

Resurrection Sunday

The Name Above Every Name

Philippians 2:1-11

Mark Vroegop

So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so 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 (Phil. 2:1-11, ESV).

I wonder if you've heard of the "IKEA effect"?

IKEA, of course, is the home furniture and furnishings store with the crazy Swedish names for their products, amazing meatballs, and a winding pathway that makes shopping in their store to be more like you are taking a journey.

The IKEA effect is a psychological theory that suggests that you feel more connected to your purchase if you assemble it. If you've purchased something at IKEA, you know how this works. The furniture comes in a boxful of pieces, small parts, an Allen wrench, and an instructional manual with alien-looking figures. You have the opportunity to put all the pieces together.

In my experience, I not only feel more connected to my piece of furniture. I also feel more connected to my anger! That said, I appreciate the effort in creating a process that tries to help me feel more connected to my furniture.

Do you know about the "Easter effect"? Okay, I'm making it up. But consider with me what it would look like if you were more connected to the story of Jesus being raised from the dead. In other words, maybe I could ask it in the form of a question: "What effect does the resurrection of Jesus Christ have on how you live?"

Well, you might say: "I'm here on Easter." And that would be a great start. But, seriously, what's the big deal with Easter as it relates to our daily lives? I hope to answer that question today from Philippians 2. I hope to show you how the resurrection of Jesus Christ applies to life today.

To do that, I'm going to approach this text backwards—from the end to the beginning. We're going to unpack this text to see what we all can learn together.

Position: Highly Exalted (vv. 9-11)

This passage concludes with the exaltation of Jesus Christ. Verses 9-11 are the conclusion of a hymn that starts in verse 6. It was an historic confession of the early church, and the apostle Paul included it in this letter that he wrote to a group of believers around 60 A.D. It tells us four things:

1. **God highly exalted him** – Jesus is given the honor and right of ruling the universe.
2. **God gave him a name above every name** – He's given a title that fits with his authority.
3. **All of creation submits to him** – Everything is placed under his rule.
4. **All of creation acknowledges that he is Lord** – Everyone recognizes who he really is: the Messiah.

This is the concluding reality of Jesus's life. It's how the biblical story ends. He came to the world as a baby. He lived a perfect, sinless life. Jesus was arrested, beaten, and crucified. Three days later, he rose again from the grave. He's alive. That's the story of Resurrection Sunday.

But Easter isn't just about Jesus's defeat of the grave. The Bible links the resurrection of Jesus to his exaltation. The resurrection is about victory, honor, and triumph. Other passages in the Bible make this connection very clear.

... Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us (Rom. 8:34).

... and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places (Eph. 1:19-20).

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is linked to his exaltation. But it's not just that he won first place in a contest or like he was selected for a prestigious award. The empty tomb marked the ultimate victory of Jesus over everything that exists. He rules over the entire creation. Jesus now occupies the most authoritative, powerful, and permanent position ever known to the world. Every knee bows and every tongue confesses.

Separate what you know about Jesus for a moment in terms of his character and what he was like. Just consider this position and its power. It's stunning, breath-taking. The authority here would make power-hungry dictators covetous. Every knee is bowed. The honor given to him would make any affirmation-longing person jealous. Every tongue confesses that he is supreme. He's hailed as God, which he is. His power is total. There's no rival, no equal.

And the defeat of death is central to all of this. "He's alive" is not just the hopeful cry of his disciples. It's a statement about his power. He's immortal, exalted, and powerful. It's a breath-taking reality. That's why all over the world Christians are celebrating Easter today with great enthusiasm.

Model: Humility (vv. 6-8)

The message of Easter and exaltation of Jesus is stunning, not only because of his exaltation but also because of the path by which his exaltation came. Human beings love to hear the story behind how someone achieved their success. We love to read stories to learn their secrets. Yet the “how-to” behind Easter is countercultural. Actually, it’s counter-human. It’s central to Jesus’s life and the message of hope found in the Bible.

In short, Jesus’s path—the most powerful and exalted position ever known—was marked by humility. That’s how he did it. That’s how he provided a way for sinful human beings to be delivered. We see this in three ways.

1. **Willingness to be limited (vv. 6-7)** – Although Jesus was fully divine, he embraced the limitations of humanity. The infinite became finite. The all-powerful embraced weaknesses. The omnipresent embraced space and time restraints. The Son of God was treated with contempt.
2. **Willingness to be humbled (v. 8a)** – Jesus chose obedience to the Father’s plan at great cost to himself. He willingly embraced this path. Despite his right to the highest position in creation, he chose the path of suffering and degradation.
3. **Willingness to be crucified (v. 8b)** – Jesus was willing to die. That’s a scandal. God doesn’t experience death. He’s beyond it. Death reports to him. What’s more, it’s not just any kind of death. The death of Jesus is extreme shame—death on a cross. This meant a kind of death that was connected to the judgment of God and cultural shame. This section of the hymn ends with the word “cross” for emphasis.

The contrast in these verses is striking. It moves from “he was in the form of God” to “even death on a cross.” This is the path of exaltation, and it’s completely opposite of how our society works. People are exalted because they are talented, gifted, and connected. They make it to the top because they are relentless and ruthless.

This model couldn’t be more different. Sometimes our distance from the crucifixion of Jesus causes us to lose the “shock value” of how backward this plan is.

The first three stanzas do not lift up our eyes to the heavens to see the wonders of creation; they do not even lift up our hearts by showing us wonderful miracles of healing and deliverance; they take us down, down, down to the deepest, darkest hellhole in human history to see the horrific torture, unspeakable abuse, and bloody execution of a *slave* on a *cross*. This hymn celebrates the death of a *slave* on a *cross* because, although he is forever the one existing in the form of God, he is on that cross by his own deliberate choice to *empty himself* and *humble himself*.¹

¹ G. Walter Hansen, [*The Letter to the Philippians*](#), The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, England: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009), 158–159.

The pathway of redemption and the exaltation of Jesus involved a depth of humility that is hard to imagine. For those of us who are Christians, one day we'll see him, and we'll be stunned at what we behold. Our world seems so beautiful, and our humanity seems so advanced. But I know that we'll be blown away at the humility of the path he chose: to rescue us.

The empty tomb is so important. It's eternity altering and life changing. Yet it's so earthy and humble. I was struck by this reality when we visited "The Garden Tomb" in Jerusalem. It's not the site where Jesus was buried, but it's a real first-century tomb, complete with a stone. And as we took Communion on the site, I was moved considering the significance and simplicity of what we saw.

No palaces, grand halls, legions of soldiers, or gold-plated chariots. Everything changed through a surprising path. The path of the empty tomb was marked by deep humility. So, as we celebrate the victory of Jesus over death and the grave, we can never forget what preceded it.

Easter Sunday isn't just victory. It's also a model for the pathway of humility.

Command: Others-centered Living (vv. 1-5)

We arrive at our third and final consideration, and it's the main point of Philippians 2. The chapter has a flow to it that we're looking at in reverse order. Paul is writing to a church with an appeal for living in a particular manner. He issues a series of commands regarding others-centered living.

He uses the life and resurrection of Jesus as the rationale for his argument. If we were to follow the order of the text, it would be command-model-position. He uses the life and victory of Jesus to prove or validate his point. But for today (Easter), I wanted to reverse it because so often this Sunday is a wonderful day about something that happened 2,000 years ago, and we don't make the practical connection to our daily lives.

In other words, we treat the empty tomb as something true but not very relevant. But this text is incredibly relevant. How so? Easter shows us that the divinely designed path of humility led to victory. And it is a call to those of us who are Christians to embrace the same mindset. And it's otherworldly.

What does this text command?

- **Unified: Same mind, same love, one accord (vv. 1-2)** – Paul points to the example of Christ, the priority of love, and the participation with the Spirit as a call to be unified. He uses terms like "same mind, same love, full accord, and of one mind." This would be as unusual in Paul's day as it is in ours.
- **No selfish ambition or conceit (v. 3a)** – There's an invitation to put away actions that serve to puff up or promote themselves along with the pursuit of empty glory ("vainglory" – KJV). This is the pursuit of glory, position, prestige, power, and possessions.²

² G. Walter Hansen, [*The Letter to the Philippians*](#), The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, England: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009), 114.

- **Consider others more important and look out for them (vv. 3b-4)** – Paul is calling for a radical death to self that seeks to affirm, promote, care, strengthen, and help others. It’s a command to live with a others-centered perspective.

Remember that Paul makes this command in the context of demonstrating the way that Jesus lived and how he was exalted. The reason he cites this example is not only because it’s in the Bible and true. He references this because we need to be reminded that this way of living works. Why? Because this runs completely against the grain of everything in our society and our humanity. No parent has to teach their children how to say “mine.”

And so, if you are a Christian, as you celebrate Resurrection Sunday, can I remind you about the “Easter effect?” Jesus was exalted to the highest place. He was honored and glorified. And that path was marked by humility, sacrifice, and a deep concern for others. Your belief in the death and resurrection of Jesus is not merely a historical affirmation. It’s not merely a celebration of the victory that is ours in Christ. The resurrection of Jesus Christ tells us that humility, sacrifice, and an others-centered approach to life works! It the way of Jesus. And that’s important because everything in our culture is pulling us toward “following your heart,” looking out for yourself, and a deeply embedded individualism.

So, on this beautiful day of celebration remember the Easter effect.

If you are here and not a Christian, this is an important moment for you. The resurrection of Jesus means that a path for life change is available and waiting for you. The Bible tells us that we’re all sinners, and in need of a Savior. We desperately need someone who can change the orientation of our hearts, to make us new. How new? Receiving Jesus means that you trust in his sacrifice on the cross, that you believe he was raised from the dead, and that you need divine cleansing through the shed blood of Jesus.

And to those who receive Christ, he not only grants them forgiveness, but God also changes what they love and how they live. This is what it means to be saved. It’s what it means for Jesus to change your life. Why not make today that day? Why not make Easter 2024 the day where you give your heart and life to Jesus?

The tomb is empty and that changes everything. Jesus was exalted because he was humbled. And the Bible invites us to see how connected the empty tomb is to how we live every day.

“Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus . . .” This is the Easter effect.

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