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Sermon Notes

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Christ's Christmas Journey: Exaltation, Humiliation, Greater Exaltation

Philippians 2:5-11

Christmas is a time of journeys... of the movement of people; people travel great distances to be with family, to sit together around the tree, to see the lights, to feel the warmth of a crackling fire and the pleasures of just seeing each other's faces again. They are willing to put up with the hassles of holiday travel—of long lines at the airport, of slow moving traffic by urban centers, of greatly increased plane fares and the perils of travel over snowy and icy road through the mountains of West Virginia or Western North Carolina... all driven by a deep yearning to be together with family, to reconnect.

Christmas has always been associated with journeys... from the very first time

- The census of Caesar Augustus meant journeying for Joseph and Mary, and indeed of the entire population of Judea, as heads of families travelled from their hometowns to the place of their ancestry to register in the town of their tribal heritage
- After Jesus was born, the shepherds travelled the shortest journey... but they still travelled... from the hills outside Bethlehem to the stable where the baby was born
- So also the magi travelled from distant lands, led on by the mysterious star that moved and led them to Judea, the land of the Jews. The star then led them to Bethlehem itself, and actually stopped over the house where the baby lay

These long journeys were caused by the coming of Christ into the world... and so people have been traveling ever since because Christ was born into the world. The entrance of Christ into our sin-cursed world resulted in massive movements of people from one place to another over the surface of the globe... some have travelled thousands of miles over continents and indeed over vast seas to bring the message of the birth of Christ to the lost people of the world. John Paton travelled probably farther than any missionary in history... from Glasgow, Scotland, to Tanna in the New Hebrides Islands of the South Pacific is a distance of 9,897 miles as the crow flies... Don Richardson travelled from Calgary in Alberta to Papua New Guinea, a distance of 6,167 miles; for William Carey, the distance from London to Serampore, India, is 4,934 miles as the crow flies.... Though the sailing distance around Africa was at least 5,000 miles longer.

So many people have travelled long distances to take the gospel of Jesus Christ to the unreached people groups of the world... In 1993, Christi and I boarded a plane with

Nathaniel and Jenny and flew to Tokyo, Japan, in the name of Christ... that journey was more than 7000 miles.

Yet no journey was as vast, immeasurable... even INFINITE as that travelled by Christ Himself in coming to the earth that first Christmas night...

And no passage describes that journey better than Philippians 2:5-11:

Philippians 2:5-11 *Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: ⁶ Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, ⁷ but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. ⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death-- even death on a cross! ⁹ Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰ 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.*

In this Christmas sermon, we are going to trace out in the words of this text Christ's stunning and amazing journey

- Where Christ Began: Divine and Heavenly Glory
- How Christ Travelled Downward to Human Form
- How Christ Travelled Further Downward to Human Humility
- How Christ Travelled Infinitely Downward to the Cross
- How God Exalted Christ Upward to Resurrection Glory
- How God Exalted Christ Further to Heavenly Glory
- How God is Exalting Christ to Worldwide Glory

I. Where Christ Began: Divine and Heavenly Glory

Philippians 2:6 *Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped*

A. Before the Incarnation, Jesus Existed Eternally in Heavenly Glory

1. He was not created by God the Father... He was eternally begotten as God the Son, and received from Him equal glory and equal worship from the heavenly angels

Isaiah 42:8 *"I am the LORD; that is my name! I will not give my glory to another or my praise to idols.*

- a. There is an infinite gap between God and between all created beings

A.W. Tozer: The Knowledge of the Holy

We must not think of God as highest in an ascending order of beings, starting with the single cell and going on up from the fish to the bird to the animal to man to angel to cherub to God. This would be to grant God eminence, even pre-eminence, but that is not enough; we must grant Him transcendence in the fullest meaning of that word. Forever God stands apart, in light unapproachable. He is as high above an archangel as above a caterpillar, for the gulf that separates the archangel from the caterpillar is but finite, while the gulf between God and the archangel is infinite.

1 Timothy 6:15-16 God, the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords, ¹⁶ who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see.

- b. But Jesus shared God's glory equally
- c. We know that because He asked for that glory back after His work was done

John 17:5 And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began.

B. Christ Equally God, Equally Glorious, Equally Worshipped

1. It was not ROBBERY for Him to be considered equally God...It was not arrogance, it was not idolatry, it was not wickedness...

Isaiah 6:1-3 In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple. ² Above him were seraphs, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. ³ And they were calling to one another: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory."

2. So... Jesus' glory was so brilliant before His incarnation that the holy angels could not bear to look on Him; He dwelt in unapproachable light just as His Father... and they WORSHIPPED HIM
3. So also Jesus received from His heavenly Father glory due Him from the nations... that they should worship Him

Daniel 7:13-14 "In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. ¹⁴ He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped

him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.

So... Jesus “did not think it robbery to be counted equal with God”

It was not robbery to be as divine as God the Father... as omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, holy, righteous, just, loving, wrathful, eternal... all the attributes which you can ascribe to the Father are equally true of God the Son

It was not robbery to be as glorious as God the Father... He was as brilliant, as radiant, as terrifying for the angels, as unapproachable as His Father

It was not robbery to be worshipped like God the Father... there was nothing wrong and everything right for the Son to be worshipped by 100 million angels

That’s where Jesus was when He began His infinitely downward journey

II. The Downward Journey: To Earth, to Servanthood, to the Cross

A. The Father Sent Him... and He Obeyed

1 Peter 1:20 He was chosen before the creation of the world

1. The Father sent Him from His side into the world... FORTY TIMES in John’s Gospel, Jesus asserts that the Father SENT HIM

John 6:38-39 For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me. ³⁹ And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all that he has given me, but raise them up at the last day.

John 8:42 I came from God and now am here. I have not come on my own; but he sent me.

So it is clear that the Father SENT Jesus on a mission into the world

The Father SENT Jesus to become a baby; the Father SENT Jesus to seek and save the lost

2. But Philippians 2 emphasizes Jesus’ WILLINGNESS to go... indeed His CHOICE in going...

B. Jesus CHOSE to Become Human

Philippians 2:5-7 Jesus: ⁶ Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, ⁷ but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.

1. It was Jesus’ will to leave heavenly glory...to “MAKE HIMSELF NOTHING”

2. It was Jesus' will to become human, to be made in human likeness
3. It was Jesus' will to become AS MUCH A SERVANT as HE WAS GOD...
equally in **THE FORM OF** God and in **THE FORM OF** a servant

C. Once Made Human, He Chose a Downward Journey from there

1. God made the birth of Jesus to be extremely HUMBLE
2. Very few babies in the world are born into as degrading circumstances as was Jesus
3. No room in the inn, Jesus was born in a stable, surrounded by animals
4. He was wrapped in clothes by His mother, Mary, who apparently had no help at all... no doctors or nurses, no midwives, no NICU standing by ready... no one measuring His APGAR score

And how about being wrapped in cloths and laid IN A FEEDING TROUGH FOR ANIMALS!!!

I can imagine many of you are involved in the sanitary birth of babies... the careful diligence you show in making sure infants are not exposed in any way to infectious diseases... and that is a wonderful effort... but Jesus had no such care

5. The circumstances of Jesus' birth show His POVERTY, his humiliation...

2 Corinthians 8:9 For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.

The vast majority of the world's population is stunningly poor; Jesus willingly chose to identify with them by His humble birth circumstances

D. Downward Further: Servant to ALL

Philippians 2:8 And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient

1. "Obedient": He ALWAYS DID what the Father commanded Him
2. Jesus humbled Himself and served anyone and everyone who came to Him for anything

Matthew 8:5-7 When Jesus had entered Capernaum, a centurion came to him, asking for help. ⁶ "Lord," he said, "my servant lies at home paralyzed and in terrible suffering." ⁷ Jesus said to him, "I will go and heal him."

Matthew 9:18-19 While he was saying this, a ruler came and knelt before him and said, "My daughter has just died. But come and put your hand on her, and she will live." ¹⁹ Jesus got up and went with him

Matthew 14:13-14 When Jesus heard [that John had been executed], he withdrew by boat privately to a solitary place. Hearing of this, the crowds followed him on foot from the towns. ¹⁴ When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them and healed their sick.

3. He fulfilled His own words

Mark 9:35 "If anyone wants to be first, he must be the very last, and the servant of all."

E. But Jesus' Obedience and His Humbling Went to the Infinite Level

Philippians 2:8 And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death-- even death on a cross!

1. The cross was perfect obedience to His Father

Matthew 26:39, 42 "Not my will but yours be done!"

2. The cross was infinitely degrading to Jesus

Isaiah 52:14 Just as there were many who were appalled at him--his appearance was so disfigured beyond that of any man and his form marred beyond human likeness

Isaiah 53:5-6 he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. ⁶ We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

No one can possibly imagine how infinitely degrading and humiliating it was for Jesus, the holy Son of God, to bear our sins, our defilements, our iniquities, our wickedness on Himself

Like swimming in a swamp of unholiness, covered with the muck of our lusts and murders and thefts and blasphemies and corruptions...

And being CRUSHED by God the Father, suffering the infinite wrath of God for us... this was the very reason why He became human

III. The Upward Glory: Resurrection, Ascension, Enthronement

Philippians 2:9 Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name

A. God Glorified Jesus in His Resurrection

Romans 1:4 through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord.

B. God Glorified Jesus in His Ascension

Acts 1:9 he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight.

Hebrews 4:14 we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God

C. God Glorified Jesus in His Enthronement at His Right Hand

Mark 16:19 After the Lord Jesus had spoken to them, he was taken up into heaven and he sat at the right hand of God.

Psalms 110:1 The LORD says to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet."

Ephesians 1:20-22 he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, ²¹ far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. ²² And God placed all things under his feet

D. "Therefore" Means the Humiliation Results in the Exaltation

1. Jesus' perfect obedience has EARNED HIM the "highest place"
2. There is in Philippians 2:8-9 a logical LINK between the DOWNWARD JOURNEY Jesus travelled and the UPWARD JOURNEY of His exaltation
3. There is no "higher place" than the right hand of God

E. Jesus Given the Name that is Above Every Name: GOD

1. All the names of God... YAHWEH... Almighty God... Lord... King of Kings... Eternal One... Creator of all things... Judge of all the earth
2. These are RIGHTLY Jesus' names for all eternity

F. Christmas Results in GREATER GLORY for Jesus Than if He'd Never Come

Revelation 5:9 And they sang a new song: "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation.

IV. The Remaining Glory: Worldwide Worship

Philippians 2:9-11 Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰ 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.

A. The Glory of Christ Has Been Spreading Since His Resurrection

1. From the time Jesus ascended, the church has been on its own journey for the praise of His glory

John 20:19-22 As the Father has sent me, I am sending you. " ²² And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit.

2. With the coming of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, the church started moving out...
3. Beginning in Jerusalem... it spread throughout Judea and Samaria
4. It was taken down to Ethiopia by the Eunuch whom Philip evangelized
5. It spread to Gentiles by Peter's witness to Cornelius
6. It spread to Cyprus and through Asia Minor with Paul and Barnabas
7. It spread to Macedonia, Thessalonica, Athens, and Corinth through Paul and Silas
8. It was taken in chains to Rome by Paul
9. It continued to spread through all the Roman world by the early church
10. It continued to spread to the Barbarian tribes of Europe
11. It spread to Germania and Brittain by early Roman missionaries... and continued little by little to conquer Europe
12. It spread eastward to the vast steppes of Russia and to the distant mysterious kingdoms of India and China in those early centuries under the Nestorians
13. It spread along the silk road into the steppes of central Asia
14. Columbus and other Christians took it on sailing vessels to the Caribbean and the New World
15. The last three centuries have seen an explosion of Protestant missions to India, Burma, China, and distant islands of the South Pacific

16. After World War II, the unreached people groups have been more and more exposed to this relentlessly spreading gospel
17. Every time a person hears the gospel, repents of sin, and trusts in Christ, he or she is BOWING THEIR KNEES to the Lord... at the name of Jesus they FALL DOWN AND WORSHIP

B. The Name of Jesus is Greater and Greater with Every Day of Missions

1. God is doing AMAZING THINGS around the world, magnifying the name of Jesus Christ among unreached people groups
2. This is especially true among Muslims!!!

World Magazine interview of David Garrison "The Rising Tide of Muslim Converts to Christianity"

David Garrison, IMB missionary for 25 years with a PhD from the University of Chicago... written a book called *A Wind in the House of Islam*... He believes that between 2 and 7 million former Muslims have converted to Christianity in the past two decades

Lots of upheaval in the Muslim world, but some of that has loosened the grip of Islam on the hearts of people living in Muslim countries; key example: IRAN... Garrison says that the Ayatollah Khomeini has been one of the greatest evangelists for Christ that Iran has ever seen! Because of his overwhelming dedication to enforce the Islam taught in the Koran, many Iranians are hating it and leaving Islam in record numbers... tens of thousands, and probably hundreds of thousands in Iran are now brothers and sisters in Christ

That is happening on a grand scale in many places:

Garrison: "there are movements of Muslims to Christ, and by that I mean not just individuals, but movements of at least 1,000 within a community who have been baptized or 100 churches planted over the last two decades. ... from one end of the Muslim world to the other, so from West Africa to Indonesia and everywhere in between."

Muslims are having their sleep disturbed by visitations and by answered prayers, as well. We've talked to a number of folks who just talked about how they'd tested God. They said, "If this is real, I'm going to just pray, and if you're really there, Lord, I want you to hear this," and Jesus began to reveal himself through his faithfulness, and they realized that to follow Christ was not to follow a 2,000-year-old prophet, it was to follow a living Lord. That, for them, was the turning point.

[David Garrison] “I travelled more than a quarter of a million miles ... into the Muslim world, and [in] every corner ... interviewed people I would have never imagined – sheikhs and imams and mullahs, leaders in the Islamic community – who gave testimony to having been baptized after having met Jesus, and knowing that in doing so, they were saying, “I’m willing to die” because they knew very well that Islamic law did not allow for conversion from Islam to anything.

Over the course of the next couple of years as I began compiling lists ..., what I discovered was, in the whole course of Muslim-Christian interaction, there’s been 82 times, 82 movements, of Muslims to Christ of at least 1,000 baptisms or 100 church plants over two decades. **Eighty-two times**. Now here’s what’s striking: 69 of those have occurred since the year 2000. We are in the midst of the greatest turning of Muslims to Christ in history. I don’t think the church of Christ is aware of this. Even though it’s minuscule when you look at 1.6 billion Muslims – less than 1.5 percent of Muslims have been touched by the gospel at this point – we’re still seeing 84 percent of all movements that have ever happened are happening right now.

C. Jesus Deserves to Be Worshipped and Glorified as God

Vs. 10-11 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.

Simply put... people are saved from sin by confessing the DEITY OF CHRIST

The human baby Jesus is recognized as fully GOD by the power of the Holy Spirit

D. Christmas Leads to Missions!!

1. Hence the completely appropriate emphasis on missions every year
2. Lottie Moon... \$120,000 for our church; \$175 million nationwide
3. MORE THAN THAT: laying everything on the table for the unreached people groups of the world to hear and believe
4. For FBC to be committed to missions in 2015 as NEVER BEFORE!!
5. That should be the passion of our hearts

V. Applications

A. Celebrate with Great Joy!!

1. Christmas is a time of celebration... let's not forget to take the time to worship Jesus
2. Let's remember to thank Him for His willingness to make such a journey for us... to leave the throne of glory and be born in a stable
3. Let's remember to make a time of worship central to our celebration of Christmas... pause before or after you open your gifts and join hearts together in a prayer of thanksgiving and praise to the Lord for coming to earth to save us
4. The text talks about every knee shall bow... BOW THE KNEE to Jesus!!!
5. Special challenge to FATHERS... LEAD YOUR FAMILIES in a time of worship to Christ for this downward journey

B. Imitate Jesus' Downward Humility

1. The whole purpose of these glorious words in context is to teach the Philippians to be humble servants of one another

Philippians 2:2-5 be... like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. ³ Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. ⁴ Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. ⁵ Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus

2. "Have this mind in you as was in Christ Jesus..."
3. Let God work genuine humility in you in all you do
4. Seek more than ever before to be humble, to listen more, to encourage others and to serve others... to meet the needs of others...
5. Christmas can make us shockingly selfish... it's so easy to be self-focused when you open gifts to yourself
6. Learn to seek the needs of others ahead of your own
7. Ask God to make you more aware of the needs of the poor around you

C. Missions

1. The exaltation of Jesus has continued for two thousand years
2. God has sent people on LONG JOURNEYS to win the ends of the earth
3. Ask God to make you more attentive to missions in 2015... to give you a heart for unreached people groups

4. Google stories of people who have been converted by missionaries
5. Embrace our church members who are serving overseas; Christmas is LONELY in a foreign land
6. YOUNG PEOPLE: God may be calling some of you to GO to the ends of the earth
 - a. Could it be that two or three of you may in a short time span be learning a language spoken by an unreached people group and seeking to win them to Christ?
 - b. God has richly blessed us with young men and women—college students, seminary students, even high school students, who have a heart for missions
 - c. LET’S BE A LAUNCHING PAD!! Let’s live for the day when more and more people will bend their knees to Jesus and confess that He is Lord

D. Come to Christ

1. Make that confession yourself!!
2. If you are not a Christian, this is the greatest gift anyone could give you—the gospel!
3. TRUST IN HIM... this is why Jesus descended from heaven to earth—to save sinners like you!