

The Model Mindset

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[0 : 00] Let's pray as we sit. May the words of my lips and the meditations of all our hearts be now and always acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our strength and our Redeemer.

And tonight I pray especially that you'll give me clarity and that God will give you understanding. In Jesus' name, Amen. Amen. So, it's a wonderful passage we've got to look at tonight.

And it's not a very straightforward one. In fact, I've never pitched on any passage which seemed to have so much written in the commentaries about so few verses.

I mean, if I were to meet all the people who'd written these very complicated thoughts about this passage, I think I'd feel like a lion in a den of Daniels.

So, I want to put up the passage that will come up on the screen in two versions. I'm going to spend about five or six minutes thinking about the details of the meanings of the words.

[1 : 13] I wouldn't normally do this, but I hope it's appropriate this once. And then I'm going to think what it actually means for us which will be a lot more exciting and a lot more encouraging. So, I put it up in two versions there.

One is the version that I had as a child, the RSV. And the other version is the version that it's not actually quite what you've just heard. It's the new version of the NIV and it's subtly different.

There are subtleties in the meanings of the words. And I think I can say that I don't think the RSV is wrong. They are reasonable translations of the different words.

But actually, there's a significant difference between these two. And I want to think out how these different translations come to be and why you might want one rather than the other.

And there's about half a dozen different, about four major differences. Much the most important is the first and much the most difficult one is this question of the word form.

[2 : 12] Morphe in Greek, we know words like metamorphosis and all those sort of things. Morphe was the word that you could use when you talk about a classical God appearing in different forms.

I think perhaps that's the picture you'd all have. Unfortunately, that doesn't seem at all a useful thought in this context. So I don't think that's what it does mean.

The best and most helpful thing I find to help me to interpret the word morphe is this. There's a Greek verb, metamorpho, which is the one that you get metamorphosis from and all those sorts of things.

And it's used a couple of times, well, two or three times in the Bible. And it's used once of Jesus' transfiguration. That's metamorpho.

That's when, at the transfiguration, his outward shape, form is changed. You see him glorified.

That's metamorpho. But, and this is the important point, it's also used in Romans 2 when Paul says, be transformed by the renewing of your mind.

[3 : 24] Now, if we have renewed minds, we don't actually transform outwardly. Well, perhaps you become happy Christians or something. But we don't have a completely different sort of outward appearance.

That's an inward change. So, both of those are changes of morphe. Now, so I don't think we can say for certain from just this one word what it means.

But in the context, and especially in the context of Scripture as a whole, I'm going to go with the new NIV version, being in very nature God. In other words, it's talking about Jesus' inner self expressed externally.

That's what Moulton and Milligan says. It's the form which truly and fully expresses the being that underlies it. Or Moul says, it's an appearance which is a manifestation.

So, I'm going to go with morphe, meaning very nature. And I think that will help us later on.

Secondly, that's much the most difficult one.

[4 : 26] If you cope with that, the rest is easy going. Now, the next one is, did not consider equality, we haven't quite got to Keno'o yet, sorry, who did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage, is the version that is in the NIV.

But the traditional translation is, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped. That's the version that Lisa read us tonight. Same translation. Now, this is a rare word.

Harpagmos is not common. And it just generally means something to be grasped. Well, that doesn't really make very good sense of the passage.

I mean, Jesus was God, so equality with God was his, so why would he need to grasp it? So, but there is at least one text outside Scripture, which uses it to mean an advantage.

did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage. I'll definitely go with that translation. That's the new NIV again. Thirdly, and this is the one that will come up in a moment, is this question of emptied himself.

[5 : 41] Keno'o is the word there, and it does mean to empty. That's the literal translation. No one can really object to that.

But it's not used in the Bible. It's used four times by St. Paul. It's never used to mean a literal emptying of something. It's always used in a metaphorical sense.

It's always used of nullifying something, making it of no account, depriving something of its proper place or use. So, emptied himself doesn't mean he subtracted something from his Godhead.

It means that he made himself nothing. That's a much better translation. I'm going to go with the new one again. How surprising.

I should like the new one each time. Not like me at all. And you know, the thing is, and David Jackman put this very nicely, what's happening is addition, not subtraction.

[6 : 43] Jesus, God from all eternity, is becoming man. He became man. That's the addition. It's not a subtraction.

It's not that he's losing some of his Godhead. And then we've got just a few more phrases.

Taking the form of a servant, that's got to be the same. Whatever you say, the first time you have to say it. The second time, they're both morphe. Being made in human likeness, that means becoming a real human being.

It doesn't mean he was like a human. He was actually a human. And being found in appearance as a man, doesn't mean he appeared to be a man, but wasn't. It means he actually was a real man.

That's the point. That God from all eternity, the Lord Jesus, becomes a human being for us. I think the rest doesn't have difficulties.

[7 : 42] But there's one more point. And this is the thing that's got me really excited this week. The one really exciting thing hasn't been all these other things. It's that very first line. Let's go back to the top. Who being in very nature God, or who though he was in the form of God.

Now I always grew up with, as I say, the right hand one. That somehow, it seemed that we were talking about although he was God, he did something. But, it doesn't say that in the Greek.

There's no kuyper, no special word that says it's concessive. It is simply being in the form of God. It could just as well, I'm not saying it definitely is, I'm just saying it could just as well be causal.

Something like, because he was God. Because he was God, he did these wonderful things for us. It came out of his Godhead.

Not somehow despite it, but because of it. I found that very thrilling. But, although I had to say all that, well I felt I had to, and I hope that you didn't find it too hard going, I think it actually rather misses the point.

[8 : 54] Because Paul's point isn't about complicated Christology. I think there is complicated Christology, I think it's very exciting. But I don't think that's the point he's making.

So now what we're going to do is we're going to hide all that, and we're going to go on to the next one, and we'll just take one translation and live with it, because that's much better. And it's the one we're going for. We're going for the 2011 version.

And I hope you can live with that from now. And that's what I'm going for, and that's what we're going to work with. And then if we do that, we might start by saying, we get to my first point, and it says, Behold your God.

When we look at this passage, which we've begun to unpack a few words and a few thoughts, we suddenly realize that God is so different from what we might have imagined.

God is so different from us, so different from Adam, who did grasp for forbidden fruit. The real God, the living God, made himself nothing.

[10 : 05] He humbled himself. He was obedient to his father, willing to go even to the cross. When the Greeks invented gods, they made them just like us, only more powerful, even more lustful, even more violent.

But they were just like us, only more so. So, Dick Lucas puts it like this, when we imagine animals, we make them just like us.

When we think of poo, and piglet, and kanga, and roo, we've imagined what animals are like by actually describing ourselves. I don't know which animal you picture yourself as.

Don't spend the rest of the sermon thinking about it, because that would be really unhelpful. But we make them like us, just like the Greeks made Zeus and co, just like us.

But the extraordinary thing is, that God isn't the God that we would have invented. We could never have invented God like that. We'd never have invented a God who came down, lived among us, came down in order to sacrifice himself.

[11 : 28] He didn't stop being divine. He lived out what it meant to be divine. He died to bear the weight of your sin and mine.

The God of self-giving love. But the extraordinary thing is, that that's not the end of the story. And that's what comes out in the passage.

Therefore, God exalted him to the highest place. the cross was a victory. Yes, in a complicated way. But perhaps, to go back to last week's passage, we might put it like this.

One of the commentators, one of the sermons I listened to, put it like this. On earth, the Son looked out for his Father's interests.

His Father had a plan, and Jesus walked to the cross in fulfillment of that plan. That's his obedience. He looked out for our interests.

[12 : 32] He came to that cross to bear our sins in his body on the tree. That's love. And then the Father looked out for Jesus' interests and raised him from the dead.

He's ascended into heaven and gave him the name that is above every name. That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow. Commentaries again have several pages on what the name is.

Is the name Jesus? But he already had that name. Most likely the name is Lord. It seems to, that seems to be the general view, which is the New Testament version of the divine name.

Spelt Y-H-W-H usually. Y-H-V-H. I'm not going to say it because certainly to the Jews it was too holy to say and the vowels aren't certain because they'd forgotten the vowels because they no longer said it.

But probably it is Lord. And it says here that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow. Now one of the questions comes, well, is everyone going to rejoice when their knees bow?

[13 : 51] Let's turn to Isaiah 45. A few verses will come up on the screen in a moment. There we are. Turn to me and be saved all you ends of the earth for I am God and there is no other says the Lord.

By myself I have sworn my mouth has uttered in all integrity a word that will not be revoked. Before me every knee will bow. By me every tongue will swear.

You see how the Lord is saying that about himself and then it turns out to be true of Jesus who is the pre-existent who is God from all eternity who comes down to us.

They will save me and the Lord alone a deliverance and strength. All who have raged against him will come to him and be put to shame. But all the descendants of Israel will found deliverance in the Lord and will make their boast in him.

Do you see what that's saying? It's saying that everyone will bow but not everyone will rejoice.

Those who trust will make their boast in him but those who have raged against him will bow but sadly.

[15 : 02] And I suppose that's one of the challenges to evangelism. Now is the moment. Now is the time when people can respond. Can bow the knee here and now. So that on that great day there will be the people who say in the Lord alone a deliverance and strength.

And if we go on to the next one to go back to the passage itself. At the name of Jesus every knee should bow on heaven and on earth and under the earth. it's not specified as to whether that means angels the living and the dead.

That's one possibility. Don't spend too long wondering. It just means everybody and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord. We've got the whole sweep of history from before creation through to the second coming.

All summed up. But you see even that isn't the main point tonight. Getting a better view of God enables us to sort our lives out.

But actually Paul's point isn't that. Paul isn't writing to give a lecture on Christology but he's writing to set forth Christ as an example.

[16:27] Paul. He's not so interested in Christ's perfect achievement although that's mentioned. It's Christ's perfect example. I'll have the next one up which only has a change of the title.

Mindset if you prefer. I've just gone for attitude. I thought it was a more common word. Christ's attitude is to be our attitude. Didn't you think it was interesting that when Paul spoke of the cross it must be one of the very few times when Paul speaks of the cross and doesn't say Christ died for us. We don't seem to be looking at it in the usual direction. We seem to be looking at it more from perhaps as it were from Christ's point of view. Christ is walking to the cross.

That's what we're seeing. We're thinking about what it cost Jesus more than what its benefits are for us. You see Paul has been writing to the Philippians because of the threats that they faced.

At the beginning of the letter he writes about the external threat from persecution. But since chapter 1 verse 27 he's been writing because of the internal threat from disunity.

[17:43] He urges them to live in a manner that's worthy of the gospel of Christ. That involves standing firm with a common purpose against the attacks from outside.

Then the beginning of chapter 2 he urges them to be to avoid all kinds of internal division. To be like-minded. Humbly regarding others as more important than themselves.

Looking out not only for their own interests but also for the interests of others. I've already referred to this passage which seems to talk about which you could interpret as Jesus looking out for other people's interests and then the father looking out for his.

We might think it was more efficient if we all just looked out for our own interests and that would work out really well. But we're not told to do it like that. We're told to look out for other people's interests and then hallelujah they'll look out for our interests and that's the way that it's supposed to work.

And he says that Christ is our model. Whereas the Philippians it seems acted in a spirit of ambition thinking themselves better than others studying how to get on and promote themselves.

[19:04] Christ's way is very different. It's that self-sacrificing self-emptying putting other people first. Once we start to think about that it gets really tough because we start thinking what that means for us.

Now I'm going to give some examples I got from the Bible to make it easy. Especially some of them we're going to have to really apply exactly in this form.

But I suppose one example would be when Paul writes to the Corinthians and there were certain Corinthians who reckoned that they had the right to eat cultic meals in the temple and pagan temples even though some brothers had lapsed into idolatry.

And what Paul says to them is simply having a right to do that doesn't mean you should use it. You have to say no to yourself because it would damage other people.

Similarly the Corinthians were urged to give financially and he says you should give financially because of what Christ has given for you in his incarnation.

[20:22] Not sure whether I should use this one but I will anyway. And husbands are to love their wives as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for it for her.

Christ is the example. His attitude is the one that we're to use in all we have to do. And to move from those big ones those big examples the danger is I now move to things that are trivial.

When we want to be servants where we think of setting out the chairs or welcoming or making coffee or hospitality and those are acts of service and are particularly a challenge to those of us who stand at the front and like to occupy ourselves in Greek texts that we're called to be servants to.

Here's another example. As I came tonight I got two texts I think one was an email one email and one text and one of them I had spoken to someone this morning and said can you make coffee for me at nine o'clock next week and I said I'll ring your wife to ask her I before I even had a chance someone sent me an email saying yes Mary and I will make coffee for you next week and I thought

wonderful that was really serving it saved me a whole phone call it seems awfully trivial but I could spend hours waiting for people to respond to things and I got another one from someone else who said no I can't do this but they responded you know they didn't think themselves too important to respond sometimes you know we can feel we're too busy and too important we wouldn't say I'm too important I hope I don't say that but sometimes I fail I'm just too busy and someone else suffers as a result

Augustine put it like this should you ask me what is the first thing in religion I should reply that the first second and third is humility humility humility humility I want to tell you a story it's a story about camp SU camp in the summer and well my role has for 20 years been to be the house manager and as house manager I organise the washing up and such like the cleaning and all these sort of things not because I have special gifts in these areas and basically you have a leader and a team of campers perhaps five campers and I give them simple instructions I used to just say right what you do is you know there's a mop and a floor and you get the campers to mop it or the washing up you just go and there's a dishwasher and there be a pile of plates and you just go for it and then I would come around each day to try and encourage and make sure that the groups were functioning well and what I would find was that the leader was mopping and he was very vigorous and enthusiastic or he was headies or she had her hands in the sink soap up to her elbows you know and there were a lot of campers standing about because there were lots of leaders who were exercising servanthood in some sense but actually there was no chance that the morning meeting could happen on time or that we could get to a game because basically it wasn't working because the only way it would work would be if the leader exercised their leadership the leadership that they had been called to do so they exercised their service by leading and so in later years

[24 : 30] I would explain what could go wrong and tell them how it should actually be done and that they went to do most of it themselves because it wouldn't work of course there are other ways you can fail to be a servant leader you could just be in the leader's room with a cup of coffee and the times and your feet up that would also be a failure of servant leadership but actually I didn't find that was the problem the actual problem was all these servant leaders who failed to lead and now just after I've stopped doing it I now know the answer theologically to the problem because it's in this passage isn't it when Jesus Jesus is a servant leader and actually Jesus doesn't spend all his time washing feet literally Jesus actually is always a servant but he doesn't stop him being a leader he's actually very focused he knows where he's going he knows what he wants to do he knows how it's to be done and perhaps that can be a picture for us yes we need to be servants but if we've been given a gift of leadership we need to exercise that too so finally this is my last point and it's very short and

I it's a quotation I don't know who it's a quotation from the way to up is down it's certainly a quotation from Hugh Palmer but he may have got it from someone else for all I know and I think that's very helpful Christ showed us that the way up is to step down the way to win the praise of God is to serve others and that by giving a person receives by serving he is served by humbling himself he is exalted this is true of Christ but it's also true of Christians if we are conformed to Christ likeness in humility we will be exalted he will transform our weak mortal bodies to become like his glorious body by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control Philippians 3 21 it's not just in this passage that we see that the way up is down that's the way it goes it also appears in 1

Peter 5 verse 6 humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you or James 4 10 humble yourselves before the Lord and he will exalt you that's the way it works in God's economy and it's jolly difficult and we need to work on it ourselves so first I'll pray and then we're going to respond in a couple of ways Lord Jesus we thank you so much that you left the glory of heaven to come down and die for us thank you Lord but we're challenged that it's an example as well as a Christological marvel and we think of ourselves and our failure to look to the interests of others as we might and we pray that we shall not look to the interests of others not only as individuals but also as a church for we ask it in Jesus name Amen so we're going to listen