



The Generosity of Jesus

Philippians 2:5-11

Pastor Matt Friend | November 18 & 21, 2021

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— OUTLINE —

Today's Big Idea

Jesus is the most generous person who has ever lived.

Two Takeaways:

#1 – Trust Jesus

#2 – Be thankful for Jesus



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— NOTES —

Introduction:

The name Charles Templeton is not a name with which most of us are familiar. However, many years ago, it was announced of Charles Templeton, who was an evangelist for an organization called Youth for Christ, “He is the most gifted and talented young preacher in America.”

If you haven’t heard of Charles Templeton, you’ve probably heard of his sidekick, another young evangelist, by the name of Billy Graham. Graham went on to be the world’s most famous evangelist, preaching the gospel to more people in history than any other single human being.

Regrettably, Charles Templeton did not. Five years after they made that announcement concerning him, he walked away from Christ and Christianity. He said he didn’t believe anymore.

Fifty years later, a journalist by the name of Lee Strobel decided to hunt him down and find out where he lived, because Strobel was writing a book called *The Case for Faith*. He wanted to interview this man who had walked away from the faith.

So he met Charles Templeton in his home. Charles was in his 80s at the time. His health was starting to fail, but he was very cognizant. And so Strobel conducted the interview. One of the questions he asked him is what do you think of Christ now? What do you think of Jesus Christ?

Charles Templeton responded, concerning Jesus, “He was the greatest human being who ever lived. Everything decent I know,



everything pure I know, I learned from Jesus Christ.” And then unexpectedly, Templeton’s voice began to crack. Tears welled up in his eyes. And he uttered these words about Jesus, “I miss him. I miss him.” After he said those words, he paused for a moment, tears started down his cheeks, and he covered his face with his hands, “I miss him.”

It’s very obvious that Jesus had a significant impact even still in the life of this man. Why? Because Jesus is the most compelling and captivating personality in all of history. Here’s just a sampling of testimonials from different famous people through history and what they have said about Jesus:

“I am a Jew, but I am enthralled by the luminous figure of the Nazarene.” –Albert Einstein

“I know men, and I tell you that Jesus Christ is no mere man. Between Him and every other person in the world, there is no possible term of comparison.” –Napoleon Bonaparte

“I am an historian—I am not a believer—but I must confess as an historian that this penniless preacher from Nazareth is irrevocably the very center of history. Jesus Christ is easily the most dominant figure in all of history.” –H. G. Wells

“I believe there is no one deeper, lovelier, more sympathetic, and more perfect than Jesus. Not only is there no one else like Him, there never could be anyone like Him.” –Theodore Dostoevsky

My favorite quote of a famous person about Jesus is from Elvis Presley. Look at what Elvis said... “No, honey, I’m not the King. Christ is the King. I’m just a singer!”

My goals for today are simple: I want to preach King Jesus. I want to show you the Lord Jesus Christ from the pages of Scripture. With Thanksgiving approaching, I want you to have a greater love and gratitude for Jesus, particularly one of His attributes that we’ll focus on later in the sermon.



What Does *Philippians 2:5-11* Teach?

In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus. –Philippians 2:5 (NIV)

The word “your” in verse 5 is plural. Paul is speaking to a group here, not an individual. He’s speaking to y’all, to us, to Jesus’ Church. Most of the New Testament is written to and for Jesus-followers, which is why most of my sermons are delivered to and for Jesus-followers. I’m speaking primarily to believers today; however, if you’re not yet a Jesus-follower, I pray God uses something I say today to enable you to take the next step in your spiritual journey. I’ll have a challenge for you at the end.

What’s Paul’s message to the Church? According to verse 5 he wants us to have a particular mindset that is epitomized in the person and work of our Lord Jesus Christ. Paul is about to lift up Jesus Christ as a model of something: a particular attribute he wants us to have.

A quick note about verses 6-11: This paragraph is what many Bible teachers believe is an ancient hymn. Though we can’t prove it, and it may not even matter on the grand scheme of things, I’m personally inclined to believe that Paul was quoting an early Christian hymn here in verses 6-11. It’s also possible that it was an early Christian creed. Either way, it sums up the good news of Jesus and gives us some incredible insight into Jesus’ heart. The entire book of *Philippians* revolves around this one poem. It’s perhaps most the moving passage that Paul ever wrote about Jesus.

*Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage. *Philippians 2:6 (NIV)**

Who is Jesus? He is by very nature, God. Some translations say that he is in the form of God. That works, but I prefer the way the NIV translates it here as nature. The Greek word is “*morphe*” which means nature. You can hear this Greek word in our English word metamorphosis: *morph* = nature and *meta* = change. Jesus’ nature before the first Christmas, after the first Christmas, and after the first Easter



and Ascension was, is, and always will be the nature of God.

We see this in the next phrase in verse 6, “equality with God.” In a way that we cannot fully understand, Jesus (as the second person of the Trinity) is God of very Gods—just like God the Father is God. This is why Jesus said in John 14:9, “If you’ve seen me, you’ve seen the Father.” Again, Jesus was God before Bethlehem, he was God when he played on the streets of Nazareth as a boy, he was God when he died on the cross, he was God when he rose from the grave, and he was God when he ascended back into heaven 40 days later. God is Jesus’ essential form.

This is one place where Christianity takes issue with the Muslim religion, and disagrees with many of the cults who still ride their bicycles through our neighborhoods.

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. –John 1:14 (NIV)

For this reason they tried all the more to kill him; not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God. –John 5:18 (NIV)

Jesus replied... “Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day; he saw it and was glad.” “You are not yet fifty years old,” they said to him, “and you have seen Abraham!” “Very truly I tell you,” Jesus answered, “before Abraham was born, I am!” At this, they picked up stones to stone him, but Jesus hid himself, slipping away from the temple grounds. –John 8:54-59 (NIV)

Jesus said, “I and the Father are one.” Again his Jewish opponents picked up stones to stone him, but Jesus said to them, “I have shown you many good works from the Father. For which of these do you stone me?” “We are not stoning you for any good work,” they replied,



“but for blasphemy, because you, a mere man, claim to be God.” – John 10:30-33 (NIV)

A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you!” Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.” Thomas said to him, “My Lord and my God!” –John 20:26-28 (NIV)

The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him. –Colossians 1:15-19 (NIV)

For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form. –Colossians 2:9 (NIV)

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

Notice the end of v. 6: Jesus did not use this “to his own advantage.” This could also be translated, “something selfishly to be held on to.” In other words, Jesus held unending privileges as a member of the Trinity in eternity past. Yet, verse 7 will show us he chose generosity over selfishness...

Rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. –Philippians 2:7 (NIV)



“Made himself nothing” = Some your translations may read, “He emptied Himself.” I don’t mind that translation as long as we understand it correctly. Jesus did not empty himself of his divinity, nor did He in any way cease to be God when he came to earth.

We already saw back in verse 6 that Jesus is by very nature God. You can't just take off some things that you are. Likewise, Jesus didn't empty Himself by removing any divine characteristics. Many of those were veiled at times during His life; yet, He never became anything less than God.

So from what did Jesus empty himself? The answer: He released/divested his privileged status of remaining in Heaven with God the Father. Think about what he had in heaven: the glory of heaven, the anthems of the angels, all the presence angels, the Seraphim, the cherubim, who gave constant praise and glory. Yet, He temporarily gave up that environment. This truth is seen in Jesus’ prayer in John 17, “Father, Glorify me with the glory I had with you before the world was.” By becoming human, he set aside all the privileges he had as God. He could now suffer. He could thirst. He could be tempted. He could be killed. However, he never released or divested any of his divinity—any of his nature as God.

Here’s an important truth to remember: Verse 7 teaches that Jesus “made himself nothing,” not through *subtraction*, but through *addition*. He didn’t subtract something from his nature, but added a second nature altogether. What did he add? Verse 7 tells us what he added: a human nature.

In verse 7 we see that Jesus added a second nature, the nature of a human servant. Beginning at that first Christmas—for the first time in eternity—it meant that when Jesus cut himself, He bled. When He stumbled up a stairway, He fell. When He slept at night, He probably snored. We don't like to think of Jesus that way, I know, yet, that’s humanity. That's the limitations of humanity. Jesus had two natures, the nature of God and the nature of a human.



This is how we say it at Bible Center, “Through the power and work of the Holy Spirit—in the incarnation through the virgin birth—Jesus fully took on human nature, including a human body and a human experience while living a sinless life. Jesus is fully God and fully man. Both natures are unified in Christ without confusion or the minimization of either nature.” –Member Statement of Faith

If you want to know more about what Paul meant by Jesus taking on the form of a servant, read Isaiah chapters 40-55. Approximately 700 years before Jesus, Isaiah prophesied about a coming suffering servant. Paul, here, is saying, “Jesus is that suffering servant.”

And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross! –Philippians 2:8 (NIV)

Somebody once said, “You can tell the depth of the well by how much rope is lowered.” In Jesus, God lowered the rope, showing the depth of the hole of sin and how God reached down to save us.

“Appearance as a man” = Does this mean that he wasn’t human but only appeared human (like a ghost of some sort)? Not at all. The NT is clear that Jesus became a real human being (1 Timothy 2:5). Romans 8:3 will help us solve the puzzle where the same word is used...

For what the law was powerless to do because it was weakened by the flesh, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in the flesh. – Romans 8:3 (NIV)

What Paul is saying back in Philippians 2:8 is that Jesus had all the appearances of any other sinful man, with one difference: he never sinned. This is what he means by, “He humbled himself by becoming obedient.” If we were to ask the Apostle Paul, “What’s one word that describes the life of Jesus Christ?” he would say, “obedience.” His whole life is summed up in obedience. From the first moment of his conception, he was obedient to God the Father. The Son and the



Father are not at odds; instead, they work together in our salvation.

Make no mistake. We are not only saved by Jesus' death; we are also saved by his life! When people ask me if I believe in works salvation, I always reply, "Yes, if you're referring to Jesus' works! My works can never save me, but Jesus' works can: his perfect life, death & resurrection." You see, Jesus could not have showed up on Thursday, died on Friday, arose on Sunday, and ascended back to heaven on Monday. No, he had to live a full life of obedience, birth to death.

In verse 8, Paul highlights the apex of his obedience, "death—even death on a cross." Death is repeated here for emphasis. This sentence is designed to make us gasp. The cross was the most despicable, shameful, and painful death in the Roman world, perhaps in all of human history. Cicero, a Roman leader at that time, said, "Far be the very name of the cross, not only from the body but even from the thought, the eyes, and the ears of Roman citizens." Crucifixion was reserved for the most rebellious of slaves, for the traitors, terrorists against the state. You didn't talk about somebody who was crucified, you didn't even talk about the cross in polite company.

This also was a horrible experience from a Jewish perspective. Back in the Jewish law, Deuteronomy 21:22-23 read, "If someone guilty of a capital offense is put to death and their body is exposed on a pole, you must not leave the body hanging on the pole overnight. Be sure to bury it that same day, because anyone who is hung on a pole is under God's curse. You must not desecrate the land the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance."

Why did he do this? Because God so loved the world (John 3:16). Because God wanted to show his love toward us, even while we were yet sinners (Romans 5:8).

So, by way of review, let's notice the digression in verses 6-8...

- Jesus became human, but His big-heartedness didn't stop there.



- Jesus made Himself a servant, but His open-handedness didn't stop there.
- Jesus humbled Himself, but His liberality didn't stop there.
- Jesus relegated Himself to a level of perfect obedience, but His charity didn't stop there.
- At the peak of His generosity stands an old rugged cross. Jesus enrobed Himself with death so we could be enrobed with eternal life. Oh, what generosity!

Today's Big Idea:

Jesus is the most generous person who has ever lived.

Big Idea Expanded:

Paul quotes Jesus in Acts 20:35, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." (NIV)

You know the generous grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that by his poverty he could make you rich. –2 Corinthians 8:9 (NLT)

The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor. –Luke 4:18–19 (NIV)

The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full. –John 10:10 (NIV)

God has given each one of us a special gift through the generosity of Christ. –Ephesians 4:7 (NLT)

With the Thanksgiving holiday coming up, it's important we are convinced of this. Hopefully you'll take some time to recount your blessings; however, make sure you are most thankful for the generosity of the Lord Jesus Christ!



Two Takeaways:

#1 – Trust Jesus

God creates, sin breaks, Jesus saves, Jesus transforms, and Jesus restores; however, you must receive him for yourself. You must believe. Whoever *calls on the name of the Lord* will be saved!

In the year 1830, a man by the name of George Wilson was convicted of a Federal Crime and sentenced to die. For some reason, the President of the United States, Andrew Jackson, gave George Wilson a pardon. (A pardon is a federal order forgiving a man for the crime he has committed. It totally cancels out the penalty for the crime.) For some unknown reason George Wilson refused the pardon from the president. The authorities didn't know what to do. Should they let him go free or should they still make him die for the crime he committed? They were confused until the Chief Justice John Marshall said this, "A pardon is a slip of paper, the value of which is determined by the person pardoned. If it is refused, it is no pardon. George Wilson must be hanged." He could have been completely forgiven, but he refused, so he paid for his sin by himself.

Eventually, you will acknowledge Jesus Christ as Lord. I pray you do so now, not later when it is eternally too late.

Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.
–Philippians 2:9-11 (NIV)

#2 – Be thankful for Jesus

Be thankful for the person of Christ. Be thankful for the work of Christ. When you recount your blessings this week, make sure you are truly thankful for Jesus. Imagine where your life would be without Jesus. Imagine an eternity lost, without hope, without Christ. Never let it be lost on you that God opened your eyes to faith. He didn't have to,



but He did!

This is one of the big reasons we take communion almost every week as a church family. Communion reminds us to praise and thank God for all He has done. In 1 Corinthians 10:16 God gives us another name for communion, “eucharist,” which is the Greek word for thanksgiving.

Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ? –1 Corinthians 10:16 (NIV)

This has been a really hard year. But do we have anything left for which to praise and thank God? Sure we do! Above all things, we can thank God for the salvation we have in Lord Jesus Christ!

Why Do These Two Things? Because...

Jesus is the most generous person who has ever lived.