

Title: "The Jesus Hymn"
Text: Philippians 2:5-11

Last week I shared that we are going to be "re-introducing Jesus" this year.

-That is, we are going to be inviting the writers of the New Testament to introduce us to the Jesus they knew.

And we saw last week at the outset that Jesus was a person that people really liked!

-He was the kind of person people liked hanging around, and the kind of person people couldn't wait to invite their friends to meet.

In fact, we saw that the whole New Testament was written to introduce Jesus to others.

-It was written by people who had been introduced to Jesus themselves, and had come to know Jesus personally, and who wanted more than anything to introduce others to this man they thought was the most wonderful and amazing guy they'd ever met.

Today, I'd like to take us to a passage in Paul's Letter to the Philippians, which most New Testament scholars believe was a hymn of the early church.

-That's right, a "hymn" like we sing from the hymnal.

You might call this one "The Jesus Hymn."

-It's found in Philippians 2:6-11.

-It's a passage you are probably quite familiar with, but maybe you didn't know it was an early hymn.

-But these words have a poetic, even lyric, character that causes most scholars to believe the words were originally sung in the early church;
-and that Paul is quoting them here.

Listen as I read the words to "The Jesus Hymn."

So how many of you go home after worship on Sundays,
-and you may not remember much about the sermon that
was preached,
-but the melody of one of the songs we sang is still playing
in your head, and the words are right there, too?

And sometimes that song will stick with you for days, right?
-Music and song lyrics have a way of sticking with us.
-People who tell me they can't memorize anything can
recite by heart
-the lyrics to songs they sung when they were a kid,
-or songs from the radio when they were a teenager,
-or songs from a musical they love,
-or songs from church that they've sung.

Songs have a way of doing that.
The melody plants the lyrics into us in a way that is
memorable and lasting. The words stick with us.
-And this song that the Apostle Paul quotes the lyrics to
here in Philippians 2,
-was stuck in the hearts and minds of Christians back in
Paul's day,
-and has stuck in the hearts and minds of Christians for
2000 years since.

And I want to highlight this "Jesus Hymn" today, because it is
one of the best introductions to Jesus that we have in the
New Testament.

If you want to know what Jesus was really like, well this song
sums it up.
Whoever wrote this song, beautifully captured the essence of
who Jesus was;
-and the early church in singing this song affirmed the
content,
-saying, "Yes, this is the Jesus we knew. This is what
made us love Him. This is what we want the world to
know.

So it's a great place to begin in "re-introducing ourselves" to
Jesus through the eyes of the New Testament writers.

And what does “the Jesus hymn” tell us about Jesus?

It sings to us about humanity and divinity all wrapped up in this one person.

It tells us of humility and glory all wrapped up in this one person.

It tells us of servant-hood and Lordship all wrapped up in this one person.

It's the amazing mystery of this person, who though he was in very nature God,

-did not consider equality with God something to be grasped,

-but instead made himself nothing.

My friends, that is the heart of what made this Jesus so likeable, so approachable, so appealing, so amazing to be around.

He had all these attributes and abilities that were totally god-like,

-but he never acted like jerk about it.

-He could teach and preach with wisdom and authority;

-He could heal the sick and give sight to the blind,

-He could cast out demons and calm storms;

-He could raise the dead and forgive people's sins.

-But wasn't self-centered, he wasn't rude, he wasn't boastful, he wasn't power hungry, he didn't look down on others or Lord it over people.

He liked people, and they liked him.

-People who met him generally wanted more of him, not less of him.

-And I say generally, because there were those who found Jesus to be a threat.

-There were religious leaders, and political leaders who hated the fact that so many people were flocking to Jesus and listening to his teaching, and thinking he was wonderful.

-The powers that be found that threatening.

-They wanted the people's allegiance, and didn't like that they were losing it to a carpenter from Nazareth.

But Jesus wasn't actively trying to be hostile to the powers that be.

-It's just that he was in fact the King of the Kingdom of God,
-and his presence on this earth caused the kingdoms of this world to quake in their boots.

Yet that's the point of this Jesus Hymn: Jesus didn't go walking around proclaiming himself to be the King of the Kingdom of God.

-He did not consider that equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing.

He came to this earth to be made in human likeness, and took on the nature of a servant.

-He humbled himself in order to seek the lost, and heal the broken, and be a physician to the sick.

-He submitted his human will to the will of his heavenly Father,

-and gave himself everyday to do only what the Father asked him to do.

He lived his life saying, "Not my will, Father, but Thy will be done;"

-even to the point of being obedient to death on a cross.

That is the heart of who Jesus was and is.

-And it's like nothing the world had or has ever seen before.

Because what we humans are used to and expect of people is "grasping after equality with God".

Maybe you never thought about it like this, but it is normal for you and I, and the other people around us:

-to think that the world revolves around us.

-And if it doesn't, we try and make the world revolve around us.

-We want our will to be done,

-We want our wants to be satisfied, and our needs to be met.

-We want other people to love and honor and appreciate us.

-We want to use others to serve our interests.

-We call all of this "self-centeredness," but it's a form of "grasping after equality with God."

Another form of such grasping is what we call Judgmentalism.

- Whenever we try and set ourselves up as the judge and jury for everyone else,
 - we are essentially pretending we are God.
- Whenever we try and straighten everyone else out;
- Whenever we act like we know what everyone else ought to be doing,
 - or what decisions they ought to be making,
 - it is a form of grasping after equality with God.

I mean, who do we think we are that we can judge everyone else's motives and behaviors?

- Who do we think we are when we constantly think we are right and everyone else is wrong?
- It seems like we think we're God, and that we have the final say on what is good and right and just and perfect.
- We're grasping after equality with God.

And speaking of perfect, how about when we turn the judgment on ourselves in what we call "perfectionism."

- This is when we are constantly trying to be perfect ourselves.
 - And we hold ourselves to some standard of perfection that no one but God can measure up to.
- Then we get down on ourselves because we don't measure up to those expectations.
 - We might not think of this as grasping after equality with God, but it is!
 - God is the only one who is perfect.
 - And when we hold ourselves to that standard we are trying to be Gods.

You see, this is the way we humans operate all the time.

- But what people found so amazing and so refreshing about Jesus, was that he was somehow free of all that.
- He was, in fact, God, but he didn't act like that.

Isn't that a crazy irony?

- Jesus was the one person who could actually afford to be self-centered because all things *were* created by Him, and for Him.
- The universe really does revolve around him, and he really is worthy of everyone's praise and honor.

-But he never demanded that for himself from people.

In fact, he emptied himself of all this privileges as the Son of God in order to live among us as the Son of Man.

-He chose not to be self-centered, but to be other-centered and to give himself away for us.

And Jesus was the one person who could rightfully judge other people, because all authority in heaven and on earth was given to him from the Father.

But again, Jesus says again and again, "I came into the world not to judge the world, but that the world might have life through me.

"I came to seek and to save the lost ones, not to condemn them."

"I came as a physician for the sick, not as a judge and jury to criticize and condemn."

And Jesus is also the one person who really was perfect.

-He lived a human life, but without sin.

-Yet this Jesus Hymn proclaims that what he ultimately offered to God by his life, was not his perfection, -but his humble obedience unto death on a cross for us, the sinful ones.

-That is what God then exalted:

-a very human Jesus who had suffered and died and given his life willingly for others.

You see, it's a hymn of divinity and humanity,

-glory and humility,

-awesomeness and earthiness.

-It's a hymn proclaiming that this is what made Jesus so amazing.

-This is what made him astoundingly awe-inspiring on the one hand, and astoundingly embraceable on the other hand.

And this is what the Apostle Paul calls all of us to model our lives upon.

"Have this same attitude yourselves," Paul writes.

- “Don’t consider equality with God something to be grabbed or grasped.
- Let that go.
 - Stop trying so hard to make the world revolve around you.
 - Stop judging everyone.
 - Stop judging yourself so harshly and trying to be perfect all the time.

Instead, like Jesus did, give it up, and take on the nature of a servant.

- Honor other people above yourselves.
- Use your gifts and talents to build others up.
- Be a channel of healing and forgiveness in the world.
- Pursue grace and peace and faithfulness and joy.
- Love the people around you, and serve them.

This is what made Jesus so utterly remarkable as a person.

- Is this the Jesus that we are presenting to the world around us?
- Is this the Jesus that people around us see exhibited in us?
 - Our attitudes are supposed to be growing more and more like that.
 - None of us are perfect at it, right?
 - After all, we are not the Christ! We cannot consider equality with God something to be grasped.

But we are called as followers of Jesus to follow Him!

- We are called to ask His Holy Spirit to live in us, and to begin molding us more and more into His image and likeness.
- We are called to walk in the way of the cross, dying to ourselves, and learning to say more and more, “Lord, not my will, but Thy will be done.”

Jesus lived this out for us, and gives us His life as a gift.

- And that life lived that way is what made the people around Him want more and more of him.
- It is what pleased His heavenly Father, such that the Father ultimately exalted Jesus to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow and every tongue confess that He is Lord to the glory of god the Father. Amen.