calls their attention to Christ. He calls their attention to Jesus Christ and says, "Get your eyes off of yourself," as it were, "in the midst of this conflict. You

need to remember Christ. You need to remember the Lord Jesus." And so, he doesn't simply say, "Stop fighting." He calls their attention to the Lord. And what he's showing us is that right thinking about Christ in the body of Christ creates right relationships. It starts with thinking rightly about our Lord.

Look at what he says. Now remember, in verse 4, actually verse 3, he says, "Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit." Verse 4. Don't look out for your own personal interest, but for the interests of others. Now, when we get to verse 5, which is a very famous text describing the theology about our Lord, understand that why he's talking about Christ in verses 5 through 11, he's talking about Christ to give them an illustration. He is illustrating for them the attitude that he wants them to have. Verse 5 is a hinge verse going from the exhortation to live in unity. It's a hinge verse that says, and here's the illustration of what I'm talking about. Verse 5, he says, "Have this attitude in yourselves." "What attitude, Paul?" "The attitude that I was just talking about in the first four verses. The attitude of unity. Have this attitude of unity, this attitude of humility. Have that attitude in yourselves which," here's the hinge. Now he is going from his exhortation to his illustration. He says, "Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus."

Now, here's what I want you to see this morning, is that in what everything that we're about to see going forward, we're getting an illustration of what the mindset of a Christian is supposed to be like. And we get the standard set really high by looking to Christ. Paul is illustrating the attitude that will help them change. What he's saying is that our Lord Jesus Christ had humility. Our Lord Jesus Christ was animated completely by humility when He came to earth. The incarnation tells us something magnificent. It opens the window. It pulls back the curtains, and it lets us look into what Christ is like in His inner man. This is holy ground that we are approaching. And what we're going to see is that the incarnation gives us three lessons that will help us, not only in our own personal spiritual growth, but it will help us maintain and deepen and preserve the unity which we have in our body.

First of all, the first principle of humility that the incarnation teaches us is that first of all: humility serves others. Humility serves others. And the power of this is remarkable. Verse 5. "Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who." Okay, so now he is going to describe Christ for us as he sets forth the attitude that we're to cultivate in our midst, in our hearts, and in our corporate life. "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." Now that is a theologically potent verse. When it says that Christ existed in the form of God, the word "form" is a term that refers to the essential nature of something. He's saying that Christ existed with the very essence of God. It's a clear statement of the deity of Christ. That Jesus Christ was God Himself. He was God Himself, and He was God before He was born. He was God before creation. He was God before time. He was God without beginning. Jesus Christ existed in the form of God. He had the full essence of God. Do you know what that means? It means that, before time began, before Genesis 1:1, Jesus Christ shared the very glory of God with God the Father as a full participant in that glory, as a full participant in

the essence of God. Everything that marks God the Father also marks God the Son. He was God existing in unparalleled glory, in unparalleled authority, in unparalleled majesty. The recipient of the worship of angels, and the One who stood over all in His very being. He existed in the form of God, not a physical form, but the very essence, the very nature of God. All of the prerogatives, all of the rights of being God belong to Jesus Christ. This One, this One who spoke the worlds into existence, had that kind of power. That's who Jesus was. We cannot in our sinful state think thoughts that are high enough and lofty enough to be worthy of who He is. And that's who He has always been and always will be. This unparalleled One over all the universe, that's who Christ was.

Now, picture, as if this were even possible, think, let's put it that way, think about that glorious position that Christ had. No one had any claim on Him. No one could tell Him to do anything, because He was God. He's the final authority. And here's the question, as we now think about our Christ, looking back, and we kind of peek back into preexistence before time, and we ask ourselves a question like this. "What will Christ do with that position of His? What will He do with the position of unparalleled authority and majesty that belongs to Him? What will Christ do with that?" The world is created. Mankind falls. Christ is ruling from heaven with all of the prerogatives and attributes of deity at His disposal. What will He do with it? Will He, this is what this verse is talking about, will He exploit that position to His own advantage? Will He use it to preserve His own position of loftiness in heaven in disregard to the troubles and toils of sinful men? What will He do? Will He keep it to Himself and leave us to our destiny date with hell and judgment? Will He leave us in our sins? Will He leave us to our sorrows? Will He leave us to the rightful fruit and consequence of our own rebellion against God? What will He do? Will He just stay there, since no one could challenge His authority?"

Not our Christ. Not our Lord Jesus. He did just the opposite. He did just the opposite. Instead of staying where He was, in His position of unparalleled might and glory, our Lord Jesus Christ, in the incarnation, laid aside all of the privileges of being God and entered into human existence in order to, as we said at the start, to bring salvation to sinners, to bring salvation to unworthy objects of His love like you and me. In Matthew chapter 20 verse 28, Jesus said, remember we're talking about God here, right? We're all clear. We're all on the same page on that, right? About who Christ is. God Himself. God in unparalleled glory. And beloved, if you shed an emotional tear at the singing of the children earlier, by all rights our Lord Jesus Christ is entitled to rivers of tears of appreciation and worship in light of what we're about to see here in Matthew 20 verse 28. Jesus said that the Son of Man, a self-reference. He could've just as easily said, "I." "I did not come to be served, but to serve and to give His life a ransom for many." This is absolutely unknown in the earthly concept of privilege and authority. Our men of renown today use it to their own advantage. Our leaders and people of means love to use it for themselves. I don't even need to illustrate it for you. Christ, who is over them all, stepped down underneath them all, as it were, and came to earth, not so He could command His creation to serve Him. Not so that He could command mankind to serve Him while He's here. Beloved! Beloved, I run out of words to describe the glory and majesty of Christ. Instead of being over and commanding, He gets under mankind and serves.

Where does that come from? Who told Him to do that? Who was above Him to tell Him to act that way? Go back to Philippians chapter 2. I'm asking the question rhetorically. You see, here's the whole point in verse 6. Philippians 2 verse 6. "He existed in the form of God, but did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped." He didn't regard His position of deity, His equality with God, as something that He would grasp, that He would cling to, that He was unwilling to let go of. He didn't view it that way. He saw all of His position. He saw all of His position, and yet He didn't cling to it. Instead, He was willing to lay it aside. And Scripture teaches us that He did it in order to serve those of us who would one day believe in Him. Those of us who had no claim on Him. Those of us who sinned against Him. Those of us who did not love Him. He loved us first. He didn't love us with a silly sentiment that could be captured in a four-line rhyme on a Hallmark card. This was great unspeakable sacrifice for Him to leave the glory of heaven to come to earth for you and for me. What is this? What kind of character is this? I've never seen this on earth. What is this humility that puts us ahead of His own position? What is that? It's the humility of Christ, is what it is. It's the majesty of One who voluntarily put Himself in a position of service rather than, in one sense, His rightful position of Lordship, rightful in the sense we never could've asked Him to do what He did for us. Now, let that sink in. Lost sinners, you and I, Christ sees our lost estate and steps down to serve us. Why do we worship Him? That's why. Why do we love Him with loyalty that transcends every human relationship? Why do we love Him with the loyalty that if called to do so, we would gladly spill our blood for Him? Why would we gladly bear mocking and insults from those who reject Christ and, therefore, reject and persecute us? Why would we do that? Oh, we need to talk about this sometime in the future. Why would we receive persecution without responding in anger and retaliation? Why? Why, why, why? Why would we do that? Why do we give our heart allegiance to this One so unreservedly and gladly? Because we can't do anything else when we understand what He did for us. He set aside the prerogatives of royalty, the prerogatives of deity, and stepped into earth to serve us. That kind of condescension is unspeakable.

Now, remember beloved, remember that Paul here is using Christ as an illustration of the command that he wants the church to carry out. He's saying, "Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus. Christ stepped down." He explains it in verse 6. His attitude toward Himself was, "I'm not going to cling to what's mine. I'll set it aside for the sake of the people that I love," and He says, "That's what you and I are to be like. Have this attitude in yourselves that was in Christ." And so, stated in the most simple way that we could state it, you can say it this way, "Christ served you. Now go and be like Christ. Go and serve your fellow believers in the body of Christ." That's the logic, that's the import of the passage. "Christ stepped down. Therefore you go step down." Let's be practical about this. God has blessed you with time, with giftedness, with resources, and, for some of you, God has given you authority in your respective rounds of operation. Understand this! Because this changes life! God has given you what you have, not so you can appropriate it and keep it all to yourself. He's given you whatever you have, so that you can turn around and serve with it. Christ with the unlimited resources of deity took it and served. Now, the way that you and I view our lives and everything that we have, we say, "This is given to me to serve with!"

And so, that's not complicated. But beloved, it takes humility to act upon it. It takes humility to say, "Okay, I'll make a volitional act and do that." It might be a simple act of love. It might mean, "I'll let go of that argument. I'm not even going to be bitter and say, 'but I was right all along.' I just want to let go of it. I let go of the bitterness. I'll serve that way." But beloved, especially you young people with your life ahead of you, understand that when we talk about this kind of humility, I want you to understand that this kind of humility has a claim on your ultimate life ambition. This kind of service from Christ, those of you that belong to Christ, especially you young people who still have the opportunity to determine the course of what you want to do with the years of life that are ahead of you, when Christ has done this for you, He has a claim on what your ambition in life is. I won't claim to define that for you, but I want you to see that you should be thinking about what the future of your life is, and the context of that is "what has Christ done for me? He served me. All I can do is somehow be a servant in response, because my priorities, my affections, my ambitions are defined by one greater than me, who served more than I ever will. And therefore, that will be the context in the way that I define what I want to do with my life." That's where proper thinking about Christ leads you.

And so, it's no longer about this earthly life and the accumulation of stuff and prominence and all of that. That's not what you're after if you're following Christ. No, no, no, the final defining ambition is, "I want to be like Him." He was a servant! "Alright, now I've got something to think about. What have I got here? What can I do? What are my abilities, and how do I translate them into service to Christ and to His people? This sacrificial attitude that He had toward us. How can I sacrifice within the body of Christ?" It's not just young people. It's all of us. You see, when we talk about humility, we're talking about something that when we talk about the humility of Christ we're talking about something that comes and owns us, because that's the only way that you could possibly properly respond to such unspeakable sacrifice for me, for you, who didn't deserve it. So humility serves others.

Secondly, humility sacrifices itself. Look at verse 7. It would be enough, really, if Christ had just come down to earth and spent a few years here. That would be condescension beyond belief considering the heavenly realm that He departed in order to do that. But it goes further. You see, if nothing else, walk away today impressed by Christ. Look at verse 7. "Christ did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped." Here's the incarnation in this passage. Verse 7. "He emptied himself," which means that He "took the form of a bondservant and was made in the likeness of men." Christ did not empty Himself in the sense that He gave up being God. That's not what the passage means. That would be impossible. God can't stop being God. No, no. When He emptied Himself, what it's referring to is the fact that He took on human flesh. In all that we've been singing about here this morning, the incarnation was a statement of Christ laying aside the prerogatives of deity in order to become a man. He sacrificed His position in heaven for the sake of being on earth for 33 years. This is a strong contrast. Jesus as God. Here He is not using it to His advantage.

Beloved, we've got to think about Christ like this. When Jesus Christ came to earth, He took an unspeakably great step down. He walked on earth in full humanity. He was like us in every way except for the sin of it all. He obeyed His heavenly Father and as the Lord of creation, often had no place to lay His own head. And the power of that example comes when we remember that He's God! It was God who was a baby in the manger. It was God who spent His earthly life in obscurity working with His hands as a carpenter. It was God who took a position lower than He deserved. It was our Lord Jesus Christ who sacrificed His place in heaven, His rightful rule, His rightful realm that belonged to Him. We speak about a man's home being his castle. Well, heaven was Jesus' castle, and He walked out beyond the gates, as it were, and came and walked as a peasant with a redemptive purpose in mind. A redemptive purpose.

And so, here He is. He's in heaven. Verse 6. And He doesn't regard that as something that He's going to cling to. He's thinking, as it were, and He says, "I'm not going to cling to this. I'll lay it aside." How far would He lay it aside? He'd lay it aside so much that he would take on humanity and walk on this earth. Why? We saw it from Matthew 20. Listen, Christ sacrificed His place in heaven, so that He could sacrifice Himself in your place on the cross. And Paul is saying, "That's our example." We extend blessing to those who don't deserve it. We lay down the weapons of retaliation. We don't assert our rights as Christians. I saw just this morning actually, got a prompt on my Facebook place. A group inviting me to join them, saying, "Christians for their First Amendment rights." Whatever. That's what you're concerned about. Go for it. But do you understand that if we are thinking rightly about our Lord Jesus Christ and what it means to be a Christian that is owned by Him, that is a slave to Christ, do you understand that whatever else the Constitution says, Christians, we don't have rights. All of our rights belong to Him. We're not meant to be a people that asserts our prerogatives and our rights and complains when we feel like they're encroached upon because the reason that we're not like that is because Christ wasn't like that! You want to talk about someone who had a Bill of Rights? It was Christ. It was Christ in heaven where all of the right and prerogative was His, and He says, "I won't hold onto any of it. I'll come down and serve sinners who are going to crucify me." And we want to complain because of stuff in the news? What's the matter with us? What's the matter with the church of Jesus Christ that we've lost sight of who our Lord is and we want to assert things that He didn't even assert for Himself?

You see, this is really magnificent, and it's really, really important. We shape our lives, we shape our view of our position in this world by Christ, not by a constitution, however magnificent that document may be. Honestly. Honestly. Honestly, beloved, can you imagine going to the cross as Christ is being crucified and complaining that someone you've never even met lost his TV show, because he said a couple of things that had biblical content to them? Can you imagine that? Can you imagine how foolish and selfish that would look? To go to Christ as He is suffering for our sins and say, "Hey, you know what? You know what that network did?" Beloved, we're seeing life all wrong when we think that way. We're not thinking about it rightly at all! We need to completely turn upside down the way we think, the way that we think about our life on this earth. Until we see ourselves as in light of Christ, the One who had everything and didn't assert His rights. We come to a point where we say, "Whatever I have, I'm not going to assert it,

because I just want to be a servant to Christ and a servant to the men around me." And servants, slaves have no rights.

That's what Christ did. That's the power of the incarnation. That's the life lesson of the incarnation. This is how we are to think about ourselves in light of Christ. It turns everything upside down, and don't let yourself get sucked into the vortex of well-meaning Christian men and women who say, "We've got to stand up and fight for our rights." We're not thinking rightly when we take that approach. If Christ had fought for His rights in heaven, maybe we would do it different, but He didn't. And beloved! Beloved, think! Think! Think! Think and let your affections and ambitions be shaped accordingly. If Christ had been like what we are called to be like by the world around us, we wouldn't be redeemed. We would not be Christians. We would be without hope. If Christ was like the Christian political mindset would have us to be, we would be all miserably lost with no hope, because He would still be in heaven, and we would be enveloped in a darkness we could never find a way out of.

That's what the incarnation teaches us. When you start with who Christ is, God Himself, and you see it was a step down to say, "I'm not going to assert this." It was another step down for Him to say, "I'll go to earth." We see a third aspect of it in that humility submits to God. We said that humility serves others. It sacrifices itself. Humility submits to God. And we see the final step in the great condescension of Christ. Verse 8 says, "Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross." Picture a staircase just down, down, down, down, until you get to the basement. That's what Christ did from heaven to an attitude that says, "I will go. I will not assert my rights," to the incarnation, in appearance just like ours. No place to lay His head. He steps down further, "I'll go to death." He steps down further and says, "I'll give my life on a cross," that instrument of torture, that instrument of shame, that instrument of utter humiliation. He says, "I'll go all the way there." Do you want to know how far humility goes in the life of a Christian? Think about Christ and realize that from heaven He went to the cross. There's just this continual progression of self-sacrifice and humiliation in our Lord that is incomprehensible. Do you see that Christ put no limits on His humility? He put no limits on His obedience to His Father. He did all of this voluntarily. He said in John 10, "No one's taken my life from me. I lay it down on my own initiative."

You know, we could talk about the glory of Christ from a perspective of His power to calm the seas, His power to raise the dead. Those are all appropriate aspects of his power. He is a many splendored wonder, isn't He? But today we look at His humility, and we see One who is utterly unlike us. We see one who put no limits. He just voluntarily and courageously, as it were, set His face toward Jerusalem and went to the cross as God. Christ obeyed His Father to the point of death. Christ never said that, "This isn't fair. Don't you know who I am? Don't you get this?" He just went and did it. There comes a point, I know this is hard to believe when I preach as long as I do, but there comes a point where I just want to not talk and just let that settle in on our collective understanding and consciousness. We are in the presence of Christ this morning. This One who did this, He's now here by His spirit in our midst, and we're in the presence of One who did such

unspeakably humble things from a position of unparalleled authority. That's magnificent. Christ is like no other. Christ is worthy of all of our worship. And Scripture says, as you go on to verse 9, God the Father gets that. In response to that utter humiliation of His Son, look what God the Father has done. Verse 9. "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." Oh, they crucified Him while He was on earth, but you know that day is still coming when everyone, either voluntarily or by force, will bend the knee to this great Christ and confess the glory that was His before time began, which He was not afforded during His life on earth. Everything's going to be made right and Christ is going to receive the glory from every tongue of every man who ever lived. And part of what we're going to glorify Him for is the glory and majesty of His humility. Come down to earth to honor and glorify His Father by sacrificing His life for us.

I love Him, don't you? As we go out today, what we have to remember is that Paul has said that all of that's a model for us. This is the way that we are to think about ourselves. Not asserting our rights. Serving, unity, one purpose, one mind, that's what we're trying to build here at Truth Community is a body like that that reveres Christ so much that we're happy to put ourselves aside and under others for the sake of being like the One who saved our souls.

Bow with me in prayer.

Father, we pray that You would make us a people just like that. We pray for the future of Truth Community. We pray, Lord Jesus, that first of all, we would reverence You appropriately in light of Your great humility. We look forward to that day when we get to bow and confess in Your presence that You are Lord to the glory of God the Father. We look forward to all of that. But as we do that, Father, we pray, even now, that our lives would conform to Your humility in the years that You leave us here on earth.

Father, I pray especially for those young people who are on the front end of their life. Father, I pray that with great power, Your Spirit would penetrate their hearts with the person of our Lord Jesus Christ, and that, somehow, Father, You would help them understand and sort out in their mind, in their thinking, in their plans how this example of Christ from Philippians 2 should define their life ambition. Help them to that end, and, Father, we pray, and we invite those who don't know Christ. Maybe those even younger, we invite them to Christ, to this crucified and resurrected Lord who lay down His life for their sins. Father, may the wonder of who He is draw them to give themselves to Christ in repentant faith.

Lord, we love the majesty of who You are. We thank You for the humility that served us on the cross. We look forward to seeing the glory that God has now bestowed upon You at His right hand. Help us to be faithful until that day comes. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

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