

FRIDAY: Result

Read: Philippians 2:9-11⁹ Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name,¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

REFLECT:

The point of this text (and all of 2:5-11) isn't "be like Jesus." Just because we're obedient to God doesn't mean He'll "highly exalt" us too. However, we often like (or at least succumb to) this *quid pro quo* kind of thinking. I.e., I do something for God and He does (or so He'll do) something for me.

The bottom line is that we can't be like Jesus...He's divine, we never will be. Furthermore, the "highly exalted" result of Jesus' obedience (not "exalted to the highest place" per the NIV; it's a verb, not a noun) was for Him only. God exalted Jesus in a way previously unknown to mankind. We should never expect the same.

However, just because we can't "be like Jesus" doesn't mean we shouldn't seek to follow His example. Of course we should serve others. Of course we should be obedient to God. But remember, it cost Jesus His life before He was "highly exalted." It may cost us too...

PRAY: Tell God of your desire for your life to bring Him glory. Pray for someone you know who doesn't know Jesus. Bow, literally (if you're physically able), and confess that Jesus is Lord.

RESPOND:

The end result of these verses is that God is glorified. Where does God's glory rank on your list of priorities?

Notice that every knee "should" bow. This text doesn't say "will" (Rom14:11 does). This text is in the realm of possibility. While people have time they should bow – that brings God glory. Have you confessed Jesus as Lord?

What is "the name" God "bestowed" to Jesus? If you don't remember check your sermon notes – or ask the preacher. Why is this significant?

SATURDAY: Missing It...

Read: Romans 6:1-14¹ What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?² By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?...¹³ ...Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life...

REFLECT:

Tomorrow is Easter. The "easter bunny" will likely visit many homes in America. Many people who scarcely darken the doorway of a church building will likely be "dressed to the nines"...and looking intently (or in disbelief) at their watch. Yet, so will some who "attend church" regularly. So sad...

The day after Easter many parents will be telling their children to not eat so much candy at once. Many of those who "attended church" yesterday will return to "normal life" by going back to work (or whatever routine they're in). How tragic...

So much is missed in the Christian faith because so much is misunderstood in it. Pray once a day? Check. Show up on Sunday? Check. Keep quiet during communion? Check. Toss a bit in the collection plate? Well... Say "fine" when asked how I'm doing? Check. Live under grace? Huh???

RESPOND:

Why is Easter significant to the Christian faith? Why is it significant to you?

Have you identified with any of the stereo-typical examples (to the left) in your past? What about presently?

Invite someone along with you to NLCC tomorrow – either the sunrise or regular service. Although it's early, the sunrise may be less intimidating – and they can eat afterwards!

PRAY: Pray for our services tomorrow at the church building; above all pray that God is glorified. Pray for the same person you prayed for yesterday who doesn't know Jesus. Thank God for His glorious love.

Power: Got some? Want some?

March 16 – 22

After Roman Catholicism's new claim of "papal infallibility" (i.e., the pope cannot err when pronouncing dogmatic Roman Catholic teaching) was established in the First Vatican Council of 1870, Lord Acton made the following statement (in 1887):

- "I cannot accept your canon that we are to judge Pope and King unlike other men with a favourable presumption that they did no wrong. If there is any presumption, it is the other way, against the holders of power, increasing as the power increases. Historic responsibility has to make up for the want of legal responsibility. **Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.** Great men are almost always bad men."

Lord Acton (full name John Emerich Edward Dalberg Acton) was a British Historian of that era. His statement was likely based on information he had gathered during his studies. While apparently original to Lord Acton, it was similar to another statement made just over a hundred years earlier (1770) by William Pitt the Younger:

- "Unlimited power is apt to corrupt the minds of those who possess it."

Per Bylund, a Swedish Libertarian says:

- The part of the truth Lord Acton did not realize when stating "power corrupts" is that the corrupted seek power. Only people not able to grow tall from their own efforts and achievements seek to subdue their fellow man; only people not being able to find comfort in their own mind seek to silence others; those who are unable to produce their own wealth aim to confiscate the wealth of others.
- Power does really corrupt, but it is as true that corrupt people seek power.

Emperor Palpatine (aka: Darth Sidious, aka: The Emperor – ala Star Wars Episodes 1-3) said:

- "All who gain power are afraid to lose it; even the Jedi."

Taking the above statements at face value...

- the most noteworthy men are always bad...
- having unlimited power corrupts the minds of people who have it...(or think they have it...)
- it's really only the corrupt who seek power...(I wonder if he trying to gain power with his statements...)
- power leads to fear...a fear of losing your power...

Apparently "power" isn't all that it's cracked up to be. Yet its lure is practically irresistible for many. Think about it. How many cops like being a cop because they have power and authority with their badge? How many lawyers and judges live as if they're "above the law?" How many parents enjoy bossing their children around simply "because they can?" How many...

Jesus told us not to "lord it over" others – but serve them (Mt20:25-28). His life is an example of self sacrifice and service. Ironically, those actions made Him great. He also had power (e.g., influence, a following of people) – but He didn't abuse it. His desire was to bring glory to His Father.

MONDAY: Unfortunate Results

READ: Philippians 2:5-11

REFLECT:

As you read in last week’s insert (on Saturday), and as you heard in yesterday’s sermon, today’s text is known as a “Christ hymn.” Songs are easily remembered, and whether we will admit it or not, they have a great amount of influence on our thoughts.

Unfortunately, today’s text has led to a great amount of controversy within the body of Christ. A song with a specific intent unfortunately lead to misunderstandings and false teachings (e.g., is Jesus divine, did He only appear to be a man, etc.).

This isn’t the only passage of Scripture that has lead to misunderstandings within (and outside of) the body of Christ (e.g., Exod20:7; 1Chron4:9-10; Jer29:11; Mt18:20; Rom8:28f; etc.). It takes effort to understand God’s Word. Yet the most important information is clear (salvation via Jesus). Fortunately a great deal more can be learned with humility, prayer, study, guidance, etc.

RESPOND:

Are songs easy for you to commit to memory? What about Scripture? How is committing Scripture to memory beneficial?

If you were to write your own “Christ hymn” what would it contain? What specifics of Jesus’ life do you need to recall regularly?

Consider reading all of Philippians. It’s short, it won’t take long. Jot down a few notes concerning important and repeated themes.

PRAY: Pray for an increasing desire and ability to know and apply God’s word. Pray for humility and a desire to continue in your sanctification as you utilize the insert this week. Pray for your actions to be the kind by which God is glorified.

TUESDAY: Focus

Read: Philippians 2:5 ⁵ Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, **John 17:20-21** ²⁰ “I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, ²¹ that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.

REFLECT:

What type of “mind” did Jesus have? Some translations say we should have the same “attitude” He had (e.g., NIV, NASB). It’s been said “your attitude will determine your altitude” – meaning that your success in life (or lack thereof) is largely dependent upon your thoughts. Jesus’ thoughts forced His ‘altitude’ to leave “God’s space” and “come down” to earth.

In John 17 we read that Jesus was concerned about God’s glory (e.g., Jn17:1). We also read that Jesus was concerned about the unity of those who follow Him. Apparently disunity and divisions don’t glorify God.

Moving back to Philippians; verse five is a command. It isn’t an option. Unfortunately too many view it as such. That is an example of putting a “comma,” or a “but,” where God put a “period.”

RESPOND:

Have you ever noticed a correlation between what your focus is and how your day goes? What is it?

John 17 is one example of the “mind of Jesus.” What are some other examples? What was He concerned about?

Are you accepting of the commands found in Scripture? Which one(s) do you have a hard time obeying? Write it (them) down.

PRAY: Pray for the things that concern God to concern you as well. Confess to God what you have a hard time obeying in His Word – ask for help. Pray for the body of NLCC to be unified.

WEDNESDAY: Authoritarian or Authority

Read: Philippians 2:5-7 ⁵ Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷ but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.

REFLECT:

Those who are authoritarian will impose their views on others while grasping at power and control. Those who have authority also have “power” (in some manner) and “control” (to a certain extent); yet they don’t seek to grasp them.

Jesus could’ve acted in an authoritarian type of way – thankfully He didn’t. He didn’t try to grasp power. He didn’t force others to see it His way. He knew He had the authority, but He didn’t allow it to distort His actions.

To a “power hungry” world, Jesus’ actions simply don’t make sense. He came and lived as a servant. He could’ve forced people to obey Him. But what would’ve happened after His death? By serving others He gained a following of immense proportions. A following that is still growing today.

RESPOND:

How can a person who “operates” in an authoritarian manner do damage to the body of Christ?

Who is someone you know who “operates” their lives based on the authority inherent in God’s word? Have you thanked them for their example?

Do you ever struggle with acting in an authoritarian way? How can you guard yourself against it?

PRAY: Pray for the Youth who will be meeting tonight at the church building. Confess to God the last time(s) you acted in an authoritarian type of way. Thank God for Jesus’ life.

THURSDAY: Obedience

Read: Philippians 2:6-8 ⁶ who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷ but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. ⁸ And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

REFLECT:

Verses like today’s make my head hurt. Simply compare a few versions of the Bible (e.g., ESV (above), NIV, NASB, NLT) and you’ll see these verses are hard to translate. However, just because they’re difficult to translate doesn’t mean we can’t learn from them.

The same word, “form,” is used to describe Jesus’ divinity (2:6a) and humanity (2:7a). This word has to do with visible characteristics based on internal qualities. Yet notice that he “was” God (eternally is implied by the word for ‘was’) but “took the form” for a servant. The divine Jesus became a man (while staying divine). This happened when He was born.

Once Jesus was human He lived life just like you and I. He got hungry, tired, laughed, cried, had friends, got His feelings hurt, etc. Yet none of what sidetracks us kept Him from completing His perfect obedience to the Father.

RESPOND:

The early church had problems with the divinity of Jesus. Ironically, we have problems with His humanity. Can you picture a hungry and tired Jesus? What about an adolescent Jesus with acne?

Read Matthew 26:36-46. What if Jesus wouldn’t have been obedient to God in the garden? (It was a possibility.)

Is it possible that we have a wrong view of what it is to be human? Jesus was human, but He didn’t sin. How important is obedience in overcoming sin?

PRAY: Thank God for the obedience of Jesus. Confess to God your most recent example of disobedience to Him. Pray that God is honored in our Good Friday service tomorrow.