

## “Who Is This Jesus?”

Philippians 2:1-18

September 27, 2020

Do you ever meet people who you know, but you don't recognize them since they are wearing a mask? This has happened to me several times over the past few weeks and usually when it happens the other person will say something like, “Pastor Bill, don't you know who I am?” I feel bad when I don't recognize someone, as the mask sometimes just makes it difficult to recognize people. I will usually respond by saying, “Of course I know you,” because when I hear their voice then I usually recognize them right away. But that phrase, “Don't you know who I am?” can be used by any of us when we think someone is being disrespectful toward us, and it is often used by politicians, celebrities, or professional athletes when they are not getting the service or recognition they think they deserve. But if there was one person who probably had a right to get upset and say, “Don't you know who I am?” it was Jesus, who was often treated very poorly during His ministry here on earth. So I would like us today to look at our second lesson from Philippians to see again who Jesus is and what that means for us.

This text from Philippians is part of a letter that Paul wrote to the church in Philippi and he wrote to thank them for the support they gave him while he was in prison. He also took the opportunity to encourage the congregation in Christian living saying, “Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who emptied himself by taking the form of a servant.” (Philippians 2:3-5,7)

Was there a problem in the Philippian congregation where members were saying to one another in a sense of anger, “Don't you know who I am?” If there was, Paul wanted them to instead consider the question: “Don't you know who Jesus is?” The answer: Jesus is our servant, and He proved His servanthood in many ways. The night before He was crucified He washed His disciples feet as they prepared to eat their Last Supper together, a task that was normally reserved for the lowest slave in the house.

We've all had moments when we've served other people. A parent serves a child. An employee serves a customer. I'm sure we've all had moments when we thought to ourselves, “I'm above this, this is not my job, but I'm going to do it anyway.” Maybe you've seen the television show, “Undercover Boss,” where the CEO of a company or restaurant disguises himself/herself as an ordinary worker and does things like making hamburgers, mopping the floor, or getting yelled at by a customer. Later on the workers are surprised to discover that their coworker is actually the boss or the owner. But what is even more surprising is seeing Jesus, the CEO of the world, taking on the very nature of a servant and washing His disciples' feet. And then on top of it He takes on an even dirtier and painful job as He washes the sin off of people through His death on the cross. Paul puts this act into perspective when he wrote in Verses 6-8, “Jesus, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.”

If you walked into the White House, we would all be surprised if we saw the President cleaning the floors of the visitors' restrooms, right? We would probably say something like, “Mr. President, I'll do that for you or do you want me to get someone to do that for you?” After all, that's not what important people are expected to do. On the contrary, important people usually expect us to serve them. But Jesus was not like that; although He was God, He never used that fact to build Himself up or to promote Himself to others. When He fed 5000 people with 5 loaves of bread and 2 fish, it wasn't so people would make Him their king (although they tried). He performed that miracle, because people needed to eat. When He turned water into wine at a wedding, it wasn't to impress the wedding party or because His mother demanded Him to do it. He did that miracle so that the wedding reception could continue joyfully without interruption. Jesus used His divine power to serve, never to brag or to show off.

So, who is this Jesus? He is God from eternity who became our servant. He set aside the beauty of heaven, His glorious appearance, and His ultimate authority in order to cleanse us from our sins. Nothing would stop him from accomplishing this, not sickness, not sore feet from walking on long dusty roads in sandals, not ridicule, and not even death. Would you do that? Would you jump into a sewer, with filthy water, and try to

save someone who fell into it while trying to throw rocks at you? In a sense, that's what Jesus did for us filthy sinners.

So how can we complain about having to clean the bathroom when we realize what Jesus went through to cleanse us from our sins? How can we complain about spending 5 minutes picking up a mess we didn't make, when Jesus hung from a cross for 6 hours to clean up the sinful mess of our lives? Therefore, when people treat you poorly or ask you to do something you find demeaning to the point that you want to say to them, "Don't you know who I am?" Answer your own question the way Jesus did. "I am here to serve. So yes, I would be happy to do whatever you've asked me to do for you."

But if we act like everyone's servant, won't people take advantage of us? Didn't they take advantage of Jesus? The religious leaders of Jesus' day certainly did. They misinterpreted Jesus' humility for weakness and had Him arrested and crucified for claiming that He was God. And Paul speaks to that point in our text saying in Verses 9-11, "Therefore, God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

Since Jesus has conquered sin, death, and the devil, and reigns in heaven as our Lord and Savior, live your life then in anticipation of joining Him in heaven someday. While people may criticize or question why you would go through the hassle of putting on a mask and coming to worship in this place or set aside time to worship with us online, instead of joining them at a weekend party, the criticism or rejection you may feel now will be nothing compared to the rejection unbelievers will feel on Judgment Day when Jesus says to them, "Away from me you evil doers. I never knew you." You may not have very much in this life, while blatant unbelievers seem to have everything. But who cares? The gift of eternal life in heaven as a child of God will be far greater than anything we have ever imagined.

So it doesn't matter what kind of trouble you may be in today. You may be in over your head financially, or the doctors may not understand what is wrong with your body, or maybe you are struggling with your marriage, the bottom line is Jesus is still with you and He will take care of you. So when it feels like Satan is attacking you and trying to make your life miserable, go ahead and say to him, "Don't you know who I am? I am God's child. My Baptism assures me of that, so you have no power over me, and one day I will walk all over you since Jesus crushed you at the cross."

Jesus was and always will be the humblest man ever to walk the face of the earth. Who will die for the sins of the world? "I will," says Jesus. Who will take the blame for all the pride, violence, adultery, gossip, and disrespect in the world? "Blame me," says Jesus. Who will feel the pain of being separated from God and die the worst death ever known to humankind? "I will," says Jesus. Do you see who He is and what He does for you at the cross? He humbles himself and lowers himself in love for you.

People may not know that you are the owner of your own company, or that you are at the top of your high school class academically, or that you make the best peanut butter cookies in the world. This lack of recognition may make you want to shout, "Don't you know who I am!?" But you won't get frustrated like that when you remember who you really are – a humble child of God who lives to serve others.