Philippians 2:5-11 - The Way Up is Down

Ludwig II – Lorrie and I recently went on vacation to southern Germany, and one of the highlights of our trip was touring the famous "Neuschwanstein Castle" (slide 1). The castle was built in the 19th century by King Ludwig II.

- King Ludwig II was born in 1845 as heir to King Ludwig in southern Germany.
- His father, King Ludwig, lived in Hohenshwangau Castle.
- Ludwig II wanted to build a castle for himself bigger and greater than his father, and surely he did.
- Neusch. castle is set on a hill that looks down on his fathers (slide 2), and looks down on all of his subjects.
- In order to build Neuschwanstein castle he extorted money from the people that he ruled over.
- Instead of being a king that was loved and who served his people, he is known for his selfish rule as one who stole money from the people he was meant to serve, all so that he could elevate himself over his father and over the Kingdom that he ruled over.

David Livingstone – At the same time that Ludwig was alive, there was a man named David Livingstone.

- Livingstone was born in 1813 in England.
- In 1840, five years before Ludwig II was born, Livingstone set sail for Africa, with a vision and dream to bring the gospel of Jesus Christ to the heathen in Africa. You can imagine what his experience would have been like.

Ludwig and Livingstone:

- King Ludwig II came from royalty, and lived his days in lavish, wasteful living.
- Livingstone came from meager, humble beginnings, but left the comforts of England in great sacrifice, he would face great anxiety, suffering and danger as he traveled through Africa.
- **For Ludwig, the "abundant life" meant** living for himself even at the expense of others. Exalting himself. For him the way up was up.
- **For Livingstone, "abundant life" meant** losing his life for the sake of the gospel and for the sake of the salvation of Africans. For Livingstone, the Way Up Was Down.

(we'll return to their stories in a moment)

- **Mt. 16:25 (slide 3)**: Jesus said, "*For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it*." (Mt. 16:25). This is a narrow path. It is a path of suffering, a path of humiliation, a path of taking up a cross daily, and yet it is a path of the greatest of joys and a path of true abundant life.
- **In God's Kingdom, the Way Up is Down**: We must first die, if we are to be raised. We are first to humble ourselves if we are to be exalted…for God opposes the proud and gives grace to the humble, and grace is the only way up (1 Pet. 5:5; James 4:6). This was the way of Jesus, this was the way of the apostles…this was the way of men like David Livingstone who surrendered their lives to God and willingly went to wherever God bid them to go…even to the ends of the earth.

- **Closer look at Mt. 16:25** – did you catch the words of Jesus. Listen carefully again, "*For whoever would save his life* [save his life by avoiding the cross of Jesus, by choosing to NOT follow Him, by avoiding the suffering of God's Kingdom] *will lose it* [the ultimate cost of not following Jesus is great loss, in this life, and for all eternity – separated from God in hell – a tragic end], *but whoever loses his life* [by following Jesus] *for my sake* [because you cherish Jesus, you trust in Jesus - so much that you are willing to lay down your life…give it all away – Mt. 13:44] *will find it* [you will find TRUE life…life abundant, not without suffering, not without struggle, but with great joy and eternal reward with God for all eternity]."
    - Jesus is not asking us to *lose a good life*…He is asking for us to *lose a life that is already lost* so that we might truly find life….WITH HIM!
    - Mt. 13:44

Transition: The greatest example of this is Jesus Himself. In the hymn that we just read (most scholars think this is a hymn, creed) in Phil. 2:6-11 we see the greatest example of a life lived upside down. For the man, Jesus of Nazareth, the Way Up was Down. Paul inserts this hymn right at the center of the letter to the Philippians as an example to follow and as the central inspiration to all that he writes in this letter.

Context: Paul is writing from prison, he wants to see the Philippians again and believes that he will…but in his absence he wants for them do three things:

1) He wants them to live worthy of the gospel of the Kingdom (3:20 - as citizens of God's Kingdom)
2) He wants them to be united and selfless
3) He wants them to embrace Paul's pattern of sacrifice and suffering

Transition: ***Here is 2:5, Paul commands the Philippians to have a particular "mindset"***

(**slide 7 - 2:5**) - "*Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus*"

- This is a command from Paul to adopt a way of thinking - to develop a mindset with Christ Himself as our ultimate example of that mindset.

Let's now read the Christ hymn again so we can see the mindset of Jesus that Paul wants the Philippians and us to have…

(slide 8 - 2:6-11)

Read: *"who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped,* ***7*** *but emptied himself, by 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.* ***9*** *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."*

- **Birds Eye View:** **(slide 9)** His divine nature (v.6) → assumed (Greg of Naz) a human nature (v.7) → so that He might die on the cross in obedience to the Father (v.8) → Therefore God exalted Him and gave Him the name that is above every name (v.9-11)

- **I want to look at each of these steps and then I'll give us some points of application**

1. **<u>His divine nature: v.6</u> (slide 10) - "*who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped*"**

    - **"in the form of God"** – the word for "form" speaks of the nature of Christ. Jesus Christ has always and will always possess a divine nature – He is very God of very God.
    - **"did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped" –** What would "grasping" being equal with God look like? It would look like Jesus robbing God of something or taking something for Himself that He did not already possess. To claim to be God was not robbery (NKJV) or grasping something He did not already possess.
        - **Ethical –** there could also be an ethical element to this – that Christ, as a man, did not use His divinity for His own personal benefit.
    - **One thing is for certain, this is one of the strongest statements in the Bible regarding the divine nature of Christ.**
    - **Plainly put, the Bible teaches that Jesus is God –**
        - **Thomas worshipped Him as God – He didn't refuse it (John 20:28)**
        - **John 1:1 – "*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was <u>with God</u>, and the Word <u>was God</u>*.**
        - **This is a great mystery, but as Christians we believe in the Triune God = One God – one divine nature – three separate persons – Father, Son, Holy Spirit**
    - **Paul's point here is *not to argue for the deity of Christ* he is simply stating it as a fact. His point is to show the Heights from which the Son of God condescended. That God Himself would condescend, humble Himself to the point of becoming a man – this is the mindset Jesus had, and the mindset we are to have.**

2. **<u>His human nature</u> – v.7 (slide 11) – "but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men."**
    - **"emptied himself" –** What does it mean that Christ emptied Himself. All sorts of awful heresies have come about from this word "emptied". What does it mean to be emptied:
        - **Emptied of Divinity?** NO! Jesus never ceased to be God.
        - **Emptied of Divine Attributes or Resources?** NO! Jesus always remained fully God. However, the mystery lies in that when we see Jesus in the gospels, we at times see His full deity and at times His full humanity.
        - **Emptied not by subtraction but by addition – "by taking", "by being born"**
            - **"by taking the form of a servant" –** He emptied Himself BY TAKING the form of a servant – slave. Fully God, He fully became a "*doulos*" – a bondservant or slave by a willing choice.
            - **"being born in the likeness of men" –** He emptied Himself by being born in the likeness of men – He became fully human while remaining fully God.
- **Jesus was fully man:**
    - His birth took place in a very natural way.

- Jesus grew in wisdom and stature just like any other Jewish boy.
- He had a human body, became thirsty, became hungry, experienced pain, experienced sorrow, had emotions, was overwhelmed with joy at times and sadness at other times,
- His disciples witnessed his physical body – they touched Him, they heard Him, they saw Him (1 John 1:1).
- He had an ordinary appearance – Judas had to give a sign to the guards
- His hometown rejected him, because it was too difficult for them to believe that the man they knew could be the Messiah
- He was tempted as we are, yet without sin – sin is abnormal, He was more human than you and I.
- When He faced temptations as a man and as a man depended on the power of the Holy Spirit and the Father just as you and I need to.

- **Paul's point is *not to prove* the humanity of Jesus, but to highlight the amazing condescension of the Son of God emptying Himself by taking upon humanity in order to save it. God at just the right time, "in the fullness of time" (Gal. 4:4) became a man, and took on full humanity that He might save us. The incarnation of Jesus was the ultimate rescue mission.**

3. **<u>His Work of Redemption (v.8) (slide 12)</u>** - **"*And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross*."**

Why did Jesus have to become human? Two things in this text:

- **To be our substitute – When we put our faith in Jesus, God sees Him as our substitute – He had to become a man in order to be our substitute man.**
- **To be our Substitute obedience –** Jesus had to live a perfect, obedient life in order to be our substitute obedience.
- **To be our Substitute sacrifice –** He needed to become a man so that He could die for sin. God cannot die, Jesus became the spotless lamb of God to die for sin so that the wrath of God which we deserve would be fully paid for.
- **Notice that Paul emphasizes the TYPE of death – death on a cross – torture, nakedness, humiliation and shame – Jesus wasn't the victim of the cross, He willingly took the cross for you and me.**
- **If Christ is not your substitute, you stand before God on your own. As a disobedient, prideful, sinful, and person who is facing the eternal, awful, wrath of God. Christianity is not you climbing up to God, it's God coming down to you. There is no ladder to climb, and if there were you couldn't climb it.**
- **Illustration: Quicksand**

4. **<u>His Exaltation (v.9-11) (slide 13)</u> – "*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*."**
   - **His exaltation = seated at the right hand of God (ascension)**
   - **His name = "Lord" over all**

- **His Worship = every knee will bow, every tongue confess (Isa. 45:24 – every His enemies)**
- **A fuller description - Ephesians 1:20-22 –** (Ephesians in the fall – Trevor). Christ is seated in at the right hand of God – "far above every rule, authority, power, dominion, and above every name that is to be named." All things are in subjection to Him…under His feet. This is the exaltation that this Christ hymn is speaking of.
- **There is not a single thing that Jesus Christ doesn't rule and reign over.**

Application

Transition: what type of "mindset" are we to have? Paul wants the Philippians and God wants us to develop a Christ-like mindset based on this hymn. What are some ways that we can apply this text in our lives, today, right now, and moving into 2024?

- **First, we should have a "missional" or "incarnational" mindset –**
  - **Christ became a human on a mission.** His mindset was to save, to reconcile, to be a perfect representative for God.
  - **How would God have you this year enter in** to the pains, struggles, heartaches of others? How can you become a better spouse by applying this mindset – what would it look like for you to enter in to the struggles of your family?
  - **To whom would God have you reconcile with**?
  - **To where would God have you go as His representative**? How can you be a substitute for others. This is what the incarnation means for us practically.
  - **The mindset:** He came….so we now go.

- **Second, we should have a mindset of hope.**
  - **Paul wants us to have this mindset – The Way Up is Down**. Humility, sacrifice, obedience comes before exaltation.
  - **What does our exaltation look like?** In Ephesians 2:6 there is a glorious passage:
  - **(slide 14**) "*and raised us up with him and **seated us with him** in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus*" – Ephesians 2:6
    - **You and I rule with Jesus** "far above every rule, authority, power, dominion…all things under our feet"
    - Over sickness, death, sin, satan, things present, things to come. All things work for good – to conform us into the image of Jesus.
    - **Our rule**: 1) the opposition is only for a season; 2) God is in control of that pressure; 3) God will use it to conform you into the image of Christ
- **Finally**, maybe you're here and you are the man/woman in the quicksand.
  - **What is hindering you** from surrendering today to Jesus to follow Him?
    - **Questions** – come and see
    - **Cleaning up your life?** – let Him clean it up…you can't do it without Him, not in a way that honor's God

- **Every knee will bow and every tongue will confess** – if you bow/confess today, you will be saved
- **If you fail to bow in this life, you will bow in the life to come , because even His enemies will bow (Isaiah 45:22-24)…but you will carry your own sentence of the wrath of God** – Christ died to be your sacrifice – let him carry your sentence.

- **How do you do that?** You must confess that you're a sinner, and receive Jesus as the payment for your sin. You must surrender your life to Him and follow Him. It begins with a step of faith today:
  - **Romans 10:9 (slide 15)** – "if you ***confess*** with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and ***believe*** in your heart that God raised him from the dead, ***you will be saved***.
  - **Step of humility**: come talk with me after

Conclusion - Ludwig and Livingstone

…back to the story of Ludwig and Livingstone as we close

Ludwig II end:

- Ludwig II moved into his lavish castle prior to its completion. He lived in the castle for several months, however, shortly after moving in, he went insane and was eventually admitted to a mental institution. He never lived to see the full completion of it.
- No one knows exactly how he died but it appears he committed suicide, although some think he was killed. What a tragic end.
- Neuschwanstein castle stands today, as an example of a man who sought to build his life at the expense and on the backs of others. He never fully experienced the glory and blessing of the castle that he built. He sought to gain his life and ended up losing his life.

Livingstone's end:

- Right around the same time that King Ludwig II was sketching designs for his palace, David Livingstone journeyed back to England after years of missionary service in Africa.
- He came to Cambridge in 1857 to give an address to the students there about his experience as a missionary. The topic of his address to the students was why he would leave the comforts of England to serve the heathen in Africa. His words are exemplary of a man who "lost his life" but "gained it":

- "*For my own part, I have never ceased to rejoice that God has appointed me to such an office. People talk of the sacrifice I have made in spending so much of my life in Africa. . . . Is [it a] sacrifice which brings its own blest reward in healthful activity, the consciousness of doing good, peace of mind, and a bright hope of a glorious destiny hereafter? Away with the word in such a view, and with such a thought! It is emphatically no sacrifice.* ***Say rather it is a privilege****. Anxiety, sickness, suffering, or danger, now and then, with a foregoing of the common conveniences and charities of this life, may make us pause, and cause the spirit to waver, and the soul to sink; but let this only be for a moment. All these are nothing when compared with the glory which shall be revealed in and for us.* ***I never made a sacrifice***."

- **5 famous words - "I NEVER MADE A SACRIFICE" – the joy, the privilege, the fulfillment, the purpose/meaning, the peace with God, and the future destiny of eternity in the presence of God FAR OUTWEIGHED the suffering, the sacrifice, the danger that Livingstone faced.**
- **Brothers and sisters, the invitation this morning, this year, to die to self in order that we may follow Christ, is an invitation to true joy and abundant life with and in God.**

Let's pray…

- **Thank God for the privilege of following Him**
- **Praise Jesus for showing us the way and for coming to live and die for us**
- **Ask God to help those who are struggling – may they know that you are working all things together for good…and that whatever they're facing, you rule over it – you're in control**
- **God give those here who are not yet following you the faith and the courage to believe and follow you.**