

PHILIPPIANS Part 7: First Christian Hymn 07.18.10

Jillian Reads Philipians 2:5-11

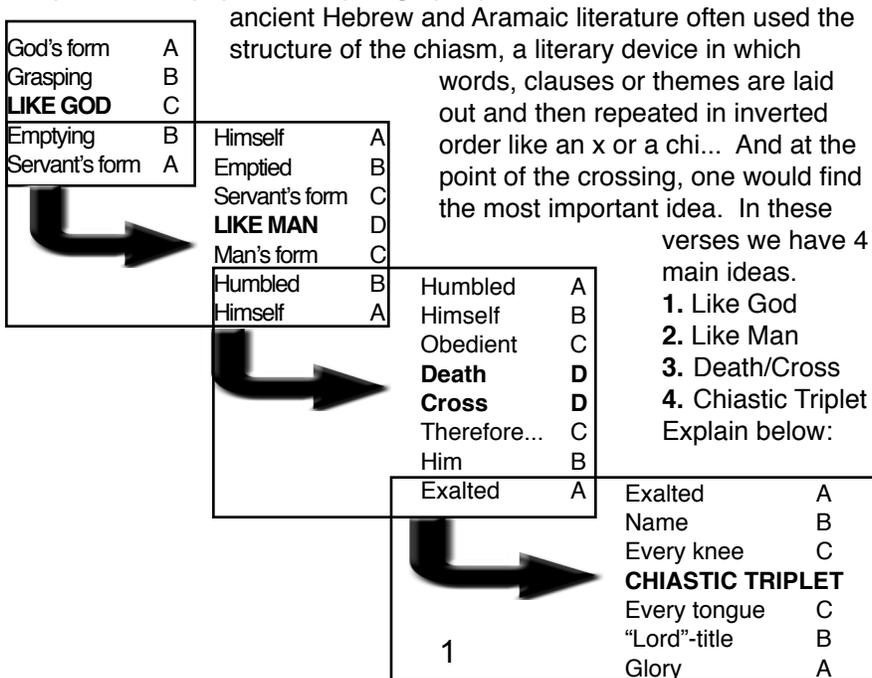
Intro: Thanks Jillian. What you just heard read to you may be the very first Christian hymn ever recorded! I love hymns. I actually keep a hymnbook near me in my basement office and sometimes I'll get it out and sing as a way of preparing my heart for my Quiet Time with God. There's something about hymns containing rich theological teaching in a structured format that helps me to remember great truths.

When you and I think of hymns we think often think of 4-stanza songs written in the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries. However, hymns have been around for a long time. The gospels Matthew (26) and Mark (14) both tell us that before Jesus and his disciples went to the Garden of Gethsemane they sang a hymn together. When Paul and Silas were in the Philippian jail, beaten and in stocks, they sang hymns. In three of Paul's letters (1 Cor. 14:26, Eph. 5:19, Col. 3:16) Paul includes the singing of hymns as part of the Christian worship service.

There's a lot of confusion about the difference between Hymns and Praise Songs. **ILL - Read "A Funny Little Story about..."**

Philippians Hymn. Musical styles change. But the idea of taking theological truth and structuring it in a memorable way and poetic way - that hasn't changed in 2,000 years. When we read Philipians 2:6-11 in some English versions, like the ESV, just show a paragraph, so you'd never know there is anything more to it. Other versions, like the NIV, show the verses like a poem, but it's still really hard to see any rhyme or meter to it. I'd like to spend just a few minutes showing you what you might see if you were a 1st century Greek reader.

To do that I have to explain to you the idea of the chiasm. When you and I learned to write, we were given a structure to follow: thesis statement, three supporting statements, concluding statement. If you want to know the point of the paper or the paragraph, you read the first line. But



1. Like God
 2. Like Man
 3. Death/Cross
 4. Chiastic Triplet
- Explain below:

Transition: I was explaining this to Nate on Thursday and he told me after a while that his head hurt. My point in showing you this is #1 - to let you know about the chiasms so you might be able to study the Bible even better, #2 - to give you the idea that theology, poetry, and hymnology have a long history going back well before the 16th century, and #3 to give you an outline for the rest of our evening.

Transition Redux: We must never lose the practical, ethical teaching that Paul had in mind with these verses. Verse 5 is a key, hinge verse! Remember last week we talked about how to be one-minded. Humility was the key. We should do nothing out of selfish ambition or from empty glory, but in humility consider others better than ourselves. How do we do this? Paul says in verse 5 that our model should be Jesus Christ. That we should have the same attitude, the same way of thinking as Jesus. Then Paul gives us verse 6-11 as the example. Perhaps this was already a hymn sung by the early church. Perhaps Paul wrote it himself. We don't know. What we do know is that this wasn't simply theory or theology with Paul. It was a call to ethical living. Our life should reflect Christ's life. So how do we apply this?

How Do I Have the Mind of Christ?

1. In Christ, I know I can act toward others LIKE GOD without presuming to act "all god-LIKE."

"He had equal status with God but didn't think so much of himself that he had to cling to the advantages of that status no matter what." Philipians 2:6 MSG

This is a great theological truth that Jesus, as the second person of the Trinity, has the same μορφή (morphē), form, essence of God as the Father AND YET INEXPLICABLY, did not think equality with God was something to be grasped. This "grasping" word is ἀρπαγμός harpagmós and can only be found here in the NT. Its meaning is to plunder, or to hold on by force. That's why Eugene Peterson translates "cling to the advantages" of his status.

Somehow, if I want to live with the mind of Christ, I must learn to live in such a way as to not *cling to the advantages* that I may have over someone else. As people, we all have advantages that we use sometimes to put ourselves in a position of authority over someone else. Education, wealth, clothing, cleanliness, health, age, clubs - all are ways we use to "Lord it over other people," to "show our power." **But Jesus...**

Jesus called them together and said, "The other nations have rulers. You know that those rulers love to show their power over the people, and their important leaders love to use all their authority. But it should not be that way among you."
Mark 10:42-43a NCV

Consider that Jesus did not use the obvious status of his GODness to his own advantage. He remained hungry for 40 days, but fed 5,000 men with just two fishes and five loaves. As the creator of the universe, omnipotent and omnipresent, he could be anywhere and everywhere anytime he wanted. But he limited himself to a daily walk with his

disciples. The Bible tells us that he could have called 12 legions of angels, but he submitted himself to death on the cross.

Transition... What natural status do you enjoy over others? Do you use it for yourself or to help others? Is your education for your advantage or for others? Are you a boss for your benefit or for your employees?

2. The more Christ-minded I am, the more **SERVANT-MINDED** I'll be.

“...but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men.” Philippians 2:7 NASB95

We're told that Christ “emptied himself.” We struggle with the understanding of this. The NIV and ESV says “he made himself nothing.” We believe that Jesus was fully God and at the same time fully man. But in order for him to really become a bond-servant, he had to empty himself of his privileges of divinity. The ancient Greeks had stories about the gods sometimes coming to earth and acting like a man. But at any point they would surprise men with their god-like powers of destruction and anger. Jesus, on the other hand, emptied himself, being made in the likeness of men... why? So that he might serve others. And Jesus told us that if we want to have his mind and his attitude that we must also have this servant mindset:

“Whoever wants to become great among you must serve the rest of you like a servant.” Mark 10:43b NCV

This is the Christian mindset. To become all that we can become... to learn all that we can learn... to do all that we can do, not for ourselves and for our own benefit, but for others and their benefit. **Transition...**

3. It's not what I know that matters so much, it's what **I DO** with what I know that will please God.

“And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” Philippians 2:8 KJV

Jesus came to earth and died for us of his own free will. No one forced him to do it. But (and this is a mystery) he also was obedient in this act. In fact Paul emphasizes this so we won't miss it. He wasn't just obedient, but he was obedient *unto death... even the death of the cross*. There was execution that was more horrible than execution by the cross. Yet Jesus obeyed to the nth degree. In this he was setting the example for you and for me, because Jesus told us that obedience is a big part of our faith.

Often we get messed up in our thinking about what *exactly* this obedience will require of us. There certainly have been times that God chooses to speak directly to men with very specific instructions about what they should do. We hesitate because we think we'll become an Evan:

Play Evan Almighty movie clip [1:04]

While this could be the case, our obedience is usually much more a matter of obeying the things that Jesus taught us.

Jesus: “If you love me, you will obey my commandments.” John 14:15 GNT

We’d rather think of our love for Jesus as some mushy, emotional, unmeasurable thing. But Jesus was quite clear. If we love him we will obey his commandments. John: this was how we show love to people:

“By this we know that we love the children of God: whenever we love God and obey his commandments.” 1 John 5:2 NET

Without oversimplifying, there are two things that are important here. #1 - Knowing what Jesus commands. We find that in this book (Bible), which means we need to know what is in here. And then #2 - DOing what it says. Obeying Jesus’ commandments. Sometimes we are satisfied with the KNOWING part without the DOING part. Jesus knew what His Father required and he obeyed. We must do the same.

This might seem really difficult if it weren’t for the last part of this:

4. I remember always that JESUS IS COMING AGAIN.

“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 confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”
Ephesians 2:10 NIV

The apostles and Paul and the early church and all the early church fathers lived with the daily expectation that at any moment Jesus might be returning. This impacted them (and should impact us) in two fundamental ways. First, we want to always be prepared. We want to always be acting in such a way that if Jesus were to physically walk into our life and watch us at this exact moment, that we would not be ashamed. We want to be doing and talking and living and thinking with the same attitude, the same mind of Christ.

But there is a second impact of this attitude that at any moment Jesus might return - because we desire to give all glory to God the Father for what His Son and His Spirit have done in and through us. Because of our lives there might be more than just ourselves who would be part of the many who would exalt Jesus’ name, who would bow at his feet, who would confess that Jesus is Lord.

Ask Nate and Trisha Williams to come forward. We are going to sing a favorite song of ours here at Church Requel: “The Sweetest Name.” Some believe that these verses tell us that God the Father will give to Jesus a new name. I don’t know if that’s the case or not. But what is clear is that we will all exalt and praise and give the highest place and honor to Jesus because of what He has done. There’s no reason to wait until that day though. We can proclaim right now that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Let’s sing.