

1 Well, thank you to our seminary intern,
2 Chris Slatter, for preaching for us last
3 week. I heard good reports, and then I
4 watched it on our live stream, and so I
5 have a good report to give as well. Just
6 a beautiful job.
7 It really is a blessing, and I've told
8 you this before, but it really is a
9 blessing to be part of a church
10 fellowship, where elders and and folks
11 within our church will will share the
12 pulpit, and do so
13 in a way that is a blessing, a blessing
14 to me, a blessing to us. I I never worry
15 about the folks that we ask to preach
16 because they're going to preach God's
17 word. And that's part of who we are here.
18 And thank you, Chris, for doing that last
19 week so well. Today,
20 we're going to look at the next section
21 of Philippians in chapter two,
22 verses five through 11, beginning in
23 verse six. It's a section that is thought
24 to be a very early Christian hymn,
25 some kind of a poem, maybe something that
26 people sang. Most people think
27 that the apostle Paul borrowed it
28 for use in his letter to his
29 friends in the church in Philippi.
30 Some people think that maybe Paul wrote
31 it himself, but the
32 rhythm and the way that this
33 particular section is put together, it
34 sounds like a poem. Sounds like something
35 that might have been used in worship,
36 that people would have recited it or sung
37 it. Many people today call
38 this section, which is one of the great
39 Christological statements in all of the
40 Bible, Christological just means about
41 Jesus, one of the great statements about
42 Jesus to be found anywhere in the Bible.
43 Many people call it today the great
44 Christ hymn. And it expresses,
45 from the broadest perspective
46 imaginable, the career of
47 Jesus. God the Son, who
48 descended from heaven to save and
49 re-ascended when his saving work was
50 completed. And I have three things that
51 I'd like to say. It's not everything
52 there is to say about this. People write
53 books. I'm still writing books about this
54 particular text. It It goes
55 really deep. But I'm going to say three
56 things about this text for us here today.
57 First of all, it is a divinely
58 inspired expression of
59 practical truth. Second,
60 It is a graciously given gem
61 of theological revelation.
62 And third, it is an enormous
63 offering of personal wisdom.
64 Let's pray. Lord God, we thank you once
65 again for your word, for the truth that
66 you give to us. Lord, we thank you that
67 we have your word to go back to again and
68 again and again, to be reminded, to
69 be encouraged, to be inspired.

70 to know which end is up, what is right,
71 and what is true. We pray that
72 your word would ring true for us
73 today and would make a difference for us
74 as we consider who we are and what we're
75 doing and the choices that we make, the
76 lives that we live. We pray this in
77 your name and for your sake. Amen.
78 So, you may notice that there are
79 no pictures in your bulletin this week,
80 sorry. I usually like to put a picture in
81 there. It makes things look nice. There
82 just wasn't room for it this time. I
83 printed the whole text for you on the the
84 cover with a little bit of commentary on
85 the side that that we'll talk about. And
86 then in the sermon outline later,
87 talking a little bit about what this text
88 means. So there just wasn't room for
89 pictures. I'll encourage you to look
90 in those places as I share with you
91 today. To start with, look at the front
92 of your bulletin. as we read this text.
93 Have this mind among yourselves, which is
94 yours in Christ Jesus, who though
95 he was in the form of God, did not
96 count equality with God a thing to be
97 grasped, but emptied himself.
98 By taking the form of a servant, being
99 born in the likeness of man, and being
100 found in human form, he humbled himself
101 by becoming obedient to the point of
102 death, even death on a
103 cross. Therefore,
104 God has highly exalted him and bestowed
105 on him the name that is above every name,
106 that at the name of Jesus, every knee
107 should bow in heaven and on earth and
108 under the earth, and every tongue confess
109 that Jesus Christ is Lord to the
110 glory of God the Father.
111 So the great Christ hymn of
112 Philippians chapter two
113 is a divinely inspired expression
114 of practical truth. I
115 think this is an important thing for us
116 to affirm together, because it sure looks
117 like really high
118 theological expression,
119 really high ideals, et
120 cetera. But it's good for us to note the
121 context of this section. Paul has been
122 urging the church in Philippi toward
123 deep unity as God's people.
124 Having the same mind, the same love,
125 affirming the same goals, serving one
126 another, rather than always looking out
127 for themselves. Last week,
128 Chris shared with us about that
129 section leading up to this great hymn. He
130 had a wonderful line, by the way. He
131 said, If unity is a strength,
132 humility is the glue. That's a
133 nice line. I may use that
134 again sometime. Yeah, if
135 you're going to have unity, you probably
136 better have some humility. People of
137 humility are able to live and
138 work together in

139 unity. People who give themselves
140 to pride, personal pride, as a
141 matter of course for them, are going to
142 have a tough time finding unity with
143 anybody. I think that's true.
144 But Humility that leads to
145 unity is much easier said
146 than done. How are the Philippians going
147 to achieve this very practical, but very
148 difficult goal of being unified as God's
149 people in his church? Well, Paul
150 tells me, by following the way of
151 Jesus, by uniting themselves to
152 him, by thinking and acting like
153 the one who descended from heaven to save
154 them. So let me ask what I think
155 is a pretty practical question.
156 Why is it that churches
157 have such a difficult time finding and
158 maintaining real unity
159 within their own walls and with other
160 Christians in their area, between
161 churches? Why is it so
162 hard for us to
163 to find and maintain unity with one
164 another? Well, we could point to all kinds
165 of factors: different goals,
166 limited resources,
167 entrepreneurial competitiveness,
168 conflicting interpretations of the Bible,
169 et cetera, et cetera. But behind all of
170 these things, it seems Paul would point
171 to this: We who call
172 ourselves followers of Jesus
173 are neither artfully seeking nor
174 wisely internalizing the
175 mind of Christ.
176 What is this mind of Christ? What was and
177 is Jesus' attitude about himself and
178 about others?
179 5-11 shows us.
180 To make the very practical reality of
181 sweet unity among people come alive,
182 The living God inspired the apostle Paul
183 to present this picture of Jesus and to
184 say, Look, look look at
185 Jesus. This is how you do
186 it. This is how you complete my
187 joy. This is how you discover and
188 maintain healthy relationships in the
189 church and everywhere else.
190 Know and follow the attitudes and
191 actions of Jesus. Be
192 like Him. Here it is worth
193 pointing out that there is much
194 about this passage of scripture that
195 Bible scholars struggle with
196 and debate. For example, we have what
197 is called the kenosis problem.
198 Kenosis is the Greek word for
199 emptied. When Paul says Jesus
200 emptied himself, that's the word in
201 Greek, kenosis. What
202 exactly did Jesus, God the Son, empty
203 himself of when he came to Earth? How
204 much supernatural ability as God did he
205 still have when he took on human
206 form? Nobody's been able to give a
207 final, definitive answer to this

208 question. God's word does not give
209 us clearly defined boundaries of
210 what Jesus could and could not do. We
211 read the Gospels, we see him doing some
212 rather extraordinary things. How much
213 could he do?What exactly did he empty
214 himself of, as Paul says here, and
215 we don't know. The Bible scholars that we
216 read, if we read Bible scholars, don't
217 know for sure. God's
218 word does, though,tell us
219 what Jesus did do.
220 He taught us the truth. He lived a
221 sinless life. He died,
222 taking upon himself the just penalty for
223 our sins. He rose from the
224 grave. He ascended into heaven after
225 promising to return. That is everything
226 we need to know. So again, in a
227 practical vein,application
228 of what we can clearly see,
229 like how to make lasting unity a
230 reality among us, is more
231 important than getting the whole thing
232 figured out. The line I like to use, and
233 you've heard me use it before, is I plead
234 the 55th. Isaiah 55.
235 where the Lord says through the prophet,
236 My ways are not your ways, neither are my
237 thoughts your thoughts. As high as the
238 heavens are above the earth, so high are
239 my ways above your ways, and my thoughts
240 above your thoughts, declares the living
241 God. If we can't figure everything out
242 about God, my theological word I like to
243 use in response to that is, duh
244 If I could figure out God
245 completely,I would be God,
246 and God would be something else.
247 But there are things that God has shown
248 us, like the mind of
249 Christ, that we can know,
250 and that we can put into practice.
251 And that's a very practical thing to do.
252 This great Christ hymn then, while
253 offering a cosmically high and wide view
254 of things, is quite practical in its
255 intent. It is not merely truth to be
256 known, it is truth to be applied.
257 Then also, our text for today is a
258 graciously given gem of theological
259 revelation. What kind of
260 God do we worship?Theological just
261 means about God. What kind of character
262 do we find in the God who created all
263 that is, whom we are coming to know
264 and choosing to serve?The Philippian
265 Christ hymn shows us. Jesus
266 shows us ourselves. He is the
267 new Adam. He is the man who
268 perfectly lived out what it means to be
269 truly human. The reality of being
270 made in God's image is a reality that
271 shines from Jesus in
272 untarnished glory. You want to know what
273 a real person is really supposed to look
274 like?Look at Jesus. Jesus
275 also shows us God.
276 He is the image of the invisible God,

277 we readhere in another great
278 Christ hymn from Colossians
279 1:15-20. 5-11 reveals God. Who
280 is God?Look at Jesus.
281 And here I will refer you to the right
282 side of your bulletin cover, next to the
283 text, where I make some commentary
284 on who is Jesus. By the
285 good and gracious choices Jesus made, he
286 shows us his character, which is
287 the character of God.
288 Before descending to Earth and throughout
289 his life, the eternal Son.
290 reveals God. Jesus,
291 in his earthly life and ministry,
292 redeemed us from sin and death. He
293 didn't kill us because we deserved
294 it. He died for us because we
295 needed it. By his faithful
296 obedience, as fully God and
297 fully human, Jesus accomplished
298 his work. Jesus
299 humbled himself. Came
300 down from heaven to earth, wrapped
301 himself in human flesh, went innocently
302 to the cross where he died, earthly
303 life over. Jesus
304 shows us that our God is a
305 God of love and compassion
306 and mercy, and so the
307 God who redeems.
308 And we see that through all of this,
309 God never ceased to be the God of all
310 power and might and rule.
311 After dying, Jesus rose.
312 Death could not umm
313 maintain its power over him.
314 Earthly life over?Real life,
315 not. By the power of Almighty
316 God and as Almighty
317 God, Jesus revealed himself to be
318 eternally and rightfully the exalted
319 ruler over all things.
320 The therefore, at the hinge point of
321 this high and holy revelation,
322 means that Jesus' exaltation was the
323 logical consequence of who he
324 is, rather than an earned
325 reward for what he did.
326 Again, Jesus is showing
327 us God. So, though God
328 is loving and gracious, this does not
329 make him weak. This is a
330 God who is to be honored and respected
331 above all else, who
332 invites us to know him, who shows us
333 himself, and who brings us into an
334 eternal relationship of love with him.
335 If this is the real
336 nature of God,and it is,
337 God has shown us Himself,
338 then we are crazy not to
339 listen to Him and to follow after
340 Jesus. Thinking like Him,
341 imitating Him, and taking seriously the
342 truth that through His life, death, and
343 resurrection, and through our gift of
344 faith, we are in
345 Christ.This is what Paul's

346 Christ Him is showing us.
347 Finally, what we are given here
348 is an enormous offering of
349 personal wisdom. We want to live in
350 health and wholeness. We want a life
351 of joy and fulfillment. We want
352 to bring glory to God by the lives that
353 we live. This grand picture of
354 Jesus shows us the way.
355 And I've spelled out the realities of our
356 Lord's character and actions and their
357 implications for us using the word
358 unity on the back of your bulletin.
359 And I'm going to work my way up from the
360 why to the you. It
361 really was the you that inspired me
362 in this, the way of the you, the
363 way of the parabola, which is a nice
364 picture of the career of Jesus. Heaven
365 descends to earth, takes on human form,
366 obeys his Father, even
367 obeying all the way to death, even death
368 on a cross as a as the
369 worst of the worst kind of criminal.
370 There's the bottom part of the parabola,
371 EU. Therefore, God has
372 highly exalted him and given him the name
373 above every name. And at the name of
374 Jesus, every knee should bow and every
375 tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord,
376 to the glory God the Father. There's that
377 movement. Well, that's what inspired me
378 to think about it. So let me start with a
379 why. I just started with the you, I
380 couldn't help it, sorry.
381 The great opportunity of a lifetime in
382 this world is that we can choose whom we
383 are going to be like. And the great
384 tragedy of a lifetime is that people are
385 aiming too low. The great joyful victory
386 of a lifetime is to become more like
387 Jesus. This is the why, you know, you hit
388 the fork in the road, you can be like
389 Jesus. Or you can not. You try to be like
390 somebody else, something else. It's an
391 opportunity that God gives us. It's part
392 of what it means to be human, to be able
393 to make choices like that. The great
394 paradox of joyful living is that we
395 succeed best when we realize that by
396 ourselves, we are unable to succeed. I
397 mean, the why looks nice, but I'm going
398 to take the wrong fork in the road way
399 too many times. And without help,
400 that's going to be the way it goes for
401 me. And I trust it's the way it would go
402 for you, too. That if it if it's all a
403 matter of me making good choices to earn
404 my way with God, it ain't going to
405 happen. God's standards are
406 as high as I can be. Not
407 pretty good, but good,
408 perfect, righteous. Not sort of
409 righteous. Not righteous in my own mind,
410 or not righteous according to some things
411 I can get a group of people to agree with
412 me on, but righteous according to God,
413 that's that's really righteous. So the
414 paradox is like letter T. You're on your

415 way, and boom, you're going to hit
416 something, and you realize, I can't do
417 it. So the great secret of
418 joyful living, Christian living, is that
419 the risen Christ lives in us,
420 walks with us, and enables us to be like
421 Him. It is by the power of God, it
422 is through this partnership with Jesus,
423 the risen Christ, in my life, I am
424 in Christ. There's There's a great
425 sermon series with those words which
426 we're not going to go into, but Paul uses
427 that phrase a lot. In Christ.
428 So there's that letter I, two parallel
429 lines. Jesus is with
430 us. The great opportunity, or excuse
431 me, the great opponent of joyful living
432 is foolish human pride, which seeks
433 futile self-exultation.
434 There's that that letter N, sort of.
435 where I'm going to exalt myself. I
436 live to make a name for myself. I live to
437 make myself better than everyone else. I
438 live to have everyone read my blog. I
439 live to have everyone in the world --
440 well, maybe just America, because
441 everybody doesn't speak English, and
442 everybody doesn't have access to the
443 Internet. But I'm going to use every
444 means possible so that everybody knows my
445 name, and everybody in some sense
446 worships me. By the way, that's
447 what our culture is telling everybody,
448 make you somebody. God's word says
449 something different. And if you
450 follow that course, and there's plenty of
451 scriptures that'll tell you this,
452 Mary's magnificat, For he
453 has lifted up the lowly, Mary said,
454 when she found out she was pregnant with
455 God's son. And he has put down
456 the pride, the prideful and the powerful.
457 Pride goeth before the fold. I mean,
458 there's all kinds of... There's all kinds
459 of verses that'll tell you that. And
460 there's all kinds of examples in the
461 scriptures, king after king after king,
462 after king, after king in Israel.
463 If anybody ever wants to take a look at
464 the books of First and Seven Kings, for
465 example, oh yeah, we just did that.
466 You see, it's people trying to do it
467 themselves, trying to exalt themselves,
468 trying to find power and security in
469 themselves, and they're doing that the
470 way of the letter N, they they go up, but
471 eventually, they come down. People
472 throughout history, I understand
473 even people today, are trying to build
474 a man-centered, man-powered
475 kingdom, empire.
476 Read your history books. Any of them
477 that last
478 forever?All of them. All of them
479 don't. Except one
480 kingdom that we see on Earth, but it's a
481 very different kingdom, and it is the
482 kingdom of God. And it
483 exists beyond any boundaries,

484 ideologies. If you If you
485 go the way of self-exultation, you will
486 find yourself eventually on the path
487 of death and destruction.
488 The great opponent of joyful living. But
489 the great and true way of joyful
490 Christian living is the way of humility,
491 the way of the cross, the way of the
492 letter U, U for us,
493 U toward unity. You
494 in Jesus, the way of Jesus.
495 Jesus Christ is the example we must
496 follow, for his U-shaped career
497 shows us the way both to live a life of
498 joyful fulfillment, and to realize
499 God-honoring unity in his church.
500 It is counter-intuitive, it is
501 counter-cultural, that we
502 would live to humble
503 ourselves. not And
504 not to humble ourselves in a way that
505 everybody notices and says, Wow, that
506 guy's incredibly humble, don't you think?
507 No. Just humbles ourselves because
508 that's what we do. And if nobody ever
509 notices, that's okay. Because we
510 trust, and again, you can find scriptures
511 about this, 1 Peter chapter
512 five, Humble yourself before the mighty
513 hand of God, and in due time he will
514 He will exalt you. And here's the thing
515 about that. I know I'm going off
516 script here, but
517 if the world exalts me,
518 how long does that last? Maybe for a
519 while. And especially in this media age,
520 there's lots of things that can you know
521 keep my name out there. But it would be
522 an interesting exercise to look at people
523 who were really famous at the beginning
524 of the 19th or 20th century.
525 Really famous. that we've never heard
526 of, right? It just
527 It just doesn't last forever. If the
528 world exalts you, it's only temporary.
529 If God exalts me,
530 how long does that last? Forever.
531 Exalts me with him in him.
532 That's the way. So what?
533 Listen, we are most
534 fully, victoriously,
535 and joyfully human
536 when we are most like
537 God. When we
538 follow as well as possible and improve in
539 following the way of Jesus.
540 The highest calling in all the earth,
541 or heaven, is to be like
542 a servant, like
543 Jesus.
544 Lord God, thank you for today,
545 thank you for the gift of this day, thank
546 you for the gift of each other, thank you
547 for the gift of your word. Thank you for
548 Jesus, who
549 most of all accomplished his work for us.
550 Jesus, who didn't just come to give us a
551 good example that we weren't going to be
552 able to follow, but who came to die for

553 us, that we might be reconciled to God,
554 reconciled to him, reconciled
555 in him, with him, for him.
556 And so now, It is the living God,
557 it is God the Son, it is our Savior and
558 Lord, Jesus Christ, who
559 is risen, alive today, here with us,
560 who who dwells among us and
561 dwells within us.
562 And so we have help. We
563 have empowerment, inspiration,
564 to truly make
565 progress in being
566 like our Lord and Savior. Lord, keep
567 helping us, thank you, and make us ever
568 more wise and willing
569 to accept your help and to follow after
570 you, and so to find many blessings,
571 like real unity in our
572 relationships with others. And we pray
573 these things in your name and for your
574 sake. Amen. Amen.
575 We'd like the choir now to
576 bless us further by sharing with us
577 A second anthem for today,
578 at the name of Jesus.