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**“The Great Exaltation”**  
**Philippians 2:5-11**  
**Pastor Peter Yi**  
**March 14, 2021**

**(Philippians 2:5-11)**

<sup>5</sup> In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:

<sup>6</sup> Who, being in very nature God,  
did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;

<sup>7</sup> rather, he made himself nothing  
by taking the very nature of a servant,  
being made in human likeness.

<sup>8</sup> And being found in appearance as a man,  
he humbled himself  
by becoming obedient to death—  
even death on a cross!

<sup>9</sup> Therefore God exalted him to the highest place  
and gave him the name that is above every name,

<sup>10</sup> that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,  
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

<sup>11</sup> and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord,  
to the glory of God the Father.

In this past Friday's email I shared the findings of an analysis of the worship songs that we sing in our church, which was conducted by Pastor Tim. In case you didn't have a chance to read it, let me give you a brief summary. The study looked at the songs we had sung over the past five years during our Sunday worship services. There were 159 different songs. The songs that we sang the most included Come Thou Fount, This Is Amazing Grace, How Great Thou Art, and the number one song was All I Have Is Christ written by Sovereign Grace. The main purpose of the study, however, was to see what were the biblical themes we sang about the most and whether the results matched with the emphasis of Scripture. Well, the results showed that the vast majority of songs had a Christ-centered theme, which included themes on the person of Christ, but more on his redemptive work, as our Saviour. Now, I'm glad the results came out as they did. It showed that we are definitely on the right track, because when we look at the trajectory of Scripture, the focus is very much upon Christ.

Let me give you a quick overview. First, all the Old Testament points to the coming of God's Messiah, Jesus Christ. Jesus, himself, told us that that was the Old Testament's focus. What he meant by that was that the major themes of the Old Testament find their culmination in the person and work of Jesus Christ. One way to look at the Bible is through the lens of God's great Covenants; his covenants with Noah, Abraham, Moses, David and the New Covenant. Simply put, all those covenants find their ultimate fulfilled in and through the Jesus Christ.

Another way to look at the Bible is through the main offices or roles that originate in the Old Testament. The three main offices are God's Prophet, God's Priest, and God's King. And in whom do those three offices merge into complete perfection? In the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the consummate Prophet, Priest and King.

Here's another theme that runs throughout the Bible and concludes in Jesus Christ. That's the idea of sacrifice. After Adam and Eve sinned, God said that the serpent will strike the heel of Adam's seed, but Adam's seed will crush the serpent's head. The striking of the heel is the first mention of God providing a sacrifice. As well, after our first parents sinned, they realized they were naked, and it was God who clothed them with animal skins, implying that an animal sacrifice was made, blood was spilled, for their covering, their atonement. Then of course, we have the elaborate system of sacrifices for sin that's found in the Law of Moses. When we fast forward to the New Testament, Jesus begins his ministry by going to the Jordan River to be baptized by John. When John first sees him, do you remember what he said? "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world." In that loaded confession, John was saying, "Look, there's the sacrifice that God has provided to take away our sins." And then it was at the cross where Jesus actually died as a sacrifice for our sins. When we get to the book of Revelation, John weeps because no one is worthy to open the scrolls that represent the unfolding of God's redemptive plan. And what then did he see? He saw a lion and then right after, he saw a lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing at the center of the throne. Then the creatures of heaven sang a new song and the subject of that song was the Lamb.

"You are worthy to take the scroll  
and to open its seals,  
because you were slain,  
and with your blood you purchased for God  
persons from every tribe and language and people and nation.  
10 You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God,  
and they will reign on the earth."

Even the song of heaven is the song of Jesus Christ, it's the song of the Lamb. All this to say that the Bible teaches us to worship our triune God, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit. However, the great emphasis of our worship, is none other than the Son.

Worship is recognizing and declaring someone's worth. The word 'worship' is short for 'worth-ship.' Worship implies knowledge of the subject being worshipped. And it follows then that the more you know of the person, the deeper and richer your worship will be. Let me give an example.

Toronto has been blessed to have the greatest slam dunker in all of history, the ageless Vince Carter. If you haven't seen his series of dunks that won him his first slam dunk contest, then you absolutely must see it on YouTube. Of all of his dunks, my absolute favorite was his elbow dunk. It was a simple one-handed dunk, which at first seemed very ordinary, until you realized that he not only stuffed the ball in the hoop, he stuck his whole forearm down the basket and for a couple seconds, he was hanging by the elbow on the rim of the basket. Just incredible. Yes, it was even better than Jordan's taking-off-from-the-free-throw-line dunk, but there might be someone that's just as amazing, not merely because of his great dunks, but because he was so short. Spud Webb was only 5'6" and supposedly had the highest vertical jump of any NBA player at 46 inches. That's four feet of vertical jump. So, when you look at Spud Webb's dunk contest videos, they're pretty impressive. But when you find out that he's only 5'6" and not 6'6" like Vince Carter, then it's all the more impressive. This is why sports fans love looking at player stats, because as we discover more information about the athlete, our appreciation of them, dare I say, our worship of them, increases.

The same principle applies to our worship of God. The more you know about God, about his person, his power, his character, his attributes, the more deep and rich and awe-some your worship will be. That's why theology always has to be the very foundation, the source of our worship. The reason why so much of the Bible is about who God is and what he has done, is so that it would inspire worship in us. And today's passage is no different.



The second option could be the title, Lord. There's textual evidence for this as well. In addition to the arguments against the name Jesus, verse 11 says, "every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord." Jesus is his personal name, whereas Lord is his title. It states his office, his position, which would fit with his exaltation. But this too seems a bit off since Jesus was already referred to as Lord in the gospels. It's seems that would be a bit redundant.

Building upon the second choice, there is still a third choice. Those of you who read the introductory pages of the Bible might have already caught on to this. Most English Bibles contain an introduction that explains their method for their use of the names of God. The three most common references to God are first of all, God (Elohim). Then there's "Lord," lower case (Adonai), and finally there's the all-caps "LORD," which is the way we translate God's personal name, what's called the "Four Letters" or the "Tetragrammaton," Y-H-W-H, which means, "I AM." Remember when Moses asked God at the burning bush, "Who shall I say is sending me? What is his name?" To which God replied, "I Am who I Am. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I AM has sent me to you.'" So, it's not lower-case Lord, but all-caps LORD, that is, the name, YHWH. Why do we think this is the name to which Paul is referring?

Well, the parallel Old Testament passage to this hymn in Philippians is found in Isaiah 45:23. Let's look at this passage together. Here, God the Father, says,

**Isaiah 45:23** By myself I have sworn,  
my mouth has uttered in all integrity  
a word that will not be revoked:  
Before me every knee will bow;  
by me every tongue will swear.  
<sup>24</sup> They will say of me, 'In the LORD alone  
are deliverance and strength.'"  
All who have raged against him  
will come to him and be put to shame.

When the word lord appears in verse 24, which lord do you think it is? Lower case or upper case? Elohim Lord, or YHWH Lord? If you guessed the latter, you'd be correct. Therefore, the name that God will bestow upon Jesus is none other than LORD, all caps, God's personal name. He too is the great "I AM." What is the extent of Christ's exaltation? He will be raised to the highest heights and given the greatest name, the name of God, the LORD. Once again see the V-shaped movement in this hymn. He who was God descended to the lowest low and now he has returned to the highest height, taking on the greatest name. This Jesus, this man, this servant, this flesh and blood, is the LORD!

If it is true that Jesus is LORD, and if it is true that he has been exalted to the highest place and given the name that is above all other names, then what comes next in the hymn makes complete sense. The reason God exalts Jesus to the highest place and gives him the name above all names, is so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow. Bowing is something subjects do in the presence of their king. It's an act of deep respect and honor. The whole act of bowing is somewhat foreign to us folks living in the west. We don't really bow to anyone. We don't bow to our government officials. We may stand up when someone important enters the room, but that's about it. Our culture has become very casual, even toward people in respected positions. But for those of us who grew up in an Asian culture, we might know a bit more about honoring and respecting our elders. For Koreans, at New Year's, we visit our elders and bow before them, not as an act of worship, but as an act of respect.

The bowing here is the acknowledgment that Jesus is Lord. In our bowing we are saying that he alone is God, he alone is Lord. And there is no one else who is worthy of the kind of worship and respect that he alone deserves, so we bow.

There are many examples in the Bible of God's people bowing before God and even bowing before Jesus. In the Psalms God's people are invited to bow in worship to the LORD.

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**(Psalm 95:6)** Come, let us bow down in worship,  
let us kneel before the LORD our Maker;  
7 for he is our God  
and we are the people of his pasture,  
the flock under his care.

When the Magi came to visit the newborn Jesus, they bowed down and worshiped him, and presented their gifts to him.

In Luke 5, when Jesus first met Simon Peter, and asked him to go fishing. After the greatest haul of fish they had ever seen, Simon fell at Jesus' knees (he bowed) and said, "Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man." Now, isn't this not only our physical posture before the Lord, but also the posture of our hearts? Don't we bow our hearts in reverence to God and his Son. Isn't the general posture of our lives as his people, a posture of bowing, a posture of respect and worship?

This hymn then tells us the extent of recognition and worship that Jesus will receive. It includes those that are in heaven, and on earth and under the earth. Here we are on the earth. What is above us is the heavens. And then there is that which is below us, or under the earth. It's meant to describe all places in the universe, seen and unseen. That means that there will not be a being anywhere that will NOT bow their knee to Jesus. This includes both spiritual beings like angelic beings and physical human beings.

Then in the final stanza of the hymn it says in addition to every knee bowing, "every tongue will acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father."

Again this last line says that there will not be a single being who will not acknowledge that Jesus is Lord. Every visible and invisible creature will acknowledge Him. But it does make you wonder, will it be done willingly or unwillingly? Will everyone who acknowledges Jesus be doing it with joy and as an act of glad worship? Or will there also be those who will do it with reluctance, perhaps even with hatred and disdain? Well, if this hymn is in fact based on that verse in Isaiah 45:23-25, then it includes both types of people. Listen to that verse again:

23 By myself I have sworn,  
my mouth has uttered in all integrity  
a word that will not be revoked:  
Before me **every** knee will bow;  
by me **every** tongue will swear.  
24 They will say of me, 'In the LORD alone  
are deliverance and strength.'"  
All who have raged against him  
will come to him and be put to shame.  
25 But all the descendants of Israel  
will find deliverance in the LORD  
and will make their boast in him.

Isaiah tells us that every knee will bow and every tongue will swear. Among all those people, some will say, "In the Lord alone are deliverance and strength." And then there will be some of those who bow, who are those who have raged against him. They will come to him and be put to shame. These are the enemies of God. They too will bow. And then finally, Isaiah writes, "But all the descendants of Israel will find deliverance in the Lord and will make their boast in him." These are God's chosen, those who love God, who make God their boast.

This means that on that great day when Jesus returns, every living creature, every soul, beings from the spiritual realm and the physical realm, will bow before Jesus and acknowledge that he is Lord. Those that are his, those that were saved by his great condescension, will confess it gladly, willingly, loudly, and worshipfully and there will be those with hearts unbroken, still hardened in their sin, who never trusted in Jesus, never loved Jesus, they too will bow their knee, not with a willing heart, but they will bow nonetheless. They too will acknowledge, not with joy, but with anger and resentment, that Jesus is Lord.

Let's summarize. Jesus did not consider the fact that he was God to be something that he would use for his own advantage, even though he had every right to do so. Instead, he made himself nothing. He added to his divine nature, the nature of a slave, a servant. He became a true living, breathing human being. He humbled himself; that is, he allowed himself to be humiliated. And he went to death, even death on a cross. The highest being descended to the lowest low. And then God exalted him back to the highest place. And gave him the name that is above every name. God's name. Jesus is Lord. Jesus is Lord.

In my 3<sup>rd</sup> year of university, I went to my first and only Urbana missions conference. The theme of that conference was, "Jesus Christ, Lord of the Universe, Hope of the World." I remember it vividly because each of the 20,000 participants received a brand new black Bible, and printed on the cover in colorful letters, were those words, "Jesus Christ, Lord of the Universe, Hope of the World." That phrase was eye opening for me. Yes, I understood that Jesus was God, and I understood that he was my Saviour, but never had I seen that title attributed to Jesus: "Lord of the Universe." The only thing that came close was when I was watching the cartoon He-Man on television as a child. The way they described He-Man and his buddies was, "Masters of the Universe." It had such a comical, sensational ring to it. But when I saw that title, "Lord of the Universe" given to Jesus, it expanded my understanding of Him and deepened my worship of him. It was at that conference that my Jesus got a whole lot bigger to me. This is who Jesus is. Jesus Christ is the Lord of the Universe, Hope of the World, to the glory of God the Father.

So, when the billions and billions of creatures bow before Jesus and acknowledge his name, among which group will you be? Join the company of creatures who will gladly, willingly, bow and confess that Jesus is Lord. Ask him to forgive your sins. Make him your Saviour and your Lord. Trust in his great condescension, so that along with him, you too can be exalted.

Let's pray.