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Philippians 2:6-11

What We Believe: The Son

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Paul Little, in *Know What You Believe*, starts his chapter on Jesus Christ by pointing out how important Christ is to Christianity. You can lose Buddha, and still have Buddhism. You can lose Muhammad and still have Islam. You can lose Confucius and still have Confucianism. You can lose millions of Hinduism's 330 million gods, and still have Hinduism. But you can't lose Christ, and still have Christianity. Jesus is:

- the hero of the Bible's story (John 3:16)
- the founder of our faith and belief (Heb 12:2)
- the bridegroom of the church (Rev 22:17)
- the fulfillment of God the Father's promises (2 Cor 1:20)
- essential to who the Triune God is, one God in three persons (Matt 3:16-17)¹

So only those who believe in Christ can truly call themselves Christians. Just like Jesus is the central focus of the Bible, the thread that holds everything together, I was reminded this week that Jesus is the central focus of our **Articles of Faith**. Without him, everything falls apart. Without Jesus, we're lost and confused.

But I want to take how important Jesus is **one step further**. Jesus isn't just essential to the Bible or our religion, he is essential to **you**. Without Jesus, I believe that your life isn't as it should be. Without Jesus, you're lost and confused. Without Jesus, you aren't who you were created to be.

Did you know that too little **salt** can kill you? **Hyponatremia** is a condition of low sodium in the blood, and it can lead to all sorts of problems, even death. The message we usually hear is "eat less salt" or "salt is bad for you," but sometimes that's not true. In seminary I lived with an elderly woman whose husband eventually died because one of his medicines stripped him of sodium. Our culture tells us Jesus is bad, to cut him from our diets, from our religion, from our life. But what if the very ingredient we need is him?

I believe you need to understand who Jesus is, and how to follow him, to flourish as God intends. We're going to look at three aspects of who Jesus is. Jesus is **God, Savior, and King**. I want to give you my **big idea** upfront so you can follow along with me as we look at who Jesus is. My idea is... *Jesus is God, Savior, King, so worship, trust, and obey him*. I didn't come up with the outline God, Savior, King. It comes to me from **Dr. Charles Quarles**, who was one of Terry's NT Professors. He attributes it even further back to the early church.

Are any of you familiar with the **fish symbol**? We usually see it as a bumper sticker but it originated in the early years of the church after the New Testament. The Greek word for "fish" is "ichthys." The **Icthus** (ΙΧΘΥΣ) forms an acrostic, "Iesous Christos Theou Yios Soter, i.e. Jesus Christ, Son of God, Savior."² In other words Jesus is *the Christ*, which is the Messianic title for King, *the Son of God*, and *the Savior*. The early Church declared Jesus to be God, Savior, and King because this is what it meant to be a Christian.

¹ Opening adapted from Little, Paul E.. *Know What You Believe* (p. 54). InterVarsity Press. Kindle Edition.

² Coffman, Elisha. *What is the origin of the Christian fish symbol? A closer look at the ancient Icthus*. Christianity Today. Christian History. Published August 2008. <http://www.christianitytoday.com/history/2008/august/what-is-origin-of-christian-fish-symbol.html> Accessed July 6, 2017.

All Scriptures are quoted from the New International Version (NIV®) unless otherwise noted.

Today, we're going to trace this theme back even further to the Bible. **Paul**, an Apostle and author of much of the New Testament, writes a hymn in Philippians chapter two. It's a song full of poetry. We don't know if this **hymn** comes from Paul, or some other Christian tradition, but we do know he uses it to inspire the early believers to live lives of humility like Jesus. Today we're actually not going to focus on Paul's main point in the text, the call to **humility**, but the **theology** in the text—what it tells us about Jesus. *First, it tells us...*

Jesus is God

Before we look at our passage, I want to read our **Article of Faith** on Jesus because it reflects what we find in Scripture. It says, "We believe in Jesus Christ, the eternal and only Son of God..." At Cornerstone, we believe Jesus is divine, that he is God, not partly, or on some days, but all the way.

Jesus is fully God. (Phil 2:6, 11)

We find this same truth in Paul's hymn. He writes in **Philippians 2:6**, Jesus "Who, being in *very nature God*, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;". The Greek word for nature is the word "**morphe**," which means "**form**." Jesus shares the same nature or form as God. This means Jesus shares all the **attributes** (characteristics or traits) of God the Father and the Holy Spirit. As the Son of God, who is fully God, Jesus is eternal, holy, sovereign, omniscient, omnipresent, and omnipotent, and he's also loving, faithful, and merciful, and all the other attributes we left unsaid.

This first line in verse 6, which declares the deity of Jesus, matches the last line of the poem in verse 11, which also declares his deity. **Philippians 2:11** says, "and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is *Lord*, to the glory of God the Father." In our Exodus series, we learned **LORD** in all capitals in the Old Testament means Yahweh. We call God "Lord" instead of "Yahweh" because the Greek version of the Old Testament, the Septuagint, translates Yahweh and Adonai as **kurios** ("Lord"). So when Jesus is called kurios ("Lord") in the New Testament, the authors are saying he is Yahweh (cf. 1 Peter 3:15, Isaiah 8:13).³

Jesus himself, recognized himself to be God. We know this because throughout the Bible God is the only person you should **worship**. On several occasions, people worshiped Jesus, and instead of turning away their worship, he accepted it. After Jesus healed a man born blind, the man worshipped him.

John 9:38 Then the man said, "Lord, I believe," and he *worshiped* him. (NIV®)

After Jesus rose from the grave, he met several women at the tomb, including Mary Magdalene, who worshipped him when they realized who he was. Notice Jesus' response. He doesn't turn them away.

Matthew 28:9-10 Suddenly Jesus met them. "Greetings," he said. *They came to him, clasped his feet and worshiped him.* Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me." (NIV®)

Jesus wouldn't accept their worship, unless he was indeed God, and deserved their worship.

Have you ever been mistaken for a celebrity? I assume Meaghan, that you've been mistaken for **Emma Stone**, the red-headed star of *La La Land*, on multiple occasions. And I assume that when you were mistaken for Emma Stone, you smiled and signed your name on pictures and posters featuring the real Emma Stone and sent your fans on their way. And of course, who is that celebrity quarterback sitting next to you? Is that **Tom Brady**, the greatest and most handsome quarterback of all time? Oh, it's just you Andrew... It's a good thing you shook your head or I would have thought I had encountered a true legend. If any of us were

³ For further info, read Millard Erickson's *Christian Theology, The Deity of Christ*, pages 707-708

mistaken for a celebrity, we would admit we're not famous, even if it were embarrassing. But Jesus never turns away worship. He always receives it because Jesus is God.

Do you worship him?

The last line of our poem tells us how to worship. We're called to "acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord." That word for "acknowledge" means "confess, admit, or give thanks." If you've never **confessed** that Jesus is the Lord God, or admitted it, you're not a Christian yet.

Romans 10:9-10 If you declare with your mouth, "*Jesus is Lord,*" and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is *with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved.* (NIV®)

I am so excited because in the next couple months we are going to have a **baptism**. A baptism is a beautiful way to confess Jesus is Lord, to admit he is God in a public way. If you've never been baptized, a simple way you can worship Jesus is by acknowledging Jesus as Lord at your baptism.

But what about for **mature Christians** who have already confessed? "Acknowledge" can also mean "**give thanks.**" Worship Jesus by giving thanks for him. I bet the blind man Jesus healed worshipped Jesus out of gratitude. Thank Jesus for opening your eyes to who he is. *First, Jesus is God, so worship him. Second...*

Jesus is Savior

Our **Articles of Faith** continue, telling us Jesus was "conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of a virgin, sinless in His life, making atonement for sin by His death, and providing access to the Father. We believe in His bodily resurrection..." Each one of these elements in our article point to Jesus as Savior. Jesus became our Savior through the **incarnation**, which is when the Son of God took on human flesh.

When **Adam** and **Eve** sinned for the first time, they broke all of humanity's relationship with God. How do you mend a relationship with God if you're a human? You get someone who is both God and human, and we find that person in Jesus Christ. Jesus' mother is Mary and his father is the Holy Spirit. When he was born, the Son of God also became the Son of Man.

Jesus is fully man. (Phil 2:7-8)

Remember how in verse 6 it says Jesus was in "the very nature of God" and how this means Jesus is God? Look at verse 7. It says Jesus took "the very nature of a servant." Jesus takes both the nature of God and the nature of man. It's not that he is part God, part man, like Hercules. Instead, he brings his deity and humanity together without division or confusion. Jesus is both 100% God and 100% man. *We believe Jesus has a divine nature and a human nature in one person.*

In verse 7, there's a very famous hotly debated line, which says, "...he made himself *nothing.*" The Greek word **kenōō** for "nothing" means "empty," which is why this line is called the **kenosis** debate. What exactly did Jesus empty himself of? Did he lose those divine **attributes** he shares with the Father and Spirit? Did he stop being omniscient, omnipresent, and omnipotent? No, because if he did, he would also stop being God.

To find the answer, we just read the **next line** of verse 7, "by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness." It's not that the Son lost something, but that he **gained** something—humanity. When he put on flesh, it was like putting on a veil that hid his glory. When Jesus became human, he received a body that became weak, tired, and hungry. He could feel pain and cry. He could still do things we can't, like walk on water, raise the dead, and know what people are thinking, but in a body that hid his divinity.

Our **Article of Faith** go on to tell us Jesus lived a **sinless life** so that he could **atone** for our sins. Atonement means to make **restitution**, to pay for a crime committed. Jesus made atonement for a crime he didn't commit, our sins, by paying for them with his own life. He became the **perfect sacrifice** so that we can have a relationship with God the Father. The heart of this poetic hymn emphasizes this. If you look in verse 8, which is the **geographic center** of the poem, it repeats one word twice, the word "death." It says Jesus became "obedient to *death*—even *death* on a cross!"

Paul highlights the death of Jesus Christ. The one who is both fully God and fully man paid the penalty for our sins with his own life. He goes from the highest-height of glory to the lowest-low of humiliation so that he could rise again, defeating sin and death. We believe in Jesus' **resurrection** because it's a sign of what we too will one day receive. When Jesus rose from the dead, he didn't just perform a miracle, he defeated your sin and your death if you trust in him.

Do you trust him?

It's not enough to simply believe Jesus is God. Even the demons do that (James 2:19). We have to trust Jesus.

Our youth are on a missions trip in France right now. I went on this trip in 2014, and right before camp started one of the leaders got us doing **trust falls**. A trust fall is where people line up behind you on either side, lock their hands together, and tell you to fall backwards. It's tempting to put your foot out to try and catch yourself, but if you do, you might kick one of those behind you.

Do you trust Jesus? He is offering to catch you if you'll fall on him. In a **normal** trust fall, a lot of people catch you. But in **Christianity**, only one person catches you, Jesus. Jesus says he will catch you, but only him. You can't trust in other religions to catch you, like Buddhism or Islam. And you can't trust in your good works to catch you, like how good a person you are, or who you voted for, or how much you give to charity. If you trust fall in those things instead of Jesus, you'll find their strength is a mirage. But Jesus promises us his arms are strong. If he can lift a cross, he can catch you. If he can hold the weight of sin upon his back, he can catch your sin, no matter how heavy it feels upon you.

There's some of us here who took that initial fall, but need to **fall again**. You've forgotten that you're resting in your Savior's arms, and are once again looking for someone or something else to catch you. You've put your trust in your obedience to God and not in Jesus' arms, or maybe you're putting all your trust in your husband or wife or ability to parent. Trusting those things never works. When you feel overwhelmed with fear or anxiety, fall on Jesus. He will catch you. You can trust him.

First, Jesus is God, so worship him. Second, Jesus is Savior, so trust him. Third...

Jesus is King

Our **Article of Faith** on the Son finishes, "We believe in His bodily resurrection, *ascension to heaven, and promise to return to this world.*" The story didn't end when Jesus rose from the grave. Forty days later, he rose into heaven, and our passage talks about what happened next. Jesus was recognized as king.

Jesus is the final king. (Phil 2:9-11)

Philippians 2:9-11 says, "Therefore God *exalted him to the highest place* and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus *Christ* is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." (NIV®)

I want to point out **two signs** of Jesus' royalty in our closing verses:

First, when Jesus rose into heaven, it says God the father exalted him. Elsewhere in the Bible we read that when Jesus rose into heaven, he took his place at the right hand of God the Father (Acts 7:55-56, Romans 8:34, Ephesians 1:20, Colossians 3:1, Hebrews 1:3, etc.). This is a place of immense authority, power, and glory. It's also a place of **royalty**, signifying Jesus is the king of kings. Jesus says in Revelation.

Revelation 3:21 To the one who is victorious, I will give the right to sit with me on *my throne*, just as I was victorious and sat down with *my Father on his throne*. (NIV®)

Second, just like the title "Lord" points to Jesus' divinity, the title "Christ" (v. 11) points to Jesus' royalty. Christ means "Messiah," or "anointed one." At almost a 1,000 years before the birth of Jesus, God promised the most famous king of Israel, King David, that one of his descendants would sit on the throne forever.

2 Samuel 7:16 Your house and your *kingdom* will endure forever before me; your *throne* will be established forever."

This future king was known as the Messiah, God's anointed king. So whenever you refer to "Jesus" as "Jesus Christ," you're actually saying "Jesus is King." How should we **respond** to a king who is also our savior and God? Philippians says "that at the name of Jesus every **knee** should **bow**." One day every knee will bow whether it wants to or not, but today each of us has an opportunity to bend the knee willingly. *We bend the knee by giving our worship and trust to Jesus, but also by submitting ourselves to him in obedience.*

Do you obey him?

Why is it so hard to bend the knee to before Jesus? Why do I struggle to obey him. I have an illustration that I think helps explain why. I'm involved in a highly athletic sport that is superior to all other forms of fitness, but sometimes people get hurt. A friend of mine tore his ACL in his knee while doing this sport, and has had to wear a knee brace for several months. The knee brace makes it really hard for him to bend his knee.

I think one of the reasons it's so hard to obey Jesus is that we're all wearing spiritual knee braces. As we go through life we get wounded by people and circumstances so we try and brace ourselves from getting wounded again. We get hurt by unexpected circumstances, so we say we won't let God into our life. We get hurt by not being in control, so we commit to being king over our own destinies. We get hurt in our marriages and relationships, so we practice self-destructive habits like look at pornography or drinking too much. We get hurt by our parents, so we wound our children. What do you do with a hurt, you cover it up, you hide it. *What's your knee brace?* What makes it hard for you to obey? You can trust him with it.

I went and saw my friend when he was recovering at home. He had this weird contraption that he would put his leg in as he laid on the couch. This device slowly rotated his knee cap so it wouldn't seize up. God is dealing with your inability to obey, your inability to bend the knee. He's slowly moving that knee through unexpected circumstances that force you to deal with your sins. Or maybe he'll bring Christians or brothers and sisters in Christ into your life who tell you about your sin. He promises to always deal with your sin through the Holy Spirit who convicts you to obey and empowers you to do so, and through the Scriptures as you encounter God week after week in his words. Will you work with the great healer or fight him?

As you recognize those places in your life that you have a hard time bending, bring them before king Jesus and pray, "I want to obey, help me obey." Our articles of faith close by reminding us Jesus is **coming back**. One day he'll return, and he'll make it worth it. Today, we have the opportunity to bend the knee willingly.

Big Idea: Jesus is God, Savior, King, so worship, trust, and obey him.

As I close, I want to return to my initial challenge—that if you don't know him, Jesus is essential to your life. If you don't worship, trust, and obey Jesus, can I encourage you to make today the day you begin to do so? You can begin by acknowledging Jesus is God, Savior, and King, by closing your eyes, bowing your head, and committing your life to him through prayer. Please pray this prayer silently with me.

Heavenly father, thank you for sending Jesus Christ, your one and only Son, to rescue me. I believe that Jesus is God, that he shares your very nature, and so I worship him. I also believe Jesus became a man through the Holy Spirit conceiving him in Mary. I believe he lived a sinless life, which made him qualified to be a perfect sacrifice for my sins. I confess my sins. Please forgive me. Thank you for taking all of my sins and placing them on Jesus. He's strong enough to handle them. I believe Jesus rose again three days after his death, and that if I trust him, he becomes my Savior and I will one day rise again too. Finally, I believe Jesus rose into heaven and is seated on the throne, and will one day return. *Help me Father to worship, trust and obey my God, Savior, and King, Jesus. Amen.*

Pastor [Jonathan Romig](#) wrote and preached this message for the people of Cornerstone Congregational Church. [Click here to listen to more sermons](#) or [click here to read our story](#).