

051526

- I. My Notes ... WWC message 5/16
- II. Series: Series: Koinonia — The Joy of Living in Unity with Christ
  - Title: The Pattern of Participation – Part 2
  - Text: Philippians 2:5-11
  - Quote: “Jesus didn’t cling to what was His so He could cling to us.”
- III. Introduction
  - We are going to deeper places in our discussions. That comes with growth, with gaining understanding. This echoes what Solomon told his son (and us) - “*Wisdom shouts in the streets ...*” (**Proverbs 1:20**). In continuing to talk about wisdom, Solomon goes on to say, “*32 For simpletons turn away from me—to death. Fools are destroyed by their own complacency. 33 But all who listen to me will live in peace, untroubled by fear of harm.*” (**Proverbs 1:32-33 NLT**). Our faith journey is causing us to gain wisdom, to have understanding in our bond with the Lord God. That’s important. It creates a stronger intimacy and connection in this life shaping relationship.
  - As I told you on Tuesday night, I have been sitting with a couple of passages of Scripture. Not trying to dissect them, not doing a deep theological dive. Just sitting and letting them re-orient and shape my perspective. In many ways, I believe these passages complement one another. They certainly shape our worldview. It happens to be that they are both places we are currently studying. Revelation 4 and the picture of worship caused me to begin to think and seek to understand what Jesus did by willingly leaving Heaven.
  - I don’t think I understood self-emptying until I became a parent. There’s something about those early mornings—when a child wakes up before the sun does—that exposes what’s really inside you. You’re warm under the covers, dreaming of ten more minutes, and then you hear it:
    - “Dad... I need you.”
    - And in that moment, you feel the tension. Part of you wants to stay where you are—comfortable, undisturbed, in control. But love pulls you downward.
    - Out of bed. Into their world. Into their needs. Into their trust. Parenting has a way of confronting the parts of me that still cling to my own comfort, my own schedule, my own rights. It reveals how tightly I hold on to things Jesus willingly let go of.
  - Because Paul says something staggering about Jesus in **Philippians 2:6–8**. He tells us that Christ, “*Though he was God, he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to.*” (**v. 6 NLT**). He didn’t cling. He didn’t insist on His position. He didn’t protect His status.
  - Instead, He “*emptied Himself*” (**v. 7 NASB**). He stepped down into our world — our mess, our limitations, our neediness. He took the form of a servant.
  - And then Paul goes even further:

*“... He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.” (v. 8 NASB).*

- When I read this passage from the viewpoint of a parent, it hits differently. Because every day, in a hundred small ways, I’m invited into that same downward movement. Not dramatic, not heroic, just ordinary moments where love asks me to descend.  
To lay down my preferences. To surrender my pride. To choose presence over convenience. To let go of the version of myself I would love to protect.
- And Paul isn’t just describing Jesus—he’s inviting us to adopt His mindset (remember our discussion of Philippians 2:5).  
He’s saying: “This is the pattern. This is the posture. This is the way.”
- So, here’s one of the questions that’s been working on me all week: Where is God inviting me to descend—so that love can rise in someone else’s life?  
Because the pathway of Christ—the pathway of joy, freedom, and transformation—always begins with self-emptying.  
It begins with surrender. It begins with choosing the downward way.
- Look at the Path Jesus Chose ...  
And when Paul invites us to *“Adopt the same attitude as that of Christ Jesus” (Philippians 2:5 CSB)*, he’s not inviting us into something abstract or sentimental. He’s inviting us to look closely—honestly—at what Jesus actually gave up as He descended into our world.
- Because Jesus didn’t just step out of heaven; He stepped away from privileges we can barely comprehend.  
He gave up the glory that had always been His (see John 17:5).  
The radiance angels never stopped worshipping (remember the scene from Revelation 4). The honor no one had to teach Him to deserve.
- He gave up the rights of equality with God (Philippians 2:6). Not His divinity—He never stopped being God — but the privileges of His divine position. He chose not to grasp what was rightfully His.
- He gave up the independence of divine power. The One who spoke galaxies into existence (John 1:1-3) chose to be carried in the womb of a teenage girl (Luke 1:35).
- The One who sustains all things by His word chose to need Mary to feed Him, clothe Him, and rock Him to sleep.
- He gave up the limitlessness of deity and stepped into the limitations of a human body — hunger, fatigue, pain, tears (Hebrews 2:14–17). He gave up the honor of heaven and embraced the misunderstanding, rejection, and ridicule of earth (Isaiah 53:3).  
And ultimately, He gave up His very life, becoming *“obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross” (Philippians 2:8)*.

- When you see it laid out like that, the descent of Jesus isn't just a theological concept. It's a breathtaking act of self-emptying love. It's the pattern of the kingdom. It's the shape of real greatness.
- And here's the part that humbles me as a parent:  
Jesus gave up infinitely more to come to us than I have (and will) ever be asked to give up to love my children well.
- His descent becomes the blueprint for ours.

#### IV. The Mind of Christ

- *"Who, being in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped."* **(2:6 MEV)**
- Paul begins not with what Jesus became, but with who He already was. The phrase "being in the form of God" (Greek: **morphē theou**) means Jesus possessed the full nature, essence, and glory of God. This is John 1:1 — "the Word was God." This is Colossians 1:15 — "the image of the invisible God." This is Hebrews 1:3 — "the radiance of God's glory."
- Jesus lacked nothing. He was not aspiring upward. He was already in the highest place. And yet Paul says He *"did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped."*
- The word grasped means: to cling to, to hold tightly, to use for one's own advantage.  
In other words, Jesus refused to exploit His divine privileges. He didn't cling to his rights. He didn't insist on His status. He didn't leverage His position for Himself.
- This is the opposite of Adam (and all men for that matter). Adam grasped for equality with God (Genesis 3:5–6). Jesus, who already had equality with God, refused to grasp.  
Paul is showing us the mindset of Christ: Self-giving, not self-protecting. Self-emptying, not self-exalting. Open-handed, not grasping.
- This is the mind we are invited to adopt (Philippians 2:5).

#### V. Explanation

- Verse 6 is dense. It's theological. It's cosmic in scale.
- Paul is describing something no human has ever experienced: the eternal Son of God choosing not to cling to His divine rights.
- This is abstract for most of us. It's glorious, but it can be hard to relate to.
- Imagine a CEO of a global company—corner office, private jet, every privilege—choosing to give up the title, the salary, the authority, and instead taking a job on the warehouse floor. Not for a day. Not for a photo op. But permanently. No special treatment. No shortcuts. Just choosing to live among the workers.
- That's a faint shadow of what Jesus did. He didn't cling to His position. He stepped down into ours.

#### VI. Kenosis

- “*But He emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.*” (2:7 MEV). This is the great mystery of the incarnation. The theological term is “kenosis” ... it points to the self-emptying of Jesus.
- What does “emptied Himself” mean? It does not mean He stopped being God. Scripture is clear—He remained fully divine (Colossians 2:9).
- It means He poured out His divine privileges, not His divine nature.
- He emptied Himself by:
  - Adding humanity, not subtracting deity (John 1:14).
  - Taking the form of a servant (Greek: *doulos*—bondservant).
  - Choosing limitation—hunger, fatigue, pain (Hebrews 2:14–17).
  - Entering our vulnerability—a baby held by human hands (Luke 2:7).
  - Living in obedience to the Father (John 5:19).
- Notice the contrast:  
In verse 6, He is in the form of God.  
In verse 7, He takes the form of a servant.
- Same word: **morphē**. Just as He was truly God, He became truly servant.
- Think about it, ponder what you know about Jesus ...
  - The One who commanded angels now washed feet (John 13:3–5).
  - The One who owned everything had no place to lay His head (Luke 9:58).
  - The One who sustains the universe needed to be carried by Mary.
- This is the downward movement of divine love. Jesus voluntarily relinquished His status, privilege, and independent power for the sake of love and reconciliation.

## VII. Explanation

- In today’s cultural landscape, we are constantly bombarded with messages of self-optimization, personal branding, and the aggressive accumulation of influence, power, and comfort. We are told to fill ourselves up, assert our rights, and guard our energy at all costs.
- In a world suffering from that kind of exhaustion, the concept of kenosis offers a radical, counter-cultural deep breath:
  - Power Through Vulnerability:  
Our culture often defines strength by how much control we exert over our environment and others. Kenosis flips the script, suggesting that the highest form of power is actually the power to let go of power for the benefit of someone else. It redefines greatness not by who is serving you, but by whom you are serving.
  - A Remedy for Fragmented Relationships  
Whether in a marriage, a friendship, or a community, conflict usually arises when both sides refuse to empty themselves of their need to be right, to be validated, or to be first. A kenotic approach to modern relationships asks: “What am I willing to lay down right now to bridge this gap?” It prioritizes connection over ego.
  - Finding Meaning in the “Quiet”

There is a quiet, hidden strength in the acts of self-emptying that the world never sees—much like the late-night rocking of a sick child or the behind-the-scenes sacrifices made to support a loved one enduring a difficult season. Kenosis assures us that these hidden, emptying acts are not a waste of life; they are where life is actually found.

#### VIII. Obedience

- *“And being found in human form, He humbled Himself and became obedient to death, even death on a cross.” (2:8 MEV)*  
If verse 7 is the incarnation, verse 8 is the crucifixion.
- “Being found in human form...” He didn’t just appear human—He lived fully human.
  - He experienced temptation (Hebrews 4:15).
  - He experienced sorrow (John 11:35).
  - He experienced rejection (Isaiah 53:3).
- “He humbled Himself...” Humility wasn’t something done to Him. It was something He chose. He willingly descended.
- “Becoming obedient to the point of death...” His entire life was obedience. Not partial obedience. Not convenient obedience. Obedience to the end.
- “...even death on a cross.”
- Paul saves the most shocking part for last.
- Crucifixion was:
  - the most shameful death (Hebrews 12:2),
  - reserved for criminals and slaves,
  - considered cursed by God (Deuteronomy 21:23; Galatians 3:13).
- Jesus didn’t just die — He died the lowest, most humiliating, most cursed death imaginable.
- This is the bottom of the descent.
- From the throne of heaven to the cross of shame. And He did it willingly. Lovingly. Obediently.

#### IX. Pause to Reflect

- Being candid here, I would like to say something profound to bring this all together and lay groundwork for the next message in this series. I am not sure that I can. The love of God reaches us from Heaven, and it has been revealed in many ways. Perhaps the most significant is Jesus coming to us – to show us the way.
- As I ponder on what the Apostle Paul has told us, a Psalm of praise and adoration comes to mind. In Psalm 113, the psalmist points us to a marvelous truth. *“4 The Lord is exalted above all the nations, his glory above the heavens. 5 Who is like the Lord our God—the one enthroned on high, 6 who stoops down to look on the heavens and the earth?” (Psalm 113:4-6 CSB).*

- I have been sitting with this thought lately and it keeps wrecking me. We serve a God who “stoops” ... Not a God who waits for us to climb up to Him. Not a God who demands we get it together before He draws near. But a God who bends low. A God who kneels in the dirt beside broken people. A God who steps into the mess we try to hide. A God who doesn’t flinch at our weakness but moves toward it.
- When I think about Jesus — the One who had every right to stay enthroned in glory —choosing instead to step down, to take on flesh, to wash feet, to touch lepers, to welcome children, to carry a cross...
- I realize I’m not following a God who shouts orders from above. I’m following a God who gets down on His knees and says, “Let me meet you where you are.”
- And honestly, that changes everything.  
Because if God stoops, then I don’t have to pretend. I don’t have to perform. I don’t have to climb some spiritual ladder to be worthy of His presence. I just have to let Him come close.  
And if God stoops, then I’m invited to stoop too — to lower myself in love, to enter someone else’s world, to serve without needing to be seen, to choose the downward way that looks like Jesus.
- We serve a God who stoops. And that’s the only reason any of us can stand.
- Let’s Pray
- Grace First, Grace Always