

Phil 2:5-11

Can anyone tell me the most expensive holiday of the year

Who thinks Christmas costs too much

I can still remember the first time Jackie and I were able

To pay off Christmas without paying on Christmas

We had entered a new stage in our married life

We got so excited we went out and charged something big – not really

We all know that Christmas is the most expensive holiday

But we rarely think about the true cost of Christmas – how much it cost God

Today I want us to consider the real cost of Christmas

READ PHIL 2:5-11 - 2Cor 8:9

I am going to ask some questions, and I want your answers

Don't think too long – just say the first thing that comes to your mind

Company reorganized – two jobs open – one a promotion – one a demotion

Which one do you want

Promotion means new office – 2 offices – one bigger with window

Which office do you take

You can now eat in the executive dining room with special order meals

Or you can eat in the cafeteria

Where do you have your lunch

Do you see a pattern emerging here

We have an incurable desire to go up – to be more and to have more

Whether we realize it or not

Many of us have decided that climbing the ladder of worldly success

Is the way to fulfill our needs - both financial and personal

We believe that by succeeding and even excelling in the world

We will find our satisfaction and happiness

We are wired to go up and we fear losing what we have

So in times like these
With the job market in the toilet – and the stock market in jeopardy
Our nation and many Christians are in a funk
When they think about their future 70% of Americans are angry
Which really means that 70% of Americans are afraid
We are the richest nation on earth – the envy of other nations
And yet there is little satisfaction and happiness in this country
I have heard it said
That this recession is the worst thing that could possibly happen
The Bible would encourage everybody to step back
And question how true that analysis is
Scripture warns of the dangers inherent in the upwardly mobile life
The Bible tells us that prosperity diseases more souls than adversity
The Bible would tell you that every time you go up
You are in increasingly dangerous territory
In your relationship to God and your relationship to other people
It is easy to become self-reliant
Yet you could make a case that self-reliance is the motto of this country
And many Christians have bought into that philosophy
We love stories of people who overcome adversity and achieve success
People who pull themselves up by their own boot straps so to speak
But often success leads to an arrogant and independent spirit
So our success can be the seed of our own destruction
Self-reliance leads you to believe you no longer need God
And pretty soon you don't need your mate
And you have no time for your children
The only thing you crave is more
Of that which is separating you from real happiness and the ones who love you most
Jesus said – **What does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul**
In contrast to the problems of prosperity

It seems when the job market and the stock market go down
Openness to God goes up
As success falters so does self-reliance
As we see the country and our self-confidence shaken
We then begin to look outside ourselves for answers that can only come from God
No one wants the boss to tell you that you are being demoted
But spiritually the way up is achieved by starting down
That's how Jesus did it

Jesus willingly experienced demotion after demotion

We hardly ever think about it but
Jesus took a series of demotions for us
And becoming the Christmas Child was the first
Jesus began His journey in heaven and He willingly came to earth
And He didn't just do a fly-by – He actually took the form of a man
That is a huge step down
But He not only became a man He also became a servant
And He didn't serve for a few years
Then take the express lane back to glory
He served until He was tortured and crucified
Jesus died by the most torturous and awful form of execution ever devised by man
Because of His love for us Jesus took a series of voluntary demotions
From heaven to earth - from ivory palaces to a stable
From being Lord of the universe to becoming a man
From a man to being a bond-servant
From being a bond-servant to torture and the death of a cross
From being eternal to being murdered
If Jesus were just a man His life story would be a tragedy
Now when we consider who Jesus is
We realize just how big that first demotion was
We who know only life on planet earth have little realization

Of the great gap which exists between heaven and earth

We have nothing with which to compare the glory of heaven

And we have wrong ideas about what makes life worthwhile on earth

A few years ago I traveled to Columbus on business - it was a late night and at 11PM the manager of the Columbus office dropped me off at the hotel where his secretary had made reservations. It was one of the nicest hotels in the city. Only one problem - it wasn't the hotel she had reserved for me. Of course it was booked solid. The manager called around and found a room for me in a different hotel. Their car service took me to a not so nice motel on the outskirts of the city. I arrived around 1AM, with a 6AM flight. I made the flight. It was about a 20 passenger jet with 6 of us on it. The pilot's first words were that there would be no coffee service.

I flew from Columbus to Louisville having a one man pity party

We have become so accustomed to our way of living and our comforts

That we feel sorry for ourselves when we have to take any step down

Who would like to get rid of power door-locks on their car – or power windows – power steering – power brakes - CD player

There are those who won't buy a car unless it has heated seats

We get used to these things

We like our comforts and we want more – not less

Because we have only known earth and its comforts

We rarely reflect and little appreciate

What it cost Jesus to leave heaven and step into history

Heaven is an environment of unimaginable beauty

Heaven is a place where Jesus is worshipped continually

And obeyed instantly

Heaven is a place without sin or the effects of sin

No decay no death no sickness or injury

A place where you never get tired or have an ache

A place of perfect harmony

The sights sounds and smells of heaven are glorious

However when He awoke on earth – Jesus was in a barn

The first thing He smelled was manure and urine and animal feed

The first sounds He heard were that of domesticated animals

There was no glory – no Father – no angels to do His bidding
And the One who holds all things together by His power - lay helpless
In heaven Jesus had legions of angels waiting to do His bidding
Millions praising Him
He arrived on planet earth and there is none of that going on
Just some cows and donkeys and a few people standing around
In heaven He had known the perfect beauty and unity of the Trinity
Father Son Holy Spirit – uninterrupted perfection perfect intimacy
He wakes up on earth, and He is alone in a cattle trough
When Jesus was in Heaven all He had to do was speak
And whatever He said came into being – He had unlimited power
When He arrived on earth - He couldn't take care of Himself
He couldn't even speak
He was subject to the care and the discipline of men whom He had created
He had to wait on His mother to feed Him and to change His diapers
Almighty God infinite in power and holiness infinite in glory
Lay helpless among sinful men in a dirty feeding trough
Is it conceivable that Jesus did that willingly

As great a sacrifice as God made becoming a baby
That was not the end of the story
Jesus left glory and became a man – subject to all the trials of men
As God He could be anywhere at any time and all places at once
On earth if He wanted to go somewhere He had to walk
There was no central air conditioning – no indoor plumbing
He discovered what it feels like to be hungry and tired and ache
To need a good nights rest
He discovered what it is like to have people be rude to Him
The Son of God had never in all created history been hungry or tired
He didn't know what pain felt like
No one had ever been rude or Him

He hadn't heard so much as a cross word
No one told Him what He could do or couldn't do
But it happened to Him on earth and He took it
He suffered it without complaint
Jesus learned first hand
What it is like to live among a race of fallen men
In a world controlled by satanic principles
And He didn't just become a man living in a fallen world
He became the servant of men
When people called for Him he went
When they had a need – He met it
Hungry – He fed them - Sick - He healed them
Blind – He gave them sight - Dead – He raised them
Dirty feet – He washed them
And many found Him inconvenient – they didn't want Him around
When He taught them they rejected His teaching as too hard
He gave them the way to eternal life and they conspired to kill Him
The Lord of glory visited earth
And the only way to put it is - we hated Him
Isaiah put it this way – He was despised and rejected by men. He was like one of those from whom
men hide their face. We despised Him and we did not give Him the honor He deserved
In heaven Jesus was a full-fledged member of the Trinity
Angels sang His praises and awaited His commands
But down on earth men plotted to kill Him
They didn't like the way the giver of the Law lived the Law
So they tried to have Him break the Law - any law – Roman or Jewish
They accused the One who had come to save them from the power of hell
Of having a demon
His brothers mocked Him
Even His closest disciples didn't understand His teachings
Men who recognized something special in Him wanted to make Him king

But He wouldn't let them
He walked this earth surrounded by crowds and yet in human isolation
You see the Son of God had come to die and not just die
He had come to die on a cross – the cruelest form of execution
And not just die on a cross
The second Person of the Holy Trinity had agreed to become sin

Become sin

The Bible says - He who knew no sin became sin

Why would He do that for us – so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him

Jesus lived His life on earth being misunderstood by men whom He loved
Being despised and rejected by those whom He came to save
All the while knowing that a cruel death and the blackness of sin awaited Him
No one ever took as big a demotion as Jesus
Jesus Christ the only begotten Son of the Living God
The second Person of the Trinity
Who in the past had only known power and holiness and adoration
Winds up naked and beaten with a crown of thorns on His head
Bleeding and dying on a cross
Deserted by His friends - forsaken by His heavenly Father
And that was why He came
We have no concept of the gap between heaven and the manger
We have no concept of the gap between life in heaven and life on earth
So there is no possible way we can ever appreciate
The gap between heaven - and Calvary
When Jesus left the glory of heaven with the purpose of His own death
It was the most dramatic series of downward steps in all of history
And our text today states
That because of these willing demotions - God honored Him
Therefore also God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is

above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord

Some day every person will know just exactly who Jesus is

And every mouth will admit that He really is the Lord

Count on it – that day is coming – and maybe sooner than we think

Now let's think about this a bit

Why would the God of glory subject Himself to all that Jesus submitted to

Why did He do it

Jesus suffered all these indignities because of sin

Sin required that He come and it was not His own sin

It was your sin and mine

The Bible tells us that we have all sinned

But we don't really need the Bible to tell us that do we

Just think about your own life

Have you ever lied to anybody - have you ever stolen anything – have you ever had lustful thoughts

Scripture says that you are a lying thieving adulterer

You see the real problem we all face

Is the gap between our moral standing and God who demands perfection

Our inability to do that which we know we should do

And live as we know we should live

We cannot meet the minimum requirements of a holy God

Who says – **Be holy just as I am holy**

We cannot achieve that which God says we must achieve

And the consequences of failure are everlasting

Someone from the outside had to come and help us with that gap

How many candidates were there to choose from that might help us

Who could take our sin from us – who could pay its price

It would have to be someone who didn't have any sin of His own

You can't pay someone else's debt when you are already in debt yourself

That is why there was only one Person
Who could be a bridge between our sin and God's standard of holiness
And He is the one who came
Jesus Christ the Lord of glory
Stepped down out of heaven and into human history
He lived a perfect life obeyed the Law of God in its entirety
Then He died a horrible death – a death He didn't deserve
Because He was the only one able to bridge the gap between God and man
And His last Words on the cross were – It is finished
Jesus paid a debt He didn't owe because we owed a debt we couldn't pay
So what is the real cost of Christmas
You can't measure it in dollars and cents
It cost the Son of God His position
It cost the Son of God His glory – it cost the Son of God His life

Why would He do that – why would He leave so much
And suffer so much
What would drive Him to forego all the glories of heaven
Come to earth so that men could reject Him mistreat Him
And ultimately kill Him
Christmas is costly to us
We buy gifts for others for any number of reasons
Business obligations – habit – friendship
They bought us something last year

There is only one answer why Jesus came

Love was the motivation for all He left behind

Love was the motivation for all that He suffered
There was a sin problem to be solved - a gap to be bridged

And He came because He was motivated by love for you and me

For God so loved the world that He sent His only Son Jesus

Who agreed to come, so that He might be the sin sacrifice once for all time for all who put their faith in Him

The love that brought Jesus to earth was costly

The love He had for you and me

Caused Him to sacrifice everything

He literally emptied Himself

Love caused Him to leave all that He had and all that He was behind

He did all for you and me – it was for our benefit

But because of His actions

Jesus was raised to life by His Father and exalted above all else

I want to finish up with two points

The first is this – love is always costly

By its very definition – love is sacrificial – love serves

That is why in the passage preceding our text

Paul tells us to serve each other

Make my joy complete by maintaining the same love – how is love expressed

Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself. Do not look out for your own interest, but also the interests of others.

And who does Paul use as our example

Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus

Love costs – it takes something from you

It cost God His Son

It cost Jesus His position and His life

But my second point is this

Downward steps take us to a higher level of spiritual growth

The pastor of a large church surveyed the congregation

He asked the question – has there been a time in your life

When you experienced an increase in your spiritual growth

If so what caused it

The leading answer of what brought people closer to God – pain

It isn't answered prayer – it isn't earthly blessings –

It is trials and hardships that cause the greatest growth

That shouldn't surprise us

In the Christian life the way up is always – down – Just like Jesus

AW Tozer – The Christian soon learns that the victorious life is lived contrary to the world. He loses his life to save it. He goes down to get up. If he refuses to go down, he is already down, but when he starts down he is on his way up. He has most when he has given most away, and has least when he possesses most.

Have this attitude in yourself, which was also in Christ Jesus

Jesus said those who follow Him were not going to be like those who follow the world – **for he who wishes to be great among you shall be your servant, and whoever wants to be first shall be your slave**

The Christian life isn't striving to be great

The Christian life is voluntarily demoting yourself to be a servant

And our example is that baby in a manger

We sing the song – they will know we are Christians by our love – by our love – they will know we are Christians by our love

If I were to ask how Christian love is best evidenced to the outside world

How would you respond

The answer is – by servant hood

By our voluntarily demoting ourselves

That we might serve each other and the world

Between now and Christmas day – get demoted

Take a step down and demonstrate through your life
The love of Jesus to someone who really needs to receive it
Send a note or a card – do an act of kindness
Reach out and touch somebody with the love of Jesus
I am certain that it will increase your Christmas joy
And the person you reach out to will see Christ in action
This is the life you have been called to
Servant-hood – downward mobility – putting others needs ahead of yours
Your great example is Jesus
And the payoff is joy – For the joy set before Him Jesus endure the cross

So whenever you consider the cost of Christmas – consider the real cost

Do the math
Because sin required it Jesus took step after step downward
The first of these great demotions was becoming the baby in the manger
And the end result of all His demotions was joy