

Session 4: What God Did: The Gospel

Passage: Mark 10:45 (NIV)

⁴⁵For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

Key Idea: What Jesus is Worthy of:

Revelation 4:11 (NIV)

¹¹“You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being.”

As we see in this passage, our God is the one that is worthy of all of our praise. This means that for us as Christians, everything we do in our lives should testify to the world that we believe Jesus is ultimate in our life.

Discussion Questions:

- How can we recognize Jesus’ worth and prioritize him in our daily lives?
- What are some practical ways you can reflect Jesus’ worth in your life in your interactions with others?

Key Idea: The Humility of Jesus:

Philippians 2:5-11 (NIV)

⁵In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: ⁶Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; ⁷rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. ⁸And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross! ⁹Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Jesus models the ultimate humility for us by coming to earth and living his earthly life. This should challenge us to consider how we too can live lives marked by Christian humility.

Discussion Questions:

- In what ways can we model Jesus’ humility and serve others around us?

- Can you think of a time recently where you could have imitated Jesus' humility? How could you have served?

Key Idea: Jesus's Mission:

Luke 19:10 (NIV)

¹⁰ For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."

Jesus' mission is to find and rescue the lost. And the best part? He invites us to be a part of that mission! That as Christians we get to play a part in seeing God save those in our communities.

Discussion Questions:

- How can we participate in Jesus' mission of seeking and saving the lost?
- Who are some people in your life that you feel are lost? How can you actively share the gospel with them?

Application Questions:

- Sometimes we may find it easier to offer kindness or mercy to others without telling them about God's love. But unless those folks hear the Good News, the grave reality is that we are just making people more comfortable on their way to hell. (Note: This does not mean that we should never serve someone unless we can share the gospel. But it does challenge our priorities in light of eternity.) In what ways can you be intentional about assuring that we are prioritizing not only their physical needs, but also their spiritual needs as well?
- Do you consider yourself to be a disciple of Jesus? What does that look like in your everyday life? To be a disciple means that you are actively helping others discover what it means to know and follow God. How are you living that out? (And if not, what can you do to start this week?)
- If someone were you ask you today, "how does a person become saved", what would you say? Do you feel equipped to answer confidently? There are a number of great tools available (Evangelism Explosion, 4 Spiritual Laws, Way of the Master, Wordless Book, Gospel Bracelet, Romans Road, etc...), but one method we like to use is called 3 Circles. (Simple enough to draw on the back of a napkin.) Take time to walk your group through the 3 Circles training – and then invite them to take turns leading one another through it. (Here is a link to the North American Mission Board website

where there are links to videos as well as the App for your phone with the presentation: <https://www.namb.net/evangelism/3circles/>)

Commentary

Session 4: What God Did: The Gospel

Mark 10:45 (NIV)

“For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

a. **Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve:** Real ministry is done for the benefit of those ministered to, not for the benefit of the minister. Many people are in the ministry for what they can receive (either materially or emotionally) from their people instead of for what they can give.

b. **And to give His life a ransom for many:** This is one of the great claims Jesus made about Himself and His ministry. He is the one who stands in the place of guilty sinners and offers Himself as a substitute for them.

- “The ransom metaphor sums up the purpose for which Jesus gave his life and defines the complete expression of his service. The prevailing notion behind the metaphor is that of deliverance by purchase, whether a prisoner of war, a slave, or a forfeited life is the object to be delivered. Because the idea of equivalence, or substitution, was proper to the concept of a ransom, it became an integral element in the vocabulary of redemption in the OT. It speaks of a liberation which connotes a servitude or an imprisonment from which man cannot free himself.” (Lane)

Key Idea: What Jesus is Worthy of

Revelation 4:11 (NIV)

“You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being.”

a. If God was worthy of the **glory and honor and power**, then *He* should get the crown.

- There is also an allusion to a practice in the Roman Empire. The Emperor of Rome ruled over many lesser kings, and these kings were at times commanded to come before the Emperor and lay their crowns down before him in homage. Then he would give them back, as a demonstration that their crowns, their right to rule, their victory, came from him. “This is an allusion to the custom of prostrations in the east, and to the homage of petty kings acknowledging the supremacy of the emperor.” (Clarke)
- The **crowns** mentioned in [Revelation 4:10](#) are the *stephanos* crowns, the crowns of *victory*, not royalty. These are the crowns of achievement that a winning athlete would receive at the ancient Olympic Games. The **twenty-four elders** – representing all the redeemed of God – threw every achievement reward they had back to God, because they knew and proclaimed that He was **worthy... to receive glory and honor and power**.
- “Our text says they *all* cast their crowns before the throne. There are no divided opinions in heaven, no sects and parties, no schisms there. They are all in perfect harmony and sweet accord.

What one does, all do. They cast their crowns, without exception, before the throne. Let us begin to practice that unanimity here. As fellow Christians, let us get rid of everything that would divide us from each other, or separate us from our Lord. I do not read that there was a single elder who envied his brother's crown, and said, 'Ah, I wish I were such an one as he is, and had his crown.' I do not read that one of them began to find fault with his brother's crown, and said, 'Ah, his jewels may be bright, but mine have a peculiar tint in them, and are of greater excellence.' I do not read ought of dissension; they were all unanimous in casting their crowns at Jesus' feet. They were all unanimous in glorifying God." (Spurgeon)

b. **For You created all things, and by Your will they exist and were created:** The twenty-four elders worshipped God because of His creative power and glory. The fact that God is Creator gives Him all right and every claim over everything – even as a potter has all rights and claims over the clay (Romans 9:21).

- God's right over us as Creator is a fact that can be accepted and enjoyed, or rejected, leading to frustration. There is tremendous value in our recognizing our "creatureliness" before God.
- "God's power put forth in the creation and administration of the world is twice here mentioned; as that which can never be sufficiently admired and adored." (Trapp)
- We confess a fondness for the King James Version translation of Revelation 4:11: *Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.* The wonderful phrase *and for thy pleasure they are and were created* reminds us that we each exist to give glory and pleasure to God. Until we do that, we don't fulfill our created purpose.

c. Because they represent all the people of God, the worship, the crown, the robes, the heart of these twenty-four elders belongs to us also. "There is a throne in heaven that no one can occupy but you, and there is a crown in heaven that no other head can wear but yours, and there is a part in the eternal song that no voice can ever compass but yours, and there is a glory to God that would be wanting if you did not come to render it, and there is a part of infinite majesty and glory that would never be reflected unless you should be there to reflect it!" (Spurgeon)

- But it also means that we should plan ahead for that great day. "If you and I should walk into some great cathedral where they were singing, and ask to be allowed to sing in the choir, they would ask whether we had ever learnt the tune, and they would not let us join unless we had. Nor can we expect that untrained voices should be admitted into the choirs above. Now, dear brothers and sisters, have you learnt to cast your crowns at the Savior's feet already?" (Spurgeon)

Key Idea: The Humility of Jesus

Philippians 2:5-11 (NIV)

In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: ⁶Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; ⁷rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. ⁸And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross! ⁹Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

a. **Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus:** Paul will, in wonderful detail, describe for us the **mind** of Jesus in the following verses. But here, before he describes the mind of Jesus, he tells us what we must *do* with the information.

- “Paul does not give all that is in the mind of Christ in these verses. He selects those qualities of our Lord which fit the needs of the Philippians at that moment... This lack of unity among the Philippian saints became the occasion for perhaps the greatest Christological passage in the New Testament that sounds the depths of the incarnation.” (Wuest)

b. **Let this mind be in you:** It is all too easy for us to read the following description of Jesus and admire it from a distance. God wants us to be awed by it, but also to see it as something that we must enter into and imitate. **Let this mind** means that it is something that we have *choice* about.

- Remember also that this **mind** is something granted to us by God. 1 Corinthians 2:16 says that we *have the mind of Christ*. But **let this mind** shows us that it is also something we must *choose* to walk in. You have to **let** it be so.

a. **In the form of God:** This describes Jesus’ pre-incarnate existence. We must remind ourselves that Jesus did not begin His existence in the manger at Bethlehem, but is eternal God.

b. **Being:** This is from the ancient Greek verb *huparchein*, which “describes that which a man is in his very essence and which cannot be changed. It describes that part of a man which, in any circumstances, remains the same.” (Barclay)

- “Paul, by the use of the Greek word translated ‘being,’ informs his Greek readers that our Lord’s possession of the divine essence did not cease to be a fact when He came to earth to assume human form... *This word alone is enough to refute the claim of Modernism that our Lord emptied Himself of His Deity when He became Man.*” (Wuest)

c. **Form:** This translates the ancient Greek word *morphe*. It “always signifies a form which truly and fully expresses the being which underlies it... the words mean ‘the being on an equality with God.’” (Kennedy)

- “*Morphe* is the essential form which never alters; *schema* is the outward form which changes from time to time and from circumstance to circumstance.” (Barclay)
- “‘God’ has a form, and ‘Jesus Christ’ exists in this form of God.” (Lenski)
- Wuest explains that the ancient Greek word translated **form** is very difficult to translate. When we use the word **form**, we think of the *shape* of something; but the ancient Greek word had none of that idea. It is more the idea of a *mode* or an *essence*; it is the essential nature of God, without implying a physical shape or image. “Thus the Greek word for ‘form’ refers to that outward expression which a person gives of his inmost nature.”

a. **Did not consider it robbery:** The ancient Greek in this phrase has the idea of something being grasped or clung to. Jesus did not cling to the prerogatives or privileges of deity.

- Wuest defines the ancient Greek word translated **robbery** as, “A treasure to be clutched and retained at all hazards.”

b. **To be equal with God:** It wasn’t that Jesus was trying to *achieve* equality with the Father. He *had it*, and chose not to cling to it. Jesus’ divine nature was not something He had to seek for or acquire, but it was His already.

- Lightfoot wrote that it was not “a prize which must not slip from His grasp, a treasure to be clutched and retained at all hazards.” Jesus was willing to let go of some of the prerogatives of deity to become a man.

a. **But made Himself of no reputation:** The more common (and well-known) translation of this is that *He emptied Himself*. From the ancient Greek word *emptied* (*kenosis*) came the idea that Jesus' incarnation was essentially a self-emptying.

- We must carefully think about what Jesus *emptied* Himself of. Paul will tell us plainly in the following verses, but we must take care that we do not think that Jesus emptied Himself of His deity in any way.
- Some develop the *kenotic theory* of the incarnation to the point where they insist that Jesus divested Himself of many of the attributes of deity – such as omniscience, omnipotence, omnipresence, and even suffered the elimination of His own divine self-consciousness. Yet Jesus did not (and *could* not) become “less God” in the incarnation. No deity was *subtracted* (though Jesus did renounce some of the privileges of deity); rather humanity was *added* to His nature.
- “During his humiliation, as God and equal with the Father, was no encroachment on the Divine prerogative; for, as he had an *equality of nature*, he had an *equality of rights*.” (Clarke)
- “His condescension was free, and unconstrained with the consent of his Father... the Son of the Highest can, at his own pleasure, show or eclipse his own glorious brightness, abate or let out his fullness, exalt or abase himself in respect of us.” (Poole)
- “Even as a king, by laying aside the tokens of his royalty, and putting on the habit of a merchant, when all the while he ceaseth not to be a king, or the highest in his own dominions.” (Poole)

b. **Taking the form of a bondservant:** This describes *how* Jesus emptied Himself. Though he took **the form of a bondservant**, Jesus did not empty Himself of His deity, or of any of His attributes, or of His equality with God. He emptied Himself *into* the form of a **bondservant**, not merely the form of a man.

- **Taking** (the ancient Greek word *labon*) does not imply an *exchange*, but an *addition*.

c. **Coming in the likeness of men:** This further describes how Jesus emptied Himself. We can think of someone who is a servant, but not in the **likeness of men**. Angels are servants, but not in the **likeness of men**. In fairy tales, Aladdin's genie was a servant, but not in the **likeness of men**.

- The word for **likeness** here *may* refer to merely the outward form of something. While Jesus did have the outward form of humanity, the outward form reflected His true humanity, which was added to His deity.
- “It was a likeness, but a real likeness, no mere phantom humanity as the Docetic Gnostics held.” (Robertson)

a. **He humbled Himself and became obedient:** Jesus **humbled Himself** when He **became obedient**. This was something that Jesus could only experience by coming down from the throne of heaven and becoming a man. When God sits enthroned in heaven's glory, there is no one He obeys. Jesus had to leave heaven's glory and be **found in appearance as a man** in order to become **obedient**.

- One key to Jesus' obedience on earth was the endurance of suffering. This again was something He could only learn by experience after the incarnation. As it is written: *though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered* (Hebrews 5:8).
- Indeed, **He humbled Himself**.

· He was humble in that he took the form of a man, and not a more glorious creature like an angel.

· He was humble in that He was born into an obscure, oppressed place.

· He was humble in that He was born into poverty among a despised people.

- He was humble in that He was born as a child instead of appearing as a man.
- He was humble in submitting to the obedience appropriate to a child in a household.
- He was humble in learning and practicing a trade – and a humble trade of a builder.
- He was humble in the long wait until He launched out into public ministry.
- He was humble in the companions and disciples He chose.
- He was humble in the audience He appealed to and the way He taught.
- He was humble in the temptations He allowed and endured.
- He was humble in the weakness, hunger, thirst, and tiredness He endured.
- He was humble in His total obedience to His Heavenly Father.
- He was humble in His submission to the Holy Spirit.
- He was humble in choosing and submitting to the death of the cross.
- He was humble in the agony of His death.
- He was humble in the shame, mocking, and public humiliation of His death.
- He was humble in enduring the spiritual agony of His sacrifice on the cross.
 - We can imagine that it was possible for the Son of God to become man and pay for the sins of the world without this great humiliation. He might have added the humanity of a 33-year old man to his deity. He might have appeared before man only in His transfigured glory, and taught men what they needed to hear from Him. He might have suffered for the sins of man in a hidden place of the earth far from the eyes of man, or on the dark side of the moon for that matter. Yet He did not; **He humbled Himself**, and did it for the surpassing greatness of our salvation and His work for us.

b. To the point of death, even the death of the cross: This states the extent of Jesus' humility and obedience.

- Crucifixion was such a shameful death that it was not permitted for Roman citizens (such as the people of Philippi). A victim of crucifixion was considered by the Jews to be particularly cursed by God (Deuteronomy 21:23 and Galatians 3:13).
- Robertson called the **death of the cross** "The bottom rung in the ladder from the Throne of God. Jesus came all the way down to the most despised death of all, a condemned criminal on the accursed cross."
- **Even the death of the cross** shows that there is no limit to what God will do to demonstrate His love and saving power to man; this was and forever will be the ultimate. "What must sin have been in the sight of God, when it required such abasement in Jesus Christ to make an atonement for it, and *undo* its influence and malignity!" (Clarke)
- "The lower he stoops to save us, the higher we ought to lift him in our adoring reverence. Blessed be his name, he stoops, and stoops, and stoops, and, when he reaches our level, and becomes man, he still stoops, and stoops, and stoops lower and deeper yet." (Spurgeon)

c. **Even the death of the cross:** All of this was a great display of the power of Jesus. Remember that because of Paul's past experience among the Philippians, they were tempted to think of God's *power* as being expressed only in exaltation and deliverance and not in terms of glorifying God through humble service and endurance.

- In this, Paul reminded the Philippians that his current place of humble circumstances (his Roman imprisonment) could still show forth the glory and power of God, even as Jesus did in His humility.

a. **Therefore God has also highly exalted Him:** This is the general heading for the material in the next three verses. These words describe how God has exalted Jesus. Indeed, **highly exalted** could also be translated "super exalted."

- "The Greek elegancy imports super exalted, or exalted with all exaltation." (Poole)
- "Now, just pause over this thought – that Christ did not crown himself, but that his Father crowned him; that he did not elevate himself to the throne of majesty, but that his Father lifted him there, and placed him on his throne." (Spurgeon)

b. **Given Him the name which is above every name:** This goes beyond giving Jesus the Divine name Yahweh. When we consider the Hebrew concept of **the name**, it also implies that God declares that Jesus has a *character* and *person* above all.

- This verse, with its clear statement of Jesus' deity, is powerful ammunition against those who deny the deity of Jesus Christ. There is no higher name than Yahweh, and Jesus has that **name**.

a. **That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow:** Not only is Jesus exalted by the Father, but the whole world is brought into submission to the Son.

- "Paul does not imply by this a universal salvation, but means that every personal being will ultimately confess Christ's lordship, either with joyful faith or with resentment and despair." (Kent)

b. **Those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth:** This conveys the absolute totality of all creation recognizing the superiority of Jesus Christ.

- In this, Paul draws on the idea of Isaiah 45:23: *I have sworn by Myself; the word has gone out of My mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, that to Me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall take an oath.* Notice that in Isaiah, it is to Yahweh that all knees bow and tongues confess. In Philippians it is to Jesus, showing that Jesus *is* Yahweh.
- **Those under the earth:** "Either the dead, who are hid in the earth, and shall be raised by the power of Christ... or, devils, and wicked souls." (Poole)

c. **Every knee should bow... every tongue should confess:** The combination of **tongues confessing** and **knees bowing** gives evidence that the idea is a complete submission to Jesus, both in word and in action, and one that is required of all.

- The totality of this recognition of Jesus' deity and exaltation has caused many to envision this happening in a formal way after the final judgment, when every creature in heaven and hell is required to bow their knees and make the confession **that Jesus Christ is Lord**.

d. **That Jesus Christ is Lord:** From this we can say that there is a sense in which Jesus *returned* to heaven with more than He had than when He *left* heaven. Not only did He return with His humanity still added to his deity (although a resurrected humanity), He also returned with the recognition planted among men of who He was and the worship He deserved – something unknown until the Incarnation and the full revelation of His person and work.

- “He has always (in Paul’s view) shared in the Divine nature. But it is only as the result of His Incarnation, Atonement, Resurrection and Exaltation that He *appears to men* as on an equality with God, that He is *worshipped by them* in the way in which Jehovah is worshipped.” (Kennedy)
- “He might have used the miraculous powers inherent in His Divine nature in such a way as to compel men, without further ado, to worship Him as God. Instead of that He was willing to attain this high dignity by the path of humiliation, suffering and death.” (Kennedy)
- All this must be seen in reference to the humiliation described in Philippians 2:6-8; our tendency is to long for the exaltation, but to forsake the humiliation.

e. **Jesus Christ is Lord:** The confession of Jesus Christ as **Lord** reminds us to consider the great significance of this word *kurios*, especially as it was understood by the early church, who used the LXX as their Bible – where *kurios* was consistently used to translate the tetragrammaton, standing for the name *Yahweh*.

- We also should not miss the significance that at a later time in the Roman Empire, all residents of the Empire were required to swear an oath of allegiance to the Emperor, declaring that *Caesar is Lord*, and burning a pinch of incense to an image of the emperor. Though the Roman state saw this only as a display of political allegiance, Christians rightly interpreted it as idolatry – and refused to participate, often paying with their lives.
- Paul has no doubt who is really Lord – not the Caesar whom he will stand trial before; *Caesar* may be a high name, but it is not the name above all names, the name which belongs to Jesus Christ!

f. **Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father:** Remember that Paul did not give this description of Jesus in Philippians 2:5-11 simply for the theological education of the Philippians.

- He gave it to equip them to endure the hardship they were experiencing.
- He gave it help them to understand Paul’s hardships.
- He gave it to help them to practice real Christian unity in the midst of hard times.
 - This picture of Jesus has helped them to understand how to assess the ministry of Paul, which seemed weak at the present time.
 - This picture helped them to understand the context of God’s revelation of power – how God delights to show His power through humble actions.
 - This picture has equipped them to act in a way towards each other that will promote unity in the body of Christ.

- This picture has shown them how to follow Jesus' pattern of patient, humble obedience – something Paul will call them to continue in the following verses.

Key Idea: Jesus's Mission:

Luke 19:10 (NIV)

For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost

a. The Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost: Jesus explained why He sought and extended friendship to a notorious sinner like Zacchaeus. Jesus came precisely to save people like Zacchaeus.

- Zacchaeus *really* believed on Jesus. A true **son of Abraham** was not only descended from Abraham genetically, but also had the *faith* in God Abraham had.
 - Even though Zacchaeus sought Jesus, it turns out that *he* was the one who **was lost**, and *Jesus sought him (has come to seek)*. Zacchaeus was lost to his parents; lost to the religious, lost to his community, lost to whatever friends he might have had – yet in a sense, not lost to God. “As the story of his conversion unfolds, his seeking Jesus (Luke 19:3) turned out to be the result of Jesus' first seeking him (Luke 19:10).” (Pate)
 - The entire account with Zacchaeus gives us a remarkable who, what, where, when, why, and how of receiving Jesus.
- *Who* Jesus wants to receive Him: those lost.
 - *What* Jesus wants with those who receive Him: relationship.
 - *Where* Jesus wants to go: down to Him.
 - *When* Jesus wants you to receive Him: immediately, quickly.
 - *Why* Jesus wants you to receive Him: to be with Him, to connect with Him in life.
 - *How* Jesus wants you to receive Him: joyfully.