

From the Pulpit of the Japanese Baptist Church of North Texas
October 28, 2018

Live as a Servant
Philippians 2:1-11

2:1 So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy,

2:2 complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.

2:3 Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.

2:4 Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.

2:5 Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus,

2:6 who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped,

2:7 but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.

2:8 And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

2:9 Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name,

2:10 so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

2:11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

1. Humility of Man

“People say that Japanese are humble and low in back.” “No, that's because the foot is short.” “But recently Japanese have got legs

longer.” “That is why they are pulling legs each other (interfere with each other)” As there is such a conversation, in Japanese culture “humility” is a virtue. Japanese people often say “I’m afraid I’m not very competent” (even if doing well) or “little gift for you” (even if the gift is expensive). Japanese people are good at “humility.” But it is one of rituals and technique to get along with, may not be true humility.

Benjamin Franklin, who has a portrait in a 100 dollar bill, gave 13 essential virtues for his life – “temperance, silence, discipline, decision, frugality, study, honesty, justice, moderation, cleanliness, calm, purity, and humility.” He strove to acquire the virtue and seems to have succeeded. However, it was difficult to acquire “humility.” Franklin looked back on his life and said, “Humility could not be worn until the end.” It is difficult to understand humility in the real sense and acquire it.

Even Christians, not all of them understand the true “humility” and acquire it. 1 Peter 5:5 said “Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves.” It taught that lay people should stand under the pastor of the church, and he pastors should stand under Christ. Jesus Christ is the only and one head of the church. All of us connected to the church are the hands or feet of the body of Christ. We never be the head. If we forget this truth, we will try to become “the head” in the church and behave like that. 3 John 9 said “I have written something to the church but Diotrephes, who likes to put himself first, does not acknowledge our authority.” A person named Diotrephes was the one who got lost the place he should stand in the church and lost the humility.

The pastor who baptized me told this story. When the pastor asked a church member to serve for a certain work, the member refused saying, “I cannot do it, I am not worthy for it.” The pastor pointed out that and said, “It is humbly arrogant.” The pastor often said that it seems humbled but that it is not truly humble since this person did not try to ask the will of God about it in the prayer. We want to know what is the true humility and to acquire the true one.

2. Humility of Christ

How can we find the true humility? Whatever true can be found in Jesus Christ, and the humility too. The true humility can be found in Christ. We shall seek the “Humility of Christ”

In Philippians 2:6-11, the humility and glory of Christ are described perfectly. In verse 6 and 7, “who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.” This means that Christ was born as a human on this earth.

Born as a baby, grow up, learn, work, and die after fulfill the mission. This is nothing special to us; however, it is not to Christ, Son of God. It is impossible and shouldn't be. As the Son of God, Christ is eternal, no beginning and no ending. He is infinite, not controlled by or limited to any kinds of space. We are living in space and time frame so that it is not easy to understand the concepts of “Eternal” or “Infinity,” If I borrow the words of theologians, “God is eternal, not limited by time. He is infinite, not limited by space. And, He is invariable, not limited by environments.” Christ is the God as

described and the Son. He was born as a human two thousand years ago, and had his beginning and ending like we do.

When Christ was born as a human, his power and glory as God was limited but it did not mean that Christ was no longer God. The King Herod was trying to kill Jesus who was a baby born in Bethlehem. There is a saying, “Twisting a baby’s hand,” when it is “as easy as.” This means that the Almighty God became the powerless and defenseless baby.

And Christ became a “Slave,” the lowest social rank. According to Philippians 2:7, “ (Christ) made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.” “Servant” is used here but this is actually “Slave” in the original language. The slave was the lowest social rank in the Rome, and the people was able buy or sell like products. They were not treated as humans. Though Christ is the King of king and the Lord of lords, He descended to the lowest status.

There are common stories, a person, who was in the higher rank of social hierarchy, hid the status and contributed to the common people. Did Christ do the same thing? No, Christ became a true slave. “Taking a form of the servant” does not mean that Christ dressed down like a servant or acted like a servant. In the verse 6, it says “He was in the form of God.” We can find the same expression in other verses of the Bible. For example, 1 Corinthians 4:4 and Colossians 1:15, Christ is called “the image of God.” Therefore, “taking a form of the servant” means that Christ became a true servant. Christ, “the image of God” became “in the form of Servant.” This is the perfect depiction of the humility of Christ.

In addition, Christ was treated as a criminal, even lower status than

a slave. He bore our sins and was hanged on the cross. In the verse 8, “And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.” Even slaves, they were buried properly after death. But the criminals on the cross were thrown away in the valley where was the trash dumping place. Christ became such a criminal.

Christ became himself lower in order to save us. Therefore, we need to become ourselves lower in order to be saved. We should acknowledge that we are sinners and not be able to save ourselves, and accept the salvation of Christ with humility. This is the first step to follow the “Humility of Christ.” Do you know and believe that the humility of Christ unto the death of the Cross will forgive your sins and save you? Have you accepted the truth with humility? If you did, you can know the true meaning of humility.

3. Glory of Christ

The second step to follow Christ’s humility is to kneel before Him and worship Him. This is Philippians 2:9-11. “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.” Until verse 8, it was described that Christ became a man, a slave, and even a sinner, and he had been lowered, but from verse 9 it was written that he had arrived at the throne of Heaven by Resurrection. Christ has returned to his glory. And he is now receiving worship of all things in Heaven and earth.

As the Bible says, “every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord,” Christ is the creator of all things, and He should be worshiped by all people in all countries. Not only human beings, but also the culture, the system, the science which man created with God’s help, and all human activities must praise Christ as the Lord. The Bible says that the entire Earth, the stars of the universe, praise, worshiped and praise Christ.

But among them, those who have been saved by the humility of Christ, should be the first one who confess that Jesus Christ is the Lord. If we gaze at the glory of Christ and worship it, we can see how big the Humility of Christ is. Worshiping Christ leads us to the humility of Christ.

Philippians 2:6-11 is known to have been one of the first churches’ praise. Believers have memorized these words, and have repeatedly recited this in the worship of the Lord’s Day and in the time of the individual’s prayers. We would like to do that as well. By doing so, the true humility of Christ will dwell in our hearts. In verse 5, “Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus,” but in the old Japanese, “Let the heart of Jesus Christ be the heart.” This is a great translation that pinpointing what this passage is meant to say. The Heart of Christ is the heart of the servant. God, who is Lord, has served, served, and served us for the sinners like us. Make that Christ’s mind your own mind. That is worship.

The third step in following Christ’s humility is to live as a servant of Christ. In Philippians 2:6-7, we learned that he had taken the form of a servant, even when he was “the image of God.” In Christ, the

image of God and the form of the servants were coexisting and binding. You may say that the image of God is the form of servants. This is a way of revealing that we humans were created in the image of God. People were created in the image of God, but they lost it because of their sins. In other words, we threw out the “image of God” by throwing away the “form of servant”. He chose not to live as a servant of God, but made himself the lord of his own life.

When we lost the image of God because of our sins, God sent Christ, who is the true image of God, to the world. And He made us to regain the image of God through His “form of servant.” As Christ had taken the form of servant and lived as a servant of God, we are becoming the image of God by living as His servant. One can regain the image of God and become what we are ought to be by living as a servant of Christ. Renew our desire to live as servants of Christ in this service. Let's pray that we can do that in our daily lives.

(Prayer)

Father, thank you for teaching us today to show us the humility of Christ and to live as servants. Christ loves us and lives as a servant. Please enable us to serve humbly by the Holy Spirit. By living as a servant, we worship Jesus Christ as the Lord. We pray this in the name of Jesus Christ who is above all, Amen.