

Look at the Cross, Look at Yourself – Drop

Philippians 2:6-8

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(Jesus), though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death-- even death on a cross!

There are places you can go that completely change you. The TV show "The Biggest Loser" pictures a place like that. A person isn't happy with their appearance - he wants to lose weight - and so he goes to a place that completely changes him. His body changes, his mind changes, and he leaves that special place a brand new person. Have you seen the show?

You hear about a famous singer whose number one song is bringing her all kinds of fame and money. But something's wrong - she has an eating disorder. Some of you know who this is. She needs to go to a special place that changes her mind, her thinking, and her body, and hopefully she comes out of that special place a brand new person.

Do you need to go to a special place? Where do Christians go when they look at themselves and say, "You know, I need to change something about my life. I want to be a better Christian." Have you ever thought that? During this season of Lent we are focusing on spiritual training for the disciple of Jesus which will help you live more effectively and joyfully as a follower of Jesus. We can use Lent to come to that place in our spiritual lives where we say, "I need to make a change. I want to become a Christian who uses the things God has given me for him! I want to live for Him now and always!" Do you? Where is the place you go for that? Where is the place you go that can change your mind, and the way you think. Where is the special place you go that can change your attitude and your lifestyle, and you leave this place and you're different - Where is the place you go where that change in your heart happens? Or as we heard last week where do we go to learn to run the race set before us for Jesus?

There is a place for that. We go there every Lenten season and every time we gather to worship. And that place is the cross of Jesus Christ. Sometimes, when we go to the cross, and we see Jesus there, it may seem so commonplace to us, that we get bored or at least disinterested. We say to ourselves, "Yes, yes, Jesus dying on the cross for my sins, I get it. Amen. What's new?"

Well, this morning, I'd like you go to the cross with me. We're going to take a deep look into the cross of Jesus. We're going to think about what Jesus was really doing on that cross - how did he really get there in the first place, and what does that teach me about myself? What does it change about the way I live my life? Is there something inside of me that's holding me back from really praising God with my life? Is there something I lack, that Jesus can give me, that truly sets

me free to honor God with every minute, every dollar, every ability that I have?

Let's go to the cross. What do we see? At first glance, Jesus looks pretty plain - a human body nailed to a piece of wood. There is the crown of thorns, there is the blood. But our Bible text today says that there is more to see, than just that. It says that this person on the cross, "being in form of God, did not count equality with God something to be grasped." This human body on the cross is, in his very nature, God. Paul here carefully uses the Greek word *morphe* with the present participle to indicate that the nature that Christ continually possesses is the "specific character or essential substance" of God. Inside that person is the same God who made the world in Genesis. The same God who calmed storms and healed diseases. This is who is hanging on the cross. But how is that possible? Why doesn't Jesus, who is God, say, "This cross is below me. I'm not going to suffer like that. I'm not going to let these people treat me that way. I am God! These sinful creatures aren't worth dying for, look at how worldly and uncaring they are. They are the ones who deserve to die."

No, Jesus doesn't say that. Instead, it says here that he "did not consider equality with God something to be grasped." What do we call that, when someone is grasping to be equal to God? Wasn't that the sin of Adam and Eve - they wanted to be equal to God - what is that sin? It is the oldest sin in the history of the world. It's the sin of pride. It's a poison that stops people from glorifying God, and causes people to glorify themselves.

Jesus didn't have the poison of pride inside of himself. Even though he was God in nature, he wasn't grasping to make himself equal to his Heavenly Father. No, he lowered himself. He emptied Himself. He dropped. First he lowered himself to the level of a human being, with all of its limitations. He walked. He ate. He slept. He was God, but also human. He had no poisonous pride that told him, "I'm above all this." And when God the Father told him that someone would have to suffer for the sins of mankind, that a sacrifice would have to be made to pay for my sin and your sin, Jesus lowered himself even further - "He humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even death on the cross."

In contrast to the many people today who seek upward mobility, Jesus was, in a sense, downwardly mobile, moving from a position of ultimate power to utter powerlessness. He dropped for us. Jesus was and will always be the humblest man ever to walk the face of the earth. Who will die for the sins of the world? "I will," Jesus says. Who will take the blame for all the pride and adultery and violence and gossip and disrespect of the world? "Blame me," Jesus says. Who will feel hell in the place of the human race? Who will die the worst death ever known to mankind? "I will," Jesus says. Do you see what he does for you at the cross? He humbles himself, he lowers himself for love. He lowers himself for you. He drops.

The familiar Lenten hymn proclaims, "When I survey the wondrous cross, on which the prince of glory died, my richest gain, I count but loss, and pour contempt on all my pride." What is it that

holds you back from passionately honoring God with your time, with your talents, with your treasures. What holds you back from giving completely of all you are and have for Him? What is it that holds you back? Could it be that you have pride inside of yourself? Could it be that you say to yourself, "I can't give my time to God - that's below me. I can't use my talents for the glory of God. I'm too busy using my talents for the glory of myself. I'll give money to God, but just a little bit. Whatever is leftover. I'll keep most of it for myself because I deserve it. My number one priority in my life is my comfort, my appearance, my status compared to others. I can't give that up for God - that's below me.

Is the poison of pride holding you back from glorifying God with all you've got? Today we go to the cross, and there we see Jesus. And what is Jesus covered with? Is it just blood and dirt? No. He's covered with the poison of pride, with my pride and yours. He gives away his wealth for you. He gives away his comfort for you. His status, his appearance, God in the flesh sacrifices it all for love, for you.

It's the ugliest place in the world, and yet it's the most beautiful. It's the most violent place in the world, and yet it's the most peaceful. It's the most hellish place in the world. And it's the most heavenly. It's the cross of Jesus Christ. That's where we go. And there Jesus takes our pride away, forgives us, changes us, and makes us healthy. He puts inside of us a special, divine kind of humility that can only come from heaven. He helps us to learn how to drop, to be humble and live for Him.

How do you explain the talented singer who excels on American Idol and could be making millions upon millions of dollars with her voice, but she doesn't want to become tainted by the culture of Hollywood. She uses her talented voice to sing for Jesus and about Jesus, and she sacrifices some of her fame and fortune for him. How do you explain the family who spends what little free time they have cleaning the church for free, when their own house is a mess? How do you explain the man who lives in a humble house and drives a humble car and takes a humble vacation, because of the amount of money he's giving to God? Why aren't these people saying things like "That's below me! Why aren't we using these things to benefit and glorify ourselves?" Well, it's because they've spent time at the cross of Jesus Christ, just like you and I are doing this today. They and we have seen the humblest man on the face of the earth, who is also our God and our Savior. They and we have had our sins forgiven, by the greatest love ever given. This is what changes people. May the love and humility of Jesus Christ change us as well so we, too, can drop, be humble and live for Him. Amen.