

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen. The text for our consideration this morning is taken from Paul's letter to the Philippians, chapter 2.

What brings you shame? When we come face-to-face with shame, we want to bow our head and turn away our eyes. You probably know what shame feels like. But have you ever felt shame because of someone else? Because of what someone else has done, or failed to do? Maybe anytime someone simply lets you down. Or, maybe someone you thought you knew well just didn't live up to your expectation for them.

This shame is sort of the way a lot of people felt about the Savior when he was on the cross. As Jesus was nailed to that cross, bloody and beaten, giving up his last breath, the people standing there hung their heads in shame as they turned and walked slowly home. Sometimes we are tempted to be ashamed of the cross. Now you might be thinking to yourself, "I'd never be ashamed of Jesus!" But the concept of rejection and defeat and death simply goes against what we naturally want to see. Especially from someone who means something to us. But in our reading from Philippians 2, Paul describes the nature of Jesus' shame, and explains what his humiliation and his exaltation means for us. This morning, Paul teaches us:

### **Do Not Be Ashamed of your Savior's Shame**

- 1. His shame gained the victory**
- 2. His shame gains the glory**

First, in the verses that come before this familiar text, Paul encourages the Philippians to love one another, to be one in spirit and mind, and to serve one another in true humility and selflessness. Paul says the prime example for this kind of living could only be found in Christ Jesus. That's where our reading picks up.

**In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage** (v. 5–6). If anybody ever had anything to be used to his own advantage, it was Jesus. Jesus is by nature God – he's eternal, all-powerful, and all-knowing, even when he was on earth. If anybody else on earth had power or prestige like that, he probably wouldn't give it up so easily. But Jesus wasn't seeking his own advantage. He had something very different in mind. **"He made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness"** (v. 7) By coming down to earth, Jesus placed everyone ahead of himself. He "made himself nothing." Literally, the words here mean that he "emptied himself." Now, he did not stop being God. But, for a time, he set aside the full use of his power and glory so he could serve us.

And then Jesus, **"being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!"** (v. 8). Jesus was found in appearance as a man—not a king. He did not come to set up a kingdom for himself. He said to Pilate, "My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36). He said it's from another place. Jesus himself said to his disciples to correct their misunderstanding: "The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Luke 9:22). That's not usually what a king does. But Jesus is a different kind of king.

Here—in Jesus' act of becoming obedient to death on a cross—here is the height of his humiliation. When we talk about Jesus' humiliation we are talking about that time when he lowered himself from his natural divine glory. He set aside that glory and took on shame, from his very first moments on earth. To be born of a woman and placed in an animal's feeding trough is not a glorious thing. To walk around with and associate with sinners is not a glorious thing. And to be betrayed by a friend, to be put on trial and mocked, and to be nailed to a cross is not a glorious thing. Those are shameful things. On the night of Christmas Eve we gaze in wonder at the child in the manger, with hearts full of joy. But something inside us says, "Really? This little baby is God?" Then again on Good Friday we look at Christ on the cross, the Savior of the world—but something inside us says, "Really? This despised man is God?"

But Isaiah prophesied that many would feel this way about Jesus. Long before Christ was born on earth, Isaiah wrote “He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by mankind, a man of suffering, and familiar with pain. Like one from whom people hide their faces he was despised, and we held him in low esteem” (Isa 53:2b–3).

What did Isaiah say? We hide our faces from him. Because this is not the image of glory that our society looks for. But the issue goes beyond just the image, doesn’t it? We know that the reason Jesus is on that cross is because of sin—because of the world’s shame. We all have to look at the cross and say, Jesus is on the cross because of *my* sin and *my* shame. “He was pierced for *my* transgressions; he was crushed for *my* iniquities (Isa 53:5a).” We bear shame every day for our sins. There are sins we commit that make the people around us ashamed of us, when we say things we shouldn’t, or act selfishly, or lie. And there are the secret sins we commit that make us ashamed of ourselves because we know God sees them: sinful thoughts and desires, or our doubt in God’s promises. And so we bow our head when we see the cross. We don’t want to believe that we put Jesus on the cross. We want to turn our eyes away. We don’t want to look, because we deserve the hell that Jesus endured on the cross.

But what does Isaiah say next? “The punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed” (Isa 53:5b). The Savior’s death brought us peace, and we are made alive. A few verses later God said through Isaiah, “After he has suffered, he will see the light of life and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities” (53:11). To be justified means that God now declares us innocent because of Jesus. God punished Jesus for our failures. And then when God looks at us, instead of seeing failures he sees Jesus’ perfect obedience, and he gives us life. **Do not be ashamed of your Savior’s shame, but believe that by his shame he gained us the victory over sin, death, and hell.**

### Transition

The height of Jesus humiliation was being crucified on the cross, forsaken by God. But earlier that morning Jesus had said to the Jewish high council, “But from now on, the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the mighty God” (Luke 22:69). Jesus rose on the third day. That’s what he said he would do. He proved his victory over death. And with that he secured the victory we will have over death. He finished his work, and his Father exalted him. Paul continues in our text,

**“Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name.”** (v. 9). When God exalted Jesus “to the highest place,” it proved that God accepted Jesus’ work on the cross. It proved that when Jesus said, “It is finished,” it really was completely finished. Sin had been fully paid for. When Paul wrote to the Ephesians he used these words to explain the exaltation of Jesus: God “raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is invoked, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church” (Eph 1:20–22). God the Father gave Jesus the ultimate seat of authority and complete charge over his Church, because Jesus won. We have no reason to be ashamed of Jesus’ victory.

What does it mean that God gave Jesus the “name that is above every name”? Something that Peter said helps us to understand. He confessed to the rulers in Jerusalem one day, “Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). Jesus is the only way that people are saved. The name “Jesus” itself means “he saves.” Jesus *earned* that name by what he did for the world. He was the star player in the contest and struggle for our souls, and he emerged with the victory.

Finally, Paul says, **“At the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father”** (vv. 10–11). When people recognize Jesus as their Savior—and billions of people have—we see these words fulfilled. Since the days Jesus walked on this earth until now, people all over the world have put their confidence in him and have confessed him as their Savior and Lord. There will still be times when we are tempted to be ashamed of Jesus. The

world will look at us and say—and maybe people have looked at you and have thought or said—“Really? You trust in someone who lived 2000 years ago and was nailed to a cross? You trust in this man as your Savior?” Because it doesn’t make sense to the world. And it doesn’t make sense to our sinful nature. But we have no reason to be ashamed of his praise, because the ultimate universal fulfillment of these words in Philippians is yet to come. We *will* see it happen on a truly world-wide scale. As Paul wrote, on the last day, *everybody* will bow on their knees and acknowledge that Jesus is Lord. Believers will do it joyfully, and unbelievers will do it reluctantly. The sheep and the goats will be separated, but all people will see and admit that Jesus is truly the Savior of the world. And on this last day, at the great triumph of the Son of God, we will certainly not be ashamed.

On that day, it will be **“to the glory of God the Father.”** Because it was the Father’s plan and work all along to reconcile people to himself by his Son. This glory which Jesus’ shame brings the Father – how could we be ashamed of it? The world hides its face from shame. The world doesn’t want to look at a bloody, rugged cross. Sometimes we feel the same way. But the man on the cross—our Savior—did not “lose the game” for us. He didn’t let us down at the final buzzer. He *won*. He holds the ultimate trophy. Rather than turning our head away we gaze at our Savior who hands the trophy to us.

One hymn writer properly captured how we should look at the cross. He wrote, “Here we rest in wonder, viewing All our sins on Jesus laid; Here we see redemption flowing from the sacrifice he made. Here we find the dawn of heaven While upon the cross we gaze, see our trespasses forgiven, And our songs of triumph raise.” *Songs of triumph*. The triumph of the Champion, our Savior. **Never be ashamed of our Savior’s shame on earth. Never be ashamed of the image of Jesus on the cross, because we see that his shame gained the victory over sin, and gains the glory—glory for the Father, glory for himself, and glory for you and me. Amen.**