Let this mind be in you

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Preacher: Rev Murdo Alex Macleod

[0:00] We read Philippians chapter 2, reading at verse 5. Philippians chapter 2, verse 5.

Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men, and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.
As you know, these words form one of the most complete statements regarding the passion and the work of the Lord Jesus Christ that we have in the whole of the scriptures.
And Paul's purpose in using them is to present them to the Philippian Christians as the ground on which they are to model their own lives.
You know that over and over again you have this emphasis in the scriptures. You have a doctrinal statement given, and then that doctrine is to be applied to the life of the Christian.
[2:07] And that is why it is a pointless exercise, really, to think that, a pointless exercise to have a, live a life that is characterized by what people refer to as devotion.

You cannot really have devotion without doctrine. You cannot live a life that glorifies God without that life being regulated by the teachings of the word of God.
And that, in effect, is what you have here. Paul is speaking about the person and the work, the life and the death of the Lord Jesus Christ.
And as he speaks about it, he reminds these Christians in Philippi, he reminds them that they are to have the same mind that characterized Christ in his life and in his work.
In other words, it is an application of doctrine, an application of truth to the life. And as we turn to consider these words today, we are to look at what he brings before us here concerning the person and the work of Jesus Christ.
[3:59] And all along we are to remember that our Lord was animated by a particular spirit, by a particular attitude of mind.

as he engaged in the work that these words bring before us. And his application of that to ourselves is this, that we too are to cultivate this mind, to apply this attitude and to live in the same spirit in which our Lord Jesus Christ came into the world and lived and died in this world.
First of all then, let us look at the state of the doctrine that is here enunciated. The example of Jesus Christ in his incarnation.
And we will, in the light of these words, consider first of all what he was. we are told that he was in the form of God.
and then we will look secondly at what he became or took to himself. He took to himself the form of a servant.
[5:21] So these are the two thoughts really that are presented to us in these words. First of all, what Jesus was and then secondly what he became.

First of all, then what he was. We are told here in verse 5, in verse 6, that he was in the form of God. Now when Paul wrote this letter in the first century, the word form was an important one in the thinking of men and women.
It is said that most things in those days were spoken of with reference to their master and to their form.
What a thing was made of and what it was like. Now the word form could be defined briefly in this way as the body of characterizing qualities which constitute a thing.
The body of the characterizing qualities which constitute a thing, the specific character of a thing.
[6:43] Now one way in which this is illustrated, in this way, one of the American theologians illustrated in this way. Take it, he says, a ship, a sword, a knife, a fork.

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Now all these things are made of steel. These things are made of steel. But all these things have their own form, have their own characteristics which determine that they are what they are.
So that no person is left laid out that a fork is a fork because they know the form of a fork, the characteristics, the distinguishing features of a fork in the same way as they recognize the distinguishing features of a sword.
I suppose at putting it simply we could say this, that when we use the word form we are thinking of the things that make a thing the thing it is.
Whatever that thing may be in your mind, in your thinking, whatever you think of, that thing has a particular form, it has particular features, characteristics and qualities and these things make that the thing it is and it is nothing else.
[8:13] It cannot be anything else. it is distinctively that and nothing else. Notice the important this Jesus Christ was in the form of God.

In other words, all the distinguishing characteristics of God belong to the Lord Jesus Christ.
God is God God God is no ordinary person. God is distinctively separate.
God is God and no one else. What are the things that make God God? Well, those of us who know our Catholic Catholicism are acquainted with it know that it gives a very good definition of God.
God is a spirit infinite eternal unchangeable in his being wisdom power holiness justice goodness and truth. These are the things that are true of God.
[9:16] His eternity his immutability his infinity his omniscience his omnipotence his omnipresence these are the distinguishing features of God these things are true of no one else but God they are what theologians refer to as the incommunicable attributes of God my glory I will give to none other he cannot these things make God God and says Paul Jesus Christ was none other than God he possessed all the distinguishing features that make God God

God is God is God is God is essentially completely really God himself he is all that God is that's what these terms mean he was in the form of God all that God essentially is Jesus Christ is all the glory and all the splendor that belongs to God belongs also to the Lord Jesus Christ this is the dignity of his possession the dignity of his being he is God now then what did this person become and we are told here in verse 7 he took upon him the form of a servant that's the second point we have here what he became now here we have the same word form now if the form of
God means all that God essentially is then similarly it follows that the form of a servant means all that a servant essentially is this is the mode of existence into which God came when he became man people regularly and probably with some justification find false to a minister with us as ministers for using terms which people do not understand and I think that because we use them often and think about them that we think that everyone else ought to know what they mean one such word is the word incarnation you know the way it's usually the incarnate
God so we just sort of take a breather here along the way and remind ourselves that when we speak of these when we use that word what we mean is that that act in the history of this world by which God became man and the confession of faith tells us that act that act began when the Holy Spirit used the substance of Mary to form the human nature of our Lord it was formed within the womb of the Virgin Mary God took that nature to himself that was the act of the incarnation and in that nature God was born into the world that was
God manifested in the flesh now in that nature what we are told here is this that God became all that a servant is and before he could become a servant he had to take the nature of a servant to himself he had to become man he had to become man for various reasons in that nature he became a servant now that was the first step that he took in this act of in this life of service the first step he had to take was to become one of us and so we read here he was made in the likeness of men now together with other things it means this he became really and truly a human being if he was really and truly in the form of
[15:27] God as he was if he was really and truly God so in the history of this world this God became really and truly man and he was born a babe into this world really and truly a baby really and truly a baby and he grew up in this world really and truly a boy a youth and an adolescent a man so we read here he was found in fashion as a man that means that and this is the record that we have in the Bible and in secular history everyone who came in contact with him recognised him to be real and truly a man as a matter of fact some of them went beyond that as we sang here this morning they treated him less than a man you know there are some people in the world today who are treated like that they aren't treated as human beings at all by people they aren't treated as

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people who are on unequal footing with other human beings they are a shade less than that in the estimate of some people if you look at what they said of the

Lord Jesus Christ look at the words of prophecy which I'm here this morning in Psalm 22 but as for me he said I'm not considered as a man people look on me as being less than a man I am prized by them as a worm a mere worm of the dust not fit to be in a company of other people not fit to be in this world at all just fit to be prodding on the fruit of men and treated like a worm well you see all that indicates to you how people who lived with the Lord Jesus viewed them he was in their estimation no more than a man and in the estimate of many far less than a man a worm he was found in fashion as a man this was a testimony of his contemporaries is this not the son of
Mary and Joseph do we not know his brothers and his sisters how does this man know how did he come to have this learning who set this man up over us this man this man this man this man until that great moment in the history of the world when Pilate said behold the man you see he was in every sense of the word in the form of a servant he took the nature of a servant only he couldn't serve otherwise without taking human nature to himself and in that nature he entered into the place of a servant he was seen he moved around he dealt with people and people dealt with him he was in the place of a servant but the thrust of this passage is not so much on the nature of the servant not on the place of the servant but rather on the spirit of the servant this is what the whole thrust of the passage now moves toward the mind that was in this passion as he served the spirit that he manifested as he dealt with people in the world and what are we told about this spirit well something very interesting he thought it not robbery to be equal with God he made himself of no repetition he humbled himself he became obedient unto death even the death of the cross and let this mind remember being you we are not to consider this statement purely as a doctrinal one a theological one it has something to say to us about the way in which you and I are to live in this world we are to exercise the same spirit as the
Lord Jesus Christ did let us then look at the spirit that he exercised as he undertook the work of a servant he thought it not robbery to be equal with God no equality as we saw in having the form of God being essentially God being that gave him a dignity of position consistent with the nature that he possessed the nature that he possessed was the nature of God and the dignity of his position was equality with God and this was the spirit he thought it not robbery to have that position now of course as you know some of you there are various shapes of meaning to this statement let's confine ourselves just to one robbery is an act that people indulge in engage in to make what is not their own their own and to retain for themselves what is not their own but the
Lord Jesus had a position of equality with God that was really his own but this is the point glorious and exalted and dignified though it was he was of such a mind that he wasn't prepared to hold on to it he was prepared to put it to one side in the interests of another or rather in the interests of another and remember the force of the declaration let this mind be in you that's the world what Jesus had was his essentially and what was his by nature he was supposed to put to one side so that others could benefit what you and I have are not else by nature what we have God has given to us whatever it is whatever position outstation out dignity or honour out position in life whatever it is it has been given to us not so with Jesus with the
[24:00] Lord he possessed it eternally as God you and I have been given by God let this mind be in you in other words you and I had to be prepared to put to one side whatever God has given to us in the interests of other people it is illicit perhaps someone has a claim upon your time and even upon your possession if not upon your position maybe the immediate reaction of the heart to that famous if you if you if we don't say it certainly we we say it in the spirit that we sometimes adopt do you realise who I am do you realise what I am do you realise where I am you and so some food soul whose needs could be made by you putting to one side your own interests and your own self importance and your own self assertiveness that food personally could have benefited if you had done that isn't benefited why because you haven't cultivated the mind that was in

Christ Jesus I don't think that there is anything in all in in in in in there is anything really in life that is so alien to the spirit of Christ as a proud spirit a self assertive spirit a spirit of self dependent so that everyone is steamrolled into the ground in the interests of this so called strong self assertive spirit of you well that if your spirit my defender that is mine it is very contrary to the spirit of Christ he was on an equality with God what are we told he made himself of no reputation he made himself of no reputation now as you know this word has been very unfortunately translated as the

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Lord emptying himself and there are some people who have gone so far as to claim on the basis of it that what happened when God became man was this that God ceased to be God he emptied himself of all the essential qualities of God but you see that could never be because God must always be God essentially eternally in the time honored words of Augustine though they're attributed to somebody else though he became what he was not that is man he remained what he was that is God he never ceased to be
God never ceased to be God though he man what else did he do well in the interest of a sinful world he laid if you might put it like this he laid as it were his own he placed his own interest to one side some other have put it like this he bailed his glory or he entered into a mode of existence in which he who was eternally God in our nature became dependent upon another and that is where the wonder of the incarnation is seen that's nowhere else that the self existent Jehovah became a man in whose nature he became dependent upon others now there are very many ways in which we are given insights into this take for example his conception and his birth now he was truly really and miraculously conceived by the power of the spirit within the womb of Mary and in that womb like any other child life was communicated to his human nature by the one who was buried him when he was born into this world like any other child she ministered to him her life again sustained him and he who was her creator from all eternity entered into a mode of existence in which as a creature he became dependent upon the creature of his own hand that was the spirit that was in Christ he entered into a position and came into a condition in which he became dependent upon other people or on equality with God and yet he made himself of no reputation he laid his interests to one side because of his consuming passion for the interests of others in the interests of others it was his intention it was his desire it was his will to come into this world to to to better if he wanted to better the condition and the lot of people who were in this world that was his mind that was his spirit he came as the new testament tells us that we might have life and that we might have it more abundantly and to do that he had to enter into this mode of existence in which he was a servant and that's not all in that place and in that condition in that mode of existence he took to himself the work of a servant not just the nature and the spirit but the work of a servant
and this is the work of a servant this is what characterizes a servant obedience he became obedient he humbled himself that he might become obedient unto death even the death of the cross now this was the nature of a service obedience not to the will of man but to the will of God every step that he took while he was in his world was a step of obedience to the will of God every step lo we sang here this morning again the words of prophecy in Psalm 40 lo I come to do thy will you know how the epistle how the apostle to the hebrews uses these words in
[32:57] Psalm 40 when he comes when he comes into the world he says lo I come now we know you just stop and think about these words just for a minute no baby born into the world has ever spoken crying yes whimpered yes but has never spoken and has never been known and Jesus when he was born didn't speak either he developed like a normal like an ordinary baby he didn't speak what then does the apostle mean when he says when he comes into the world he says in hebrews chapter 10 lo I come to do thy will well justice that his very coming into world was an act that spoke an act that spoke of his willing obedience to the will of God and in the world as he lived in the world as he moved towards that great act of death on the cross every moment was one of obedience to the will of

God this was the thing that characterised Jesus I am come not to do mine own will but the will of him that sent me let this mind be in you not my will but thy will be done how do you and I live are you and I live at times as though nothing else mastered but our will not what anyone else says but what I say I don't care what other people say I don't care what other people think it's it's it's what I want to do well my friend there was never an instant in the history of this world when that thought raised its head in the life of Jesus never he was in this world not to do his own will but the will of him that sent me and this is Christ likeness in its very essence willingness to do what God wants me to do no matter what it costs me and therefore he says here he become obedient unto death that was the extent of his obedience that was how far he went to death and that's not the end of it even the death of the cross why does he use that word even just to show us that this was no ordinary death that he was prepared to die it was an obedience unto death yes and you know that there are many people who are you know
I heard recently of the death of a beloved Christian brother he had a wonderful deathbed and his brother seemingly said of him to the man's widow you know he said speaking of him of his name

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was Norman you know he said Norman's death the way he died made it easy for us all to accept his death he had a wonderful deathbed in which he was so reconciled to the will of God but you see Jesus' death was no ordinary death it was the death of the cross it was our death the death that you and I deserve to die the death upon which the curse of God hung and within which the wrath of God lay and he died that death he was obedient even to that extent that's the meaning of it to death yes but to a death that was no ordinary death even to that extent he was obedient to the will of God therefore he says God highly exalted him because of what he did he was given this place now in the presence of God the father gloriously exalted remembering that therefore let this mind be in you you know what I think it leaves us just with this one great question to what extent am I prepared to follow Christ to what length was he prepared to go to the very estimate the death of the cross to what length am I prepared to go that's what this passage that's the question it leaves us with how far am I prepared to go to imitate the mind that was in Christ and you know the more the mind of Christ fills our thoughts the more I think we do respond the more we respond in the spirit of the psalmist what shall I render to the Lord for all gifts to me let us pray

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