

**Philippians 2:5-11 (Palm / Passion Sunday—Series C)**  
**“Christ the Servant-Lord”**  
**Lutheran Church of Our Redeemer, Enfield CT**  
**April 10, 2022**

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Our text is Epistle lesson recorded in Philippians 2.

<sup>5</sup>Have this mind among you, which was also in Christ Jesus, <sup>6</sup>who although He really existed in the nature of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be grasped, <sup>7</sup>but He emptied Himself, taking the nature of a slave, being born in the likeness of people; and being found in form as a man, <sup>8</sup>He humbled Himself by becoming obedient unto death, even death on a cross. <sup>9</sup>And therefore God exalted Him and bestowed on Him the name that is above every name, <sup>10</sup>so that, at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, <sup>11</sup>and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Christians throughout the centuries have confessed the faith into which they are baptized saying, “I believe in God the Father Almighty. And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord. I believe in the Holy Spirit.” Central to the Christian faith is the Second Article of the Creed—that Jesus Christ is, at the same time, both true God and true Man. It is this Jesus alone who is Lord.

But what does it mean that Jesus Christ is Lord? Martin Luther helps us to understand that it means that Jesus “has redeemed me from sin, from the devil, from death, and from all evil. For before I did not have a Lord or King, but was captive under the devil’s power, condemned to death, stuck in sin and blindness. For when we had been created by God the Father and had received from Him all kinds of good, the devil came and led us into disobedience, sin, death, and all evil. So we fell under God’s wrath and displeasure and were doomed to eternal damnation, just as we had merited and deserved. There was no counsel, help, or comfort until this only and eternal Son of God—in His immeasurable goodness—had compassion upon our misery and wretchedness. He came from heaven to help us. So those

tyrants and jailers are all expelled now. In their place has come Jesus Christ, Lord of life, righteousness, every blessing, and salvation. He has delivered us poor, lost people from hell's jaws, has won us, has made us free, and has brought us again into the Father's favor and grace. He has taken us as His own property under His shelter and protection so that He may govern us by His righteousness, wisdom, power, life, and blessedness. Let this, then, be the sum of this article: the little word *Lord* means simply the same as *redeemer*. It means the One who has brought us from Satan to God, from death to life, from sin to righteousness, and who preserves us in the same."<sup>1</sup>

We, who by faith confess Jesus as Lord, acknowledge that He rules over all things as our Creator and Redeemer who has given us eternal life and taken us under His eternal care and protection because Jesus is the Lord God Himself (Yahweh) in our human flesh. This is what Paul says by the power of the Holy Spirit in verse 5 of our Epistle text, that Jesus, "who although He really existed in the nature of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be grasped." That's what it means when you read the English Standard translation that "He was in the form of God." Jesus didn't just pretend to be God. He **has** the very nature of God because Jesus **is** God the Son who has existed eternally with the Father and the Holy Spirit, ever One true God in three distinct Persons.

And what did the eternal Son of God do in order to become our Lord? He took upon Himself the nature of a servant, or as the Greek text says, the nature of a slave. "He emptied Himself, taking the nature of a slave, being born in the likeness of people; and being found in

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<sup>1</sup> Paul Timothy McCain, ed., *Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2005), 401–402.

form as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient unto death, even death on a cross." This "humbling" means to lose prestige or status. It is what was often done to slaves in the days of the Roman empire. Slaves were humbled, humiliated, and demeaned.

Jesus, the eternal Son of God, took to Himself a real human body and soul in His incarnation—in His conception by the Holy Spirit and birth by the virgin Mary. C.S. Lewis, in his book, *Mere Christianity*, said it this way. "The Eternal Being, who knows everything and who created the whole universe, became not only a man but (before that) a baby, and before that a fetus inside a woman's body. If you want to get the hang of it, think how you would like to become a slug or a crab." Certainly does not sound very "Lord-like," does it? Jesus entered our history then, not as "Lord," but as "slave," a person without advantages, with no rights or privileges, but in servanthood to all.<sup>2</sup>

In order to become our Lord, Jesus had to made like us in every way, except without sin. Fully human, God the Son came to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many (Mark 10:45). Jesus had to be true Man, our Brother, in order to perfectly serve us in order to redeem us from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil.

Sharing our humanity as our Brother, Jesus fulfilled our obligation to keep God's Law, which, in our fallen, sinful condition, we are not able to do. Romans 5:19, "For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous" (Rom. 5:19 ESV). And from Galatians 4 we read, "But when the

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<sup>2</sup> Gordon D. Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 212–213.

fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons" (Gal. 4:4–5 ESV).

It was not enough, however, for Jesus simply to keep the Law on our behalf so that we would have the credit of His righteousness. You and I are guilty of breaking God's Law and are under God's condemnation of death and hell. As our Brother, Jesus, true God and true Man, also assumed our place under that condemnation. He served humanity by becoming the sin-bearer for us and for the whole world. He was obedient to God's Law not only with His perfect life, but He was also obedient to God's Law that called for the death of the sinner and the punishment of hell. Even though Jesus had done no sin, He became sin for us, bearing our sins in His body on the tree of the cross "that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed" (1 Pet. 2:24 ESV).

Jesus, true God and true Man, is our Servant-Lord. He was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. Jesus did this so that He might pay what you and I owe "not with silver or gold, but with His own precious blood. And He did all this in order to become [our] Lord. He did none of these things for Himself, nor did He have any need for redemption. After that He rose again from the dead, swallowed up and devoured death, and finally ascended into heaven and assumed the government at the Father's right hand. He did these things so that the devil

and all powers must be subject to Him and lie at His feet until finally, at the Last Day, He will completely divide and separate us from the wicked world, the devil, death, [and] sin.”<sup>3</sup>

As we enter into this Holy Week, we especially contemplate and meditate upon that which our Lord Jesus Christ, true God and true Man, did for us and for our salvation with His perfect life and with His sacrificial death on a cross to pay for our sins. Because of Christ’s blood shed for you on the cross, because He suffered the punishment of sin for you, you stand forgiven before God. You, by faith in Christ, are now children of God. We have this mind among us as we think on these things, namely that “Christ Jesus, who although He really existed in the nature of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be grasped, but He emptied Himself, taking the nature of a slave, being born in the likeness of people; and being found in form as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient unto death, even death on a cross.” For you. For your forgiveness, life, and salvation. Amen.

Let us pray. Lord Jesus Christ, our Brother and Savior, we praise You for rescuing us from sin, death, and the devil’s power by Your innocent suffering and death. Thank you for your great love and underserved sacrifice that won us, lost and condemned creatures, to be Yours. Give us faith to trust your reconciling work and live in the knowledge of Your salvation; for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Paul Timothy McCain, ed., *Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2005), 402.

<sup>4</sup> *Luther’s Small Catechism with Explanation* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2017), 187.