

SHARING LIFE AT FIRST BY DR. BOB BENDER, PASTOR, ON DECEMBER 10, 2017
“A SONG OF HUMANITY” FROM PHILIPPIANS 2:6-8
A TIMELESS CHRISTMAS SONG SERMON SERIES FROM PHILIPPIANS 2:5-11

I have here a Christmas gift. Several things characterize this gift. Somebody went to a lot of trouble wrapping it. Wrapping usually is set aside quickly, giving very little attention to it. The gift inside is what really matters. The outside wrapping and the inside gift are different. The inside gift is hidden by the outer wrapping. For our purposes today, this gift represents Jesus. The outer wrapping is His outer man of humanity and the inner wrapping is His inner God of divinity. Jesus, the divine Son of God, came to us wrapped in humanity as the Son of Man. If this box didn't have any wrapping on it, you wouldn't know it was special—would you? But then again, if it were among other wrapped gifts, it would just blend in, wouldn't it? All just like Jesus.

We focus on Jesus' miracles, but we overlook the greatest miracle of all—the divine God in human flesh. John 1:14 says, “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.” Paul elaborates on this concept in Philippians 2.

Our theme this Christmas is *A TIMELESS CHRISTMAS SONG FROM PHILIPPIANS 2:5-11*. Each week we sing a different verse. Last week we considered verse 1: A song of humility. Today we consider verse 2—“**A SONG OF HUMANITY” FROM PHILIPPIANS 2:6-8**.

Before He became a man, Jesus was “in the form of God” (vs. 6). From eternity past Jesus possessed God's very nature. He existed as God and always will be God.

He “did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped.” The eternal Son did not consider His equality a thing to be seized selfishly with a closed fist, but...

“He emptied Himself.” Of what? Of the possession of deity? No. Of the expression of it. Jesus was always the Son of God and maintained that identity in His earthy sojourn—just in a different form. “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today, and forever” (Heb. 13:8).

“Taking the form of a bondservant.” He changed clothes and put on a different form—that of a slave. He did not boast of His eternal glory and right to be ministered to but demonstrated His desire to minister. “The Son of man came not to be ministered to, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many” (Mt. 20:28).

“And being made in the likeness of men/being found in appearance as a man.” He was a man just like you and me, yet without sin. His becoming Man did not exclude His possession of Deity, for He was and still is the God-man.

“He humbled Himself.” He surrendered to His Father's will testifying, “Not my will but Yours be done.” Only eternity will reveal the depth of meaning for Him and for us as found in those words.

“By becoming obedient to the point of death.” Here the God-man dies. But in dying He brings us the greatest gift (Rom. 5:15-17 MSG).

“Even the death on a cross.” Other men died on crosses, but the innocent God-man Jesus died the kind of death not only assigned to criminals but ordained by God Himself. The Jews knew how despicable a death this was, for they wrote, “For he that is hanged is cursed by God.” Little did they know what they were saying (Gal. 3:13).

The angel told Joseph, “His name shall be called Jesus” (Mt. 1:21). Jesus was and is a common name. Whenever I meet a man named Jesus, I think, “Why did his parents name their child a heavenly name like Jesus?” Hard to live up to! Wrong question. Why did God name His son a common earthly name like Jesus? Right question. It would be like calling the savior of the world Bill today. Because He came to earth just like one of us. Isaiah 53:2 says of Jesus “He has

no stately form or majesty that we should look upon Him, nor appearance that we should be attracted to Him.” We don’t know what He looked like. I doubt He looked like Jeffery Hunter—the blond Jesus in *King of Kings* or George Castanza... but still, He was a common man. If He was present in this crowd today, He wouldn’t stand out as appearing special.

We look at the miracles Jesus performed while walking with us, but look again at the miracle of the wrapping—God wrapped in flesh. He was wrapped in the same skin with the same aches and pains, the same emotions, and in the same human package that you and I are wrapped in. We tend to push past the wrapping, emphasizing the God side of Jesus. If the world has problems with Jesus’ divinity, the church has problems with Jesus’ humanity. However, today we need to remember that He was wrapped in flesh. As a baby, he was dependent on Mary to feed him daily and provide for his needs. Instead of His mighty voice sounding like many waters, His voice was now the cries of a baby. God’s gift came wrapped in a human baby and later a grown human body. He weeps. He becomes angry. He is disappointed. He gets hungry. He becomes tired. He sweats. He obeys His parents as well as worrying them. He is moved with compassion. He feels. He bleeds. He stumbles under the weight of the cross. He gets thirsty and hungry. He feels betrayal and abandonment. He has rugged hands like that of a common laborer.

He even knew how to have a good time (Laughing Jesus pic). used appropriate humor—“straining at gnats and swallowing camels.” Why do you think He was invited to so many parties? If Jesus attended our church picnic, he would be playing softball with us. The atheist philosopher Frederick Nietzsche said, “It’s too bad Jesus didn’t learn how to laugh.” One of the reasons he rejected Jesus is he thought Jesus was boring. Some of you may have rejected Jesus thinking that He’s dull, and to die and go to heaven is like going to the eternal dentist with no Novacain You’re like, “No, thank you. I’d rather go to hell where the party will be and there will be a mosh pit, lots of beer, and all sorts of fun. Heaven is for all the bored people and hell is where all the action is, because Jesus is a dullard, right?” That is some people’s false impression of Jesus. I wouldn’t be surprised at one of their many crossings of the Jordan or dipping in the Sea of Galilee if Jesus and the 12 had a water fight every now and then! The first and last words of Jesus were “rejoice.” He began His ministry with “Happy are those...” in His Sermon on the Mount and ended it with “Rejoice!” to Mary at the empty tomb. He wished His own joy to be in His disciples. How could He bring joy to the world if possessed none Himself? Jesus was human—just like you and me.

Max Lucado summarizes Jesus’ life and says it best; “The tongue that called forth the dead was a human one. The hand that touched the leper had dirt under its nails. The feet upon which the woman wept were calloused and dusty and His tears... oh, don’t miss the tears... they came from a heart as broken as yours or mine ever has been. *Because He Is Love: If you were God, would you sleep on straw, nurse from a breast, and be clothed in a diaper? I wouldn’t, but Christ did. He went from commanding angels to sleeping in the straw. From holding stars to clutching Mary’s finger. When He saw the size of the womb, He could have stopped. When He saw how tiny His hand would be, how soft His voice would be, how hungry His tummy would be, He could have stopped. At the first whiff of the stinky stable, at the first gust of cold air. The first time He scraped His knee or blew His nose or tasted burnt bagels, He could have turned and walked out. When He saw the dirt floor of His Nazareth house. When Joseph gave Him a chore to do. When His fellow students were dozing off during the reading of the Torah, His Torah. At any point Jesus could have said, “That’s it! That’s enough! I’m going home.” But He didn’t. He didn’t, because He is love.*

While the creatures of earth walked unaware, Divinity arrived. Heaven opened herself and placed her most precious One in a human womb. Were it not for the shepherds, there would have been no reception. And were it not for a group of star-gazers, there would have been no gifts. It

all happened in a moment. In one moment... a most remarkable moment. The Word became flesh.

Angels watched as Mary changed God's diaper. The universe watched with wonder as the Almighty learned to walk. Children played in the street with Him and had the synagogue leader in Nazareth known Who was listening to His sermons... Jesus may have had pimples. He may have been tone-deaf. Perhaps a girl down the street had a crush on Him or vice versa. It could be that His knees were bony. One thing's for sure: He was, while completely divine, completely human. For thirty-three years He would feel everything you and I have ever felt. He felt weak. He grew weary. He was afraid of failure. He was susceptible to wooing women. He got colds, burped, and had body odor. His feelings got hurt. His feet got tired and His head ached.

To think of Jesus in such a light is—well, it seems almost irreverent, doesn't it? It's not something we like to do; it's uncomfortable. It is much easier to keep the humanity out of the incarnation. Clean the manure from around the manger. Wipe the sweat out of His eyes. Pretend He never snored or blew His nose or hit His thumb with a hammer... But don't do it. For heaven's sake, don't. Let Him be as human as He intended to be. Let Him into the mire and muck of our world for only if we let Him in can He pull us out" (*God Came Near*). So what does all of this mean to you and me?

/THE MAN JESUS REVEALS GOD TO MAN

See John 14:8-10. "Great is the mystery of godliness He who was revealed in the flesh" (1 Tim. 3:16). The curtain is pulled back and it's not the great fake Oz. In Jesus, we see the heart, mind, will of God. What does God look like? Look at Jesus, the God-man, full of grace and truth.

//THE MAN JESUS UNVEILS MAN TO HIMSELF

Just as He knew Simon Peter and Nathanael in John 1, having never met them before, so Jesus peels away our own self-protective ways and penetrates our hearts with His insightful look into our very soul. "He Himself knew what was in man" (Jn. 2:25). He shows us who we really are. With Simon Peter we cry out, "Depart from me for I am a sinful man" and want to go out and weep bitterly. Then He picks us up and shows us what we could be—"As He is so also are we in this world" (1 John 2:6).

///THE MAN JESUS REDEEMS MAN TO GOD

He became flesh. If He was only God, we couldn't relate. If He was only man, He can't redeem. But God in man and we have God with us and God for us. He became like us to save us. Until I have experienced what you have experienced, I cannot really understand what you have been through. Because of the humanity of Christ, God can say, "I understand what it's like to be human. I understand what you're going through." "We don't have a high priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities." (Heb. 4:16-18). He doesn't have to imagine what it feels like He was wrapped in skin. His fleshiness doesn't decrease my worship; it increases my belief in the fact that God loved me so much that He becomes like me to reach me. It reveals the lengths that He was willing to go to get to me.

No one ever lived liked like Jesus—a virgin birth, a perfect life, His revolutionary teachings, vicarious death on the cross, and miraculous resurrection.

"No one ever spoke like Jesus" the guards sent to arrest Him said (Jn. 7:46).

No one ever loved like Jesus. Billy Graham said, "No man ever loved like Jesus. He died on the cross to save us. He bore our sins. And now God says, 'Because He did, I can forgive you.'"

Here is a picture of the late Rusty Gandy in our last church. He was wheel-chair bound his

whole short life. His parents, Rob and Kathy Gandy, took him to a Michael W. Smith concert and he had a front row seat. At one point, Michael asked the children in the audience to come up on stage. Rusty couldn't because there was no ramp, so he just parked his wheelchair at the bottom of the stairs. Michael began singing a song to the children and noticed Rusty on the floor. He left the stage and came down to where Rusty was. At the end of the concert, Rusty's parents asked him what he thought of the concert. Rusty said, "It was so cool because when he saw that I couldn't come up to him, he came down to me!" Folks, we are all like little Rusty Gandy—crippled by the fall of sin and unable to make it up to heaven's platform. Jesus came to do for us what we could not do for ourselves. Won't you let Jesus come down to you and save you?

For some of the rest of us, we are like, "I don't want to say that I'm hurting or struggling, because that'll make Jesus look bad." No it won't. Jesus had some very hard days. "Nobody knows the trouble I've seen, nobody knows but Jesus. Sometimes I'm up; sometimes I'm down sometimes I'm almost to the ground. Oh yes Lord, nobody knows the trouble I've seen. Nobody knows, but Jesus." In the words of Gregory of Nazianzus, "That which he has not assumed he has not healed."

How amazing that the divine Son of God would take all of our humanity at that first Christmas—and then take that true humanity all the way to the cross for us. Now He resides in heaven awaiting our new creation. "This hope we have as anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and steadfast and one which enter within the veil, where Jesus has entered as a forerunner for us" (Heb. 6:19-20). Jesus paved the way as God in human flesh and now has paved the way for us back to God as a man. There is a man in heaven and His name is Jesus. Because He is there, we will follow.

Jesus took a human body to save our bodies. And he took a human mind to save our minds. Without becoming man in his emotions, he could not have rescued our hearts. And without taking a human will, he could not save our broken and wandering wills. He became man in full, so that He might save us in full. He is a truly marvelous Savior.

Sammy Tippit writes; "Jesus is unique in human history. He is not merely one of the gods, he is God. He is not just a good man, he is the only man who is perfect in his goodness. He is not only a great leader, he is the one leader worthy of absolute allegiance. He is not only royalty, but he is the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords. John called him the son of God and Luke called Him the Son of Man. He is the God-man. He is in a class all his own" (*Worthy of Worship*).

I can't say it any better than Bing Crosby in this video of "One Solitary Life." Larry Libby says, "Depending upon how you look at it, the greatness and mystery of God either flattens you like a bug on the windshield or brings inexpressible comfort and rest." Which is it for you?

By way of application, we have three assignments this week: 1) Love Him. Don't you love Jesus more because of who He is? I sure do. 2) Live for Him. This Christmas I want you to realize that Jesus is wrapped up in us. Let's let the "present" Jesus live through us this week in our actions and attitudes. 3) Look for ways to say a good word about Jesus. A recent survey revealed that 83% of Americans didn't mind receiving a re-gifted gift. Let's re-gift the greatest gift this year. Wrapped in our skin, let's re-present Jesus in such a way that those around us will receive Him. We have this same treasure in our earthen vessel—our bodies (2 Cor. 4:7).

Central Idea of Text (CIT): Jesus put aside His full expression of divinity in becoming a man.

Big Idea of Message (BIM): Jesus was a man in the fullest sense of the word.

Major Objective (MO): Doctrinal/Supportive

Specific Objective (SO): I desire my hearers to appreciate Christ's full humanity.

Primarily Addressed Need (PAN): What difference does it make that Jesus was a man?