

**Philippians 2: 5-11; “Christ’s Mind in the Incarnation”, A Sermon for
the Christmas Season, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on
December 25th, 2016, in the Morning Worship Service.**

The preaching of the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ is a very important part of the preaching of the gospel because it is this truth that establishes who He is; that He always has existed as God. But what is quite wonderful, and even astonishing is, that He became a Man and came into this world to save poor and needy sinners like ourselves. In verse 5 we are told that we are to let this mind be in us which was in Christ Jesus. In other words, we are to learn from Christ’s incarnation, about His mind in this matter, concerning what He deliberately did upon His taking up a nature like our own, except for sin. He did these things so that we might be saved, but He did them also to show us how He Himself thought; so that we by His grace, might become more like Him in the way that we think about living our Christian life. And so, I want to set before you Christ’s mind in the Incarnation in 3 statements. 1st – In Christ’s mind, it was essential that He consider Himself rightly. (verses 5 and 6) 2nd – In Christ’s mind it was essential that He make Himself of no reputation. (verse 7) 3rd – In Christ’s mind, it was essential that He should humble Himself, in order that He would be exalted in the way that the Father had purposed. (verses 8-11) In presenting to you these thoughts of Christ’s holy mind, I will bring application to each of you who know Him, so that you will let this mind be in you, which was first in Him. For those of you who do not know Him yet, consider the greatness and the redeeming love of our Savior. He can be your Savior, if you will believe.

1st of all – In Christ’s mind, it was essential that He consider Himself rightly.

(verses 5 and 6)

Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God...” Now, that Christ always considered Himself rightly in all that He did, both before and after His Incarnation came originally from the fact that He is the 2nd Person of the Divine Trinity. The three Persons of the Godhead are subsistences in the one essence of God, and as such, it was considered by them in the counsels in eternity past, what would take place in relation to the creation of the heavens and the earth, and in their purposing together that all things created, would be created for the glory of the Triune God. It was understood by God in these counsels of eternity, that man, having been created, would be created in righteousness and holiness of truth, in the image and likeness of God. He would be given the highest responsibility of all of God’s creation, because he was created in this way. He would be responsible for the keeping of the one great commandment which God gave to him in the garden of Eden; not to eat the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for in the day that he would eat of it, he would die. Although there was no question with God how man would do, in relation to this test of his original righteousness, this was how God proceeded. He granted to man the freedom of will and the ability to keep this one good commandment, if he would abide the word of God to him.

Realizing with perfect unfailing scrutiny, in accordance with His eternal purposes, that man would fail this test of standing in his original righteousness when left to himself, God had further purposed before all creation came into existence, that all things would be gathered together, that is, they would be summed up in His only-begotten Son. And, so it was, before time began that God decided that all of the people whom He chose to eternal life would only be saved in Christ and through Christ. In order to accomplish this redemption, the 2nd Person of the Godhead, the Word would become flesh and dwell among us. God had a purpose which was greater than the creation of man. It was a great and glorious purpose which would have its focus on man’s coming to better understand His own great glory, and dwell with Him forever, rejoicing in all that God would reveal of Himself to man. Our Lord Jesus Christ would come in time and space, in the fullness of time, at exactly the right time. He would come, so to live and so to die, that He would redeem God’s chosen

people from all their sins. His coming, and His work of righteousness on their behalf, would place believing people into the position of being able to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever; not by their own righteousness, and not by the strength of their own will, but by the righteousness of Christ, and the spiritual strength which God would supply.

All of this was purposed in this way so that God would indeed have an everlasting inheritance in His highest creation man; He would have a people for His own possession, forever and ever. Turn with me over to Ephesians 1, verses 3-10. “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved.” “In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence, having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to his good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth – in Him.” This last verse reads this way in the New American Standard translation: “According to His kind intention which He purposed in Christ, He had a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times, that is, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth.”

So, you see, it was God’s holy and wise purpose that all things would be summed up in Christ. All things would not, and could not, be summed up in mankind as they are fallen in Adam. But all things could be summed up in Christ who would become a Man, and then God’s purpose would be fulfilled. You and I can learn from this. Do you not see that it never really was God’s purpose that all things be summed up in man by himself, apart from what God would do in Christ? God the Son considered Himself rightly. Even though His glory with the Father, before the foundation of the world, was inexpressibly great, yet He was willing to lay it aside for the sake of an inexpressibly great number of sinners whom His Father would choose in Him; for your sake, if you will believe in Him. Will you not see what this means for you in particular? It means that all of life really is summed up in Christ, and your being found in Him, not having a righteousness of your own, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ. Life does not ultimately revolve around you; it revolves around God’s good purpose towards you in Christ. You must learn what is most important and seek for the meaning of life outside of yourself. The meaning of life is your coming to know Christ and learning to do God’s will from a cheerful heart; knowing that He has redeemed you by laying aside His glory and coming down to this fallen world to redeem you so that you could be saved and walk with Him.

2nd – In Christ’s mind it was essential that He make Himself of no reputation.
(verses 6 and 7)

“Being in the form of God He did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, (He did not consider it a thing to be grasped) but made Himself of no reputation, (He emptied Himself of all of the privileges of deity) taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men....” To be in the form of God means that from all eternity Christ existed as God, and that He was then, and He is now, of the same essence with the Father. He did not take something from God, having robbed something of His eternal glory, when He was begotten of the Father. He was not made by the Father as the highest of the creation. He always existed with the Father, having the same essence and glory. He and the Father always had shared this essential glory of the Godhead in their one essence, even though they were two distinct Persons. The form of God is God. It is not something less than God, or created by God to look like God. It is something that each of us should

take notice of; that the glory of the Father and the glory of the Son were and are the same glory, and always have been.

Listen to John Calvin on this: “The form of God means here His majesty.” “For as a man is known by the appearance of his form, so the majesty, which shines forth in God, is His figure.” “Or, if you would prefer a more apt similitude, the form of a king is his equipage and magnificence, showing him to be a king – his scepter, his crown, his mantle, his attendants, his judgment-throne, and other emblems of royalty; the form of a consul was – his long robe, bordered with purple, his ivory seat, his lictors with rods and hatchets.” (a lictor was a bodyguard in ancient Rome, whose task it was to protect magistrates.) “Christ, then, before the creation of the world, was in the form of God, because from the beginning He had his glory with the Father.” “For in the wisdom of God, prior to His assuming our flesh, there was nothing mean or contemptible, but on the contrary a magnificence worthy of God.” “Being such as He was, He could, without doing wrong to anyone, show Himself equal with God; but He did not manifest Himself to be what He really was, nor, did He openly assume in the view of men what belonged to Him by right.”

So, Christ, when He came in His incarnation did not choose to manifest His tremendous great visible glory to all the world, because both He and the Father were in perfect agreement about what it would take to save His elect people, both in respect to Justice and to Mercy. Together they knew, with the Holy Spirit, what would be the best possible way to show forth Christ’s glory, and the glory of the Triune God, in the salvation and sanctification of sinners. Christ knew that He would need to make Himself of no reputation. So, He was born of Mary; Mary who never knew a man, but who knew the power of the Most High overshadowing her and that holy One who would be formed in her, our Lord Jesus, was not born in a palace, but in a stable; in real obscurity. And God did not send prophets to tell the leaders of Israel that His Son had come. Instead He revealed the birth of His Son to wise men and shepherds.

And when Jesus became of the age that His earthly ministry should begin, He certainly had the right to command that all men, Jew and Gentile would reverence Him and obey Him. But this was not the Divine plan. It says here, that He had already, in connection with the Father’s will for Himself, decided that it would be essential that He would make Himself of no reputation, even from the time that He was born until the time of His beginning His earthly ministry at the age of 30. He was not taught in the schools of the Sanhedrim. He was the son of a carpenter. He was not known as someone extraordinary, except that when he was a young lad of 12 years of age, His parents went up to Jerusalem to the feast of the Passover, and at some point toward the end of that time, Jesus went to listen to the teachers. He was listening to them, and He was asking them questions. And all who heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers. And yet, we hear nothing more about Him until His ministry began.

Why did Christ need to make Himself of no reputation? It was because He needed to take the form of a bond-servant. As our Mediator, He needed to take our place, first in His submission to God and His will, and then in terms of His living a perfect and sinless life in relation to all men whom He came into contact with them. This obscurity was good for the cultivation of the secret habit of prayer and learning to be faithful in little things. “He grew up before Him as a tender plant, and as a root out of dry ground.” “He had no form or comeliness; and when they saw Him, there was no beauty that they should desire Him.” “And so He was despised and rejected of men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.” (Isaiah 53: 2 and 3) All of this, making Himself of no reputation and learning obedience in little things and the great things done in secret before God, all of these things were embraced as a part of doing the will of His Father in heaven. Our Lord Jesus “did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give Himself a ransom for many.” (Matthew 20: 28)

This should tell us something about how we should live our lives. We should live our lives to God primarily, and then learn to be faithful in our everyday duties before God and men. You do not need to have a great reputation, or to try to become popular with people around you, in order to

be great in the sight of God. God is able to work with you and use you wherever you live, and no matter how much in obscurity you are. You are always just as much with Him and under His holy and kind gaze as the most public or popular person in the world. Indeed, it is good, if you would be like your Master, that you would “make yourself of no reputation”. That is, that you would not strive to deliberately place yourself in the place where you would think that you and your talents would be most seen by men. Instead, cultivate faithfulness to God in obscurity and wait until He providentially brings you out to be useful to Him in a more public sense. It is better that you learn to wait upon the Lord and pray and work for Him right where you are, no matter how obscure the place is where you live. It is true that you have decisions to make, but remember that God’s eye is on the sparrow. Remember the Hymn – “Why should I feel discouraged?” “Why should the shadows come, why should my heart be lonely, and long for heaven and home?” “When Jesus is my portion, my constant friend is He: His eye is on the sparrow, and I know He watches me; His eye is on the sparrow, and I know He watches me.” (Hymn 725, Trinity Hymnal)

3rd – In Christ’s mind, it was essential that He should humble Himself, in order that He would be exalted in the way that the Father had purposed. (verses 8-11)

“And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.” “Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” It is truly extraordinary that the 2nd Person of the Divine Trinity would “find Himself in appearance as a man”. What must it have been like for God to become a man, and the Omnipotent become, as a Man, unable to care for Himself as a babe; having to have His mother and others care for Him? To realize the reality of becoming human flesh; to grow up and experience all of the human feelings and emotions and thoughts, He who was perfect in holiness, immutable, and impassible from all eternity, had to experience these things. In this there was no doubt a great humbling that took place in Him. But, even more, He humbled Himself and became obedient to all of His Father’s holy law on our behalf. “Then I said, ‘Behold, I come; in the scroll of the book it is written of me.’” “I delight to do Your will, O my God, and Your law is within my heart.”

This humbling of Himself, we should understand, would not simply be for a short time of difficulty. This humbling would have a progression to it, which began at His Incarnation and culminate in His death. It would be a humbling of Himself in relation to being sent by the Father into this world in order that He would keep all of the commandments of God to the point of His going to the cross; to the point of suffering, bleeding, and dying on the cross for the sins of all of God’s elect people, for the whole world of people who would trust in Him for salvation. In this He succeed, and even in death, He triumphed. This is why He was exalted by God in His resurrection from the dead, and in His ascension to heaven to sit at His right hand there. This is why His is the name above every name. This is why every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess that He is Lord. It was, and it will be, to the glory of God the Father, because His purposes have all been fulfilled. This is why it is also right for us to live our Christian lives humbling ourselves in the sight of God, in obedience to His revealed will in the Bible. It is so that God will be glorified and that we might be exalted in the right way. Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ; that of humbling Himself that He might be exalted, and that you might be exalted also in due time. God is opposed to the proud, but He gives grace to the humble. Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the right time, casting all your cares upon Him, for He cares for you.”