

Let this mind be in you

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 01 January 2000

Preacher: Prof John Murray

[0 : 00] I'm going to speak to you this hour on a certain passage. Mr. Ian Murray has been asking me for long to give an expository address, a closing expository address.

And since I finished on Monday 24-25, all I had prepared got through more rapidly than I anticipated. I am therefore going to accede to Mr. Murray's request and give us a closing address, an expository address.

And I have chosen the passage Philippians 2, 5 through 9, that very well-known passage, which has been read in your hearing and which it is not necessary for me to repeat, but to remind you of the beginning. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.

The first mystery of being is the mystery of the Trinity. Now that is not a mystery that came to be.

The revelation of this mystery came to be because all revelation is temporal and given to temporal creatures.

[1 : 47] But the truth of this mystery, the mystery of the Trinity, is eternal. It is the mystery of God's eternal being in three persons.

The second mystery is that of the Incarnation. And that is the mystery of godliness. The mystery of Christianity.

It is that to which Paul refers when he says great is the mystery of godliness. This is the mystery of God's eternal being in the world.

the mystery of God's eternal being in the world.

In reference to the dignity possessed, there are two aspects, the dignity of his being and the dignity of his station.

[3 : 34] And the dignity of his being is announced in the words being in the form of God. The dignity of his station in the words equal with God or on an equality with God.

This expression, the form of God, does not mean anything less than Godhood. We are not to be misled by the meaning we today attach to the word form in the Greek language and in the English language.

More than 300 years ago, 350 years ago, the word points to the essence of a thing.

And means, in this case, the reality and fullness of Godhood. The sum of those perfections and attributes which belong to God.

And by reason of which he is God. So when it is said of Christ Jesus that he was in the form of God, that has richer meaning than to say simply that he was God.

[5 : 00] The accent falls, you see, upon the fullness of his Godhood. Upon his being originally, natively, and essentially God.

In the full possession of all that is distinctive of God in his glory and majesty. Now that is the dignity of his divine identity.

And it is the dignity of unabridged deity. There have been filtrated from time to time into the church thoughts which bring Christ down to a lower level than that of full deity or full divinity.

That notion is fanatically peddled today by the so-called Jehovah's Witnesses. that Jesus is less than fully divine.

No, it is precisely that heresy in any and every form that Paul's assertion here directly condemns.

[6 : 33] Well, if we are not willing to believe in the full deity of Christ, that is one thing. But let us not try to peddle that as biblical.

That profanity has no support whatsoever in Scripture. And let us not be deceived by an illusory learning that knows not what it speaks.

Jehovah's Witnesses do peddle an illusory learning that may very easily lead some people astray.

The apostle could not have used any expression that would more clearly assert the completeness completeness of Jesus' Godhood than to say who being in the form of God, in the existence form of God.

Now there is also the dignity of his station. He is equal with God. or he is on an equality with God.

[7 : 59] Now this equality is not an accession either by robbery or attainment. He did not consider his being on an equality with God something he had gained or something he was to gain.

It was not something of precarious tenure. It was the consequence of his being and continuing to be in the form of God.

And therefore also his natively, essentially, and immutably. And I think the thought of the clauses can be very well paraphrased thus.

Being in the form of God and therefore not considering his being on an equality with God a prize or duty but an inalienable possession.

He made himself of no reputation. And I am quite convinced that that is the direction of thought that is in accord with Pauline language.

[9 : 33] Who being in the form of God thought it not robbery thought it not a prize or thought it not booty to be equal with God but made himself of no reputation.

Now here in respect of the dignity possessed we have a combination of terms that only the mystery of the Trinity can explain.

A combination of terms that only the first mystery of being can elucidate for us. Christ Jesus is identified with God and therefore on an equality with God identified with God and yet distinguished from God distinguished and yet not on a lower status possessing the fullness of God and yet so related that he is not the only one who is God.

How well as one said Paul bears witness to the identity and the differentiation which belong to the glorious mystery of the Trinity.

It is oftentimes in unsuspecting ways that we find the witness of scripture to what is the great and ultimate mystery of being.

[11 : 24] now second we have the humiliation undertaken divine being and station Christ Jesus did not undertake they were his natively and essentially but humiliation he took upon himself and how careful the apostle is to institute this contrast draw our attention to this contrast and therefore peculiar emphasis falls at this point upon the voluntary action of the person who is the subject of this text he made himself of no reputation he took the form of a servant he humbled himself there is the sustained progression here we have of course a series of events which happened in time and had no actuality prior to the fullness of time now when he when we read that he made himself of no reputation a literal rendering would be he emptied himself but here

I want to be very emphatic and very demonstrative there is not one whit of good reason for a literal translation of this particular part usage elsewhere and the context here require the figurative rendering which is well given in our AV he made himself of no reputation or an alternative he made no account of himself and versions which have adopted a literal translation have imposed upon English readers a rendering which has ignored the demands of good translation and interpretation and have introduced a question into the minds of

English readers which the context or the particular passage concern does not warrant or require the thought is simply that Christ Jesus did not make his own self the all absorbing and exclusive object of interest concern and attention he became absorbed in concern for others he made no account of himself and if you know the Greek you see the emphasis that falls upon himself make no account of himself and that of course is the whole the leading lesson of the whole passage let this mind be in you which was also in

Christ Jesus now we have to ask what was this voluntary undertaking there are three observations that is three observations in connection with the humiliation undertaken first he became man found in fashion as a man made in the likeness of man that was humiliation it would have been humiliation under the most ideal of human and earthly conditions humiliation because of the great discrepancy between the creator and the creature an unbridgeable discrepancy it was not however into an ideal world that the son of

God came it was into a world of sin of misery and of death and he came in the likeness of sinful flesh in the likeness of sin cursed humanity so himself without sin holy harmless undefiled and separate from sinners nevertheless coming into the closest relationship to sinful humanity that it was possible for him to come without thereby becoming himself sinful and second he took the form of a servant took the form of a servant and again the word form points to the reality and fullness of his servanthood just as at the beginning the word form points to the fullness and reality of his deity so now it is very significantly repeated in connection with his servanthood and underlines the reality and the fullness of his servanthood it was not simply that he became a servant he became a servant with all the subservience and obligation that subjection to the will of another entails that is magnificent emphasis in the word form now it is true that

[18 : 21] Jesus devoted himself to the service of men that is reflected on in the preceding statement that he made no account of himself he became preoccupied with the service of others or with the interest of others and of course it is the practical lesson of the whole passage let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus think not every man of his own things but every man also of the things of others but it is not his service of men that defines the expression the form of a servant not at all although he himself said and did and emphasized that he came not to be ministered unto but to minister and to give his life a ransom for many although he said

I am among you as he that serveth it is not his service of men that defines this expression the form of a servant Jesus did not subject himself to the will of men to have taken the form of a servant in reference to any human will or in reference to any creature will or authority would have contradicted his dignity and mission the dignity of his being and the dignity of his station as well as the dignity of his very mission it was to God the father that he was servant and this expression the form of a servant must be fully understood in reference to his service in the will in the doing of the will of

God the father it was to the will of the father that he surrendered himself in the fullness of subjection and obligation he came down from heaven not to do his own will but the will of him that sent him and you remember how this is certified to us in the old testament how eloquently this great lesson is inscribed in the isianic passages behold my servant whom I uphold mine elect in whom my soul delights behold my servant shall deal prudently he shall be exhorted and extoled by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many and it is therefore

Jehovah's servant it was this office of unreserved commitment to the father's will that he voluntarily undertook and because it was the father he served there was humiliation but no degradation we must not overlook the contrast that we find again in this passage Christ Jesus was on an equality with God and this equality was natively and unalterably his it was the dignity of station coordinate with his being in the form of God and his being in the form of

God was his natively essentially and unalterably but in his humiliation he took the form of a servant and therefore became subject to God and here is subordination and subordination remember in the fullness and the reality of subjection on the one hand there is equality and therefore no subordination subordination in the other there is servanthood and therefore subordination in all the reality and fullness of its meaning well beloved friends we must come in there is if we want even a glimpse of the mystery of God there is no analogy it is the solitary instance of such conjunction there is no analogy in heaven earth or hell there is no analogy in the whole of history there is no and there will be no analogy throughout the endless ages of eternity here is something that belongs solely and uniquely to him who being in the form of God and thought it not robbery to be equal with

[24 : 33] God made himself of no reputation and then thirdly in connection with the humiliation undertaken he became obedient unto death even the death of the cross now that is the extent of his humiliation according to this passage death for our Lord was an act of obedience and it was the grand climax of his commission a servant as the Lord's servant it was not mere death it was the accursed death of the cross and it was death in the unspeakable anguish of damnation vicariously borne death in the experience of that reflected of death in the experience of that which is reflected in the most mysterious cry that ever ascended from earth to heaven my God my God why hast thou forsaken me my friends let us appreciate it that it would have violated all divine propriety it would have shaken the foundation of

God's throne justice and judgment if this were not thy damnation vicariously borne for Jesus was holy harmless undefiled and separate from sinners and he was unalterably in the form of God and thought it was robbery to be equal with God and in the very ordeal of laying down his life on the accursed tree he was rendering the supreme act of obedience to the father in his capacity as the servant and it is the very expression the form of a servant that points up this so eloquently because we are here advised of the fullness of the reality of the extremity to which his office as a servant constrained him yes he was laying down his life from the accursed tree and rendering the supreme act of obedience to the father an obedience that has no parallel and never will have a parallel or repetition never be duplicated here again you see advised of the absolute uniqueness of that which belongs to the mystery of godliness now these are the lowest depths of humiliation conceivable and it is no blasphemy to say it is absolute truth to say that god himself could not conceive of or devise a humiliation surpassing that to which our lord subjected himself god himself could not conceive of humiliation lower for he who humbled himself was in the form of god and an inequality with god that of course bespeaks the highest dignity of unalterable being and unalterable station humiliation but but he humbled himself to the accursed death of the cross and there were no lower depths possible for the cross bespeaks the whole curse and judgment of god upon sin it is humiliation inimitable it is humiliation unrepeated it is humiliation unrepeatable and again let us be reminded it was self humiliation

Christ Jesus undertook not only to be humbled he undertook to humble himself and humiliation was an action in his capacity as the servant and here my friends is convergence with no similitude the will of the father that the servant be humbled and the will of Christ Jesus to humble himself the will of the father that he should be humbled to the lowest depths of humiliation conceivable and the will of the servant that he should humble himself to the lowest depths of humiliation conceive now third we have the exaltation bestowed there is of course the dignity possessed the humiliation undertaken but the exaltation bestowed and you see the contrasts are again eloquent the divine dignity

Christ Jesus possessed the humiliation was undertaken I repeat but the exhortation is bestowed God has highly exhorted now now that is the action of the father and again there are three features to be particularly noted in connection with the exaltation bestowed first the exaltation is the reward of humiliation the reward of the humiliation that is the lowest conceivable wherefore you see at the beginning of verse nine establishes that connection now here is obedience that merited reward and it is the only obedience that has that intrinsic quality at least the only obedience among men that has that intrinsic quality of meriting reward the obedience of the saints will be rewarded each will receive his own reward according to his own labor first corinthians 3 8 but in the case of the saints this is the reward of grace not of merit in the obedience of Christ we have obedience that divine propriety must reward it is an obedience that merits reward and as we shall see merited reward that is correspondingly in the opposite direction from the humiliation undertaken now second the exaltation is the guarantee that Christ

Jesus perfectly fulfilled the commitment given to him by the father in Paul's teaching of course this is but the echo of our Lord's own prayer as recorded in John 17 I have glorified thee on the earth I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do and now oh father glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was you cannot but detect in the very words of our Lord in that prayer the very sequence which is expressed in our text by the word wherefore wherefore God also hath highly exalted him and then third the exaltation is the highest conceivable have highly exalted him and given him the name which is above every name you can see the marble oh how marvelous may we catch something of the matchless glory of the mystery of God how marvelous the incarnation would have been humiliation even in a sinless world and we might therefore think that humiliation would be inseparable from the human nature of our

[35 : 17] Lord in that bliss whether he has ascended that might seem to be the logic you see of the humiliation that is involved in incarnation essentially because of the discrepancy that there is between the creator and the creature we might think that a certain element of humiliation permanently attaches therefore to the incarnation humiliation but the truth is that now no humiliation attaches to him in his glorified humanity and why if the distance between the creator and the creature is so great how can it be that no humiliation belongs to the incarnate Christ in his exalted glory well the reason is the uniqueness of the commission he undertook and the perfection with which it was accomplished

I say the uniqueness of the commission that he undertook and the perfection with which it was accomplished super eminent and transcendent glory attaches now to his very incarnation because only as the incarnate could he have fulfilled this unique commission and only as incarnate could he have perfectly fulfilled the office of servant he is exalted far above all principality and power and might and dominion and every name that is named not only in this world also in that which is to come not only in this age but also in that which is to come now the apostle has here delineated for us the great pivots of the mystery of God it is high and heavenly doctrine and for that reason of little appeal to dull minds and dark hearts it is the mystery that angels desire to look into they are not partakers of the specific benefits of redemption because they don't need them but they desire to look into these things and their bliss is greatly enhanced indeed by the redemption that Christ has brought but it is also my friends the delight of enlightened and humble souls they love to explore the mysteries which bespeak the glories of their redeemer there is a direct line from these great themes these high and exalted themes to the most elementary duties of the

Christian vocation oh what folly people speak of doctrine as being impractical of course we may make what we conceive to be doctrine very impractical but it isn't because doctrine is impractical this is the great lesson that is emblazoned on this text as on many others we had the time to adduce them there is a direct line from these great themes to the most elementary duties of the Christian vocation the humiliation of Christ is here appealed to in support of considerate and selfish regard for others think not everyone of his own things but everyone also of the things of others let this mind be in you which was also in

Christ Jesus and you see it is therefore on the supreme example of our Lord that the basic virtues of the Christian life are nurtured and it is a great lesson of our text as of numerous others and it is significant as was mentioned last night very properly by Mr.

Alexander it is significant that what was unique in Jesus undertaking is the pattern there can be no repetition or duplication of what he had done to have the mind of Christ to have the mind that was in Christ Jesus is not mimicry of his action it would be blasphemy to have the mind that was in Christ Jesus is to be animated in our vocation and in our relations to others by that mind that was exemplified by him in his inimitable commitment and in that commitment that has no analogy there is no similitude in the whole of history or throughout eternity our

[41 : 31] Lord's incomparable self humiliation accords to the humble mindedness required of us the highest sanction and with that I must leave it it is enough for the disciple to be as his master and the servant as his lord and it is just the uniqueness the inimitableness of the lord's own action as the uniqueness of his commitment that gives added sanction to that which is ours in our very humble and common sphere of activity the adalah aj