

"The Mind of Christ"

Philippians 2:3-11

February 8, 2026

It's common for people to have a *consumer* mentality when it comes to the church—what does this church have to offer me? What can I get out of it? While it's important to be a part of a church where you can be fed and grow, the best way to benefit from the ministry of the church is to not only come to receive but also to *contribute*. Not only do we grow and benefit from the use of our spiritual gifts, but in so doing, we reflect the giving heart of God. The gospel transforms us from living for what we can get, to living for what we can give—what we can contribute to the kingdom of God. In today's passage, we will see that this is the heart of the gospel because it's the heart of Jesus.

My heart is overflowing with gratitude for so many people at Trinity who have this heart. It has been so evident again this week. Hearts to gracious serve, patiently, sacrificially, and joyfully. How God is honored. May He continue to shape this heart—the very mind of Christ—in us!

Philippians 2:3-11 is one of the most important passages in the Bible for several reasons. Not only does it detail the precise mindset we need to adopt to become like Christ, it is also immensely rich with doctrine concerning the person and work of Christ.

This passage is worthy of memorization—at the very least, every believer should *memorize* [Phil 2:3-5]. How will we consistently live out the mind of Christ if we do not have an intimate knowledge of the mind of Christ. Yet memorization alone will not suffice. We need to live it out. Every day we have the opportunity to do just that not only with our church family but also in our homes, neighborhoods and workplaces.

As followers of Jesus, we are called to live out our oneness with Christ and our unity in the church through humble, selfless, lives oriented toward serving others by adopting the very mindset of Jesus in our relationships with one another.

Notice that a Christ-centered mentality makes you others-oriented. This is not about serving others for the sake of serving others or to feel better

about yourself. Christ is the motivation and Christ is the object of our selfless and sacrificial service to others. So we turn from self to serve others humbly and selflessly for the sake of Christ being formed in us and glorified through us.

Consider how transforming this might be in your marriage, ministry, in your workplace. Adopting the mind of Christ will create opportunities for the gospel as you live it out in a world obsessed with the idle of self. Adopting the mind of Christ enables us to live in a manner worthy of the gospel in every relationship.

Background / setting

I don't want us to miss where today's passage fits in the flow of Philippians.

Live worthy of the gospel

→Stand firm & strive together for the gospel

→Unity in Christ

→Encouragement/Comfort/Love/Fellowship/Affection/Compassion

→**Mind of Christ** (self-giving humility)

Last week in 1:27 Paul called us to live as citizens of heaven **in a manner worthy of the gospel**. Living in a manner worthy of the gospel includes **standing firm** and **striving together** for the gospel, even in the face of suffering for the sake of Christ. Then Paul focuses on the backbone needed to stand firm and strive together which is our **unity** in Christ. Our steadfastness and our gospel ministry will only be as strong as our unity in Christ—especially when are facing worldly and satanic opposition.

Then in 2:1-2 Paul calls us to build up our unity in Christ through **encouragement, comfort, love, fellowship, affection and compassion**. This brings us to 2:3-5—the climax of all that Paul has said so far. The essential mindset (very heart) that enables us to effectively strengthen our unity through encouragement, comfort, love, fellowship, affection and compassion—the core application of what it means to live in a manner worthy of the gospel is this...[2:3-5] If we think of Phil 1 & 2 as a sermon, vs. 3-5 are the main application. Then in the following verses, Paul grounds this application in the doctrine of Jesus life, death, and resurrection. That's the flow. Now, let's unpack what it means to adopt the mind of Christ.

The mindset of Jesus (Phil 2:3-5)

Paul begins by telling us what *not* to do if we are going to imitate Christ. Vs. 3: “Do nothing from *selfish ambition* or *conceit*...” Notice that Paul does not eliminate *all* ambition—we should be a people of godly ambition, seeking to advance the kingdom of God. But there is no place for *selfish* ambition. That is, ambition aimed at building the kingdom of self, especially personal gain at the expense of others. Paul is warning the church to guard themselves against the very competitive spirit and envious rivalry that Paul called out among the ill-willed preachers in 1:15-17.

Along with selfish ambition, Paul calls them to put off (be guarded against) *conceit*. The idea here is vain glory, having an elevated opinion of oneself. The root that feeds all of this is pride. Oh, how we need to be constantly vigilant against every form of pride in our hearts. The goal is to pursue humility as we see it modeled in the life of Christ. Vs. 3: “...*in humility* count others more significant than yourself.” Vs. 4: “Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.” Notice that this is an others-oriented perspective. Humility is not so much thinking less of yourself as it is thinking about yourself less.¹ The essence of humility is not self-degrading (though we may need to lower our opinion of our self-importance). Humility is being less preoccupied with self and more conscious of serving others.

The NASB renders vs. 3 this way: “...with *humility of mind* regard one another as more important than yourself. This indicates that humility is not just a *disposition*, but also a *choice*. “I can gladly serve from second place!” Vs. 4 goes on to clarify that there is a place for self-interest (we need to eat and sleep and pay the bills). But self-interest needs to be reined in by a dominant concern for the interests of others.

Yet why would we live this way? Paul gives us the motivation in vs. 5: “Have this attitude in yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus.” When you are one with Christ, this is the right way to think. The idea here is to adopt Jesus’ way of thinking—to make His mindset your own.

This is the key to unity—humility—each person giving oneself in service to others with genuine concern for their wellbeing. In a single word, *honor*. Husbands and wives, there is nothing better you could do for your marriage than to memorize Phil 2:3-5 *and daily live it out*. There’s no better way for kids to nurture sibling relationships than for parents to shepherd them toward a heart of honor in their relationships by imitating Jesus. One of the ways we did this with our kids was having them do an *honor check*. After they finished their chores that helped them contribute to family life, they did an honor check which meant looking for one additional thing they could do beyond what was expected, that would be a blessing to someone in the family.

Oh, may this increasingly be the culture at Trinity—that we adopt the mind of Christ by doing nothing from selfishness or empty conceit but with humility of mind considering others more important than ourselves, not merely looking out for our own personal interests but also for the interests of others.

The Height from which Jesus Condescended (Phil 2:6)

Now, having called us to adopt the attitude of Jesus, Paul now shows us what it looks like in the life of Christ. There are thousands of examples Paul could have used of Jesus putting the needs of others ahead of His own, but to make the strongest impact, Paul drives us right to the heart of the gospel. He points to the heights from which Jesus lowered Himself, the depth to which Jesus humbled Himself, and the exceeding height to which the Father exalted our humble king. But first let me define a word that we don’t use much today.

Condescended- “to stoop; to put aside one’s dignity or superiority voluntarily and assume equality with one regarded as inferior.”

This is what Christ did. He voluntarily laid aside the dignity of divine glory to put himself on our level as a man and then stooped even lower to take

¹ Tony Merida and Francis Chan, *Exalting Jesus in Philippians* (Christ-centered Exposition), pg. 86.

the filth of our sin upon Him and die in our place to lift us out of our spiritual grave. He put our interests ahead of His own.

To understand the significance of Christ's condescension, we need to understand not only the depths to which He humbled Himself, but also the height from which He lowered Himself. For example, imagine serving at a homeless shelter. It would be one thing for me sit on the floor so that a homeless person could sit on a chair at the table. It would be quite another for the president of the United States to sit on the floor in the homeless shelter so that a homeless person could sit at the table.

Vs. 6 highlights the heights from which Jesus condescended: *"though He was [existed] in the form of God, [He] did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped"* (or held on to). Paul uses two Greek words here (*huparcho*—existed; *morphe*—form) which together emphasize the unalterable divine nature of Jesus. As one scholar explained, *morphe*/form describes that part of a person, which in any circumstance, remains the same.² Jesus possessed all the qualities and characteristics of God. The weight of vs. 6 is that the very essence of Jesus is the very essence of God. *No one could be more deserving of honor or less expected to humble himself than the son of God who has inherit and infinite greatness!*

Yet He did not "count/regard" His equal honor with God something be clenched (forcibly held onto). Notice vs. 6 uses the same word as vs. 3 (count/regard). This was a conscientious decision, a mindset that would determine Jesus' actions. He became no less God in His nature but took on a posture of deep humility. It is from the highest of highs that Jesus stooped to the lowest of lows.

The Depth to which Jesus Condescended (Phil 2:7-8)

To help us grasp the vast descent of Jesus' humility, Paul details 7 steps by which Jesus descended down the latter of humility.

- 1. Self-emptying:** *"did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself"* (Phil 2:6-7)

² William Barclay, *The Letters to the Philippians, Colossians, and Thessalonians* (The Daily Study Bible), pg. 43.

"Emptied Himself" does not mean that in any way He became less than fully God in His nature. But rather that *He laid aside (suspended) His divine rights, privileges, and honor* for a time to take upon Himself the ultimate role of a selfless servant. He refused to use His divinity for His own advantage.

- 2. Servanthood:** *"taking the form of a bond-servant"* (2:7)
Now Jesus takes upon Himself the form (*morphe*; cf. 2:6), the very essence, of a bondservant—literally a slave. Just as a slave owned nothing and carried other people's burdens, so Jesus did not consider His life His own, but a means to serve God and sinners.

- 3. Humanity:** *"being made in the likeness of men"* (2:7)

This is the Christmas miracle of the incarnation. While remaining fully God, Jesus became a true genuine human being—fully man.³ It was a tremendous step of humility for Jesus to not only take upon Himself all the attributes and frailties of man, but to be born as a dependent infant, who like us would countless times be hungry, thirsty, weary, and tempted.

Note: The humanity of Jesus is not temporary. Though He will be dressed with infinite glory and honor for all eternity, He will never forsake the humility of His humanity. How much more should we embrace humility as the irreversible direction of our lives!

- 4. Appearance:** *"Being found in appearance as a man"* (2:8)
This has to do with how people viewed Jesus. Even though He was more than just a mere man—He was fully God and fully man—he appeared to be an ordinary man. There is something humbling about being viewed as something less than you are. But Jesus was okay with that.

³ "Remaining all that He was, He became what He was not" [Tony Merida and Francis Chan, *Exalting Jesus in Philippians* (Christ-centered Exposition), pg. 96.]

5. Obedience: *"He humbled Himself by becoming obedient"* (2:8)

Jesus humbled Himself not only by becoming a man, but also choosing a life of submission. He willingly and perfectly subjected Himself to the Father, but He also submitted Himself to earthly parents and governing authorities wherever He could without disobeying His heavenly Father.

6. Death: *"to the point of death"* (2:8)

Death is the ultimate humiliation that all human beings are subjected to, but how much more for the Son of God? That He who had eternally existed should now voluntarily die to save rebellious sinners is stunning. Could there be any greater humility? Now Jesus steps off the lowest rung of the ladder into the dirt...

7. Cross: *"even death on a cross"* (2:8)

Some men die honorably. Yet Jesus died with the utter humiliation of a criminal's death. The torturous death of Jesus by Roman crucifixion was all the more humiliating due to the fact that Jesus was perfectly innocent of any wrongdoing.

This final step is what we deserve apart from Christ—judgment. We are dead in our transgressions and sins, deserving of judgment (Eph 2:1). But Jesus humbled Himself to the point necessary to save us from our sins. This is why true Christianity is different from every other religion in the world. All other religions are about trying to climb a ladder of approval to God. But in the gospel, God descended down the ladder to humbly meet us at our point of need.

But the Father did not leave Jesus in that place of willing humiliation. *God honors humility.* And certainly, no humility is more honorable than that of Jesus.

The Exceeding Height to which the Father exalted Jesus (Phil 2:9-11)

[vs. 9-11]

We must not miss the significance of the first word in vs. 9: *"Therefore..."* [He] was *"obedient* to the point of *death*, even death on a cross. *Therefore*, God has highly exalted Him..." The exaltation of Christ is God's response to the obedience, humility and righteous suffering of Jesus. Consider the implications for those who follow Jesus:

- **Obedience** may be costly and even cost our lives on this earth. But God will ultimately reward the obedience of those who trust in Him.
- **Humility** is the pathway to honor. Proverbs repeatedly teaches that "humility goes before honor" (Pr 8:12; cf. 15:33; 22:4).
- **The righteous who suffer** will be vindicated by God

The exaltation of Christ is multifaceted including His resurrection, ascension, and His coronation as King to reign "far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that his named, not only in this age but also in the one to come" (Eph 1:21-22). Add to this Jesus' role as High Priest and final Judge.⁴

But what Paul specifically mentions here in Philippians is that the Father bestowed on Jesus "the name which is above every name." That name is most likely the title *Lord* in vs. 11. One of the convincing reasons is Isaiah 45:22-24 which speaks of Yahweh as Savior and declares: *"Before Me every knee will bow; by Me every tongue will swear. They will say of Me, 'In the LORD alone are deliverance and strength.'"*⁵

It's not as if Jesus was not Lord before His incarnation and exaltation, but now through the decisive triumph of the cross the forces of darkness and every rebel power have been issued their final, unavoidable doom, and Jesus is bestowed with an honor of Lordship that exceeds the honor He had before; the physical, visible center of heaven's adoration—the Lamb who was slain, worthy of execute the final decrees of God (Rev 5). BTW for

⁴ John MacArthur, *The MacArthur NT Commentary: Philippians*, pg. 140-142.

⁵ Cf. Isaiah 42; Acts 2:36

the Father to bestow such honor on the Son does not diminish the Father's glory but enhances it because they are one [vs. 11].

This name, Lord, carries *universal authority* for all creatures, in all times, and in all places. Vs. 10 says that every knee will bow "in heaven" (angels and saints), "on earth" (believers and unbelievers), "and under the earth" (demons and lost humanity in hell). "Every tongue [willing or unwilling] will confess that Jesus is Lord!"

What an encouragement this must have been for the people in Philippi. Caesar is not Lord, *Jesus is Lord*. And one day your opponents—even Caesar—would bow the knee in submission to Christ. Church, our citizenship is in heaven from which we eagerly await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ (Phil 3:20).

The Gospel

I call you to respond to the vast humility and exalted honor of Jesus in two ways:

1. **Humbly bow your knee to Jesus as Lord and Savior.** There is coming a day when every knee will bow, and those who have lived their lives in disregard of Jesus will be brought to account for their rebellion and bow in defeat and judgment.

But those who embrace the humility of Jesus and bow their knee now in loving surrender to Him as Lord and Savior will be delivered from the condemnation of sin and be exalted with Him on the last day.

This is the gospel, the good news: Jesus, the eternal Son of God, willingly humbled Himself, laying aside the honor of His divine glory, took on human flesh, made Himself a servant to those subservient to Him, and lived a life of perfect obedience to the Father so that His death on the cross in place of sinners would be perfectly acceptable to the Father. And God raised Him from the dead and highly exalted Him as Victor over every human being, every spiritual power, and even death itself so that all who bow

their knee to Christ in faith will be saved from their sin to reign with Christ in heaven for all eternity.

Will you humble come under the loving reign of Jesus and be saved from your sin? Will you submit to Him as Lord?

2. **Adopt a life of humility that is worthy of the gospel of Jesus Christ.** How? By adopting the attitude of Jesus as your own in your relationships with others. You look to Jesus, the one most deserving of honor who nevertheless stooped to the lowest degree for those undeserving of honor, and you say, "certainly I can put the needs of others ahead of my own. I can serve selflessly. I can love sacrificially. I can honor them with humility and honor of Jesus."

Adopt—own this—as your own way of life: "***Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit. 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 interest of others. Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus***" (Phil 2:3-5).