

October Teaching Theme: Philippians

讲员 Speaker: Pastor William R Horne/Dong Wang

题目 Topic: Jesus the Self-Giving King

经文 Scripture: Philippians 2

Monthly Theme: This month, we are going through a 4 part series on the letter to the Philippians. The church in Philippi was one of Paul's early Christian communities founded on his second missionary journey around 50 AD, which we read about in Acts 16. Philippi was a Roman colony known for its patriotic nationalism and was strategically populated by Emperor Octavian (Caesar Augustus) with retired military veterans, ensuring the region's allegiance to the Empire. In this context, Paul faced resistance preaching the Gospel - that Jesus is the true King of the whole world, not Caesar. As a result, the Christian community in this region continually faced persecution even after Paul left. Fast-forward 10-12 years, and Paul finds himself under Roman imprisonment for the proclamation of this Gospel. The church in Philippi sent Epaphroditus to help provide and care for Paul, and this letter is what Paul sent back with Epaphroditus to the church community. All of this context is crucial for us to understand the nuances of this letter. Contained within this short letter is a profound posture and mindset for the people of God to follow.

十月 **October:** 新約書信: 腓立比書 **New Testament Epistle: Philippians**

October 3rd - 腓立比書 1 Philippians 1

October 10th - 腓立比書 2 Philippians 2

October 17th - 腓立比書 3 Philippians 3

October 24th - 腓立比書 4 Philippians 4

October 31st – 諸聖節 All Saints Day (雲彩般的見證人 The Cloud of Witnesses – 希伯來書 Hebrews 11-12:3)

Resources:

[Sermon Video](#) (English Service - Pastor Will)

[Sermon Slides](#)

[Sermon Video](#) (Chinese Service - Dong Wang)

[Sermon Slides](#)

[Bible Project: Philippians Overview](#) (English - 9:13)

[Bible Project: Philippians Overview](#) (Chinese - 8:44)

[If you have not yet watched the overview video, it is helpful to get the big picture]

Discussion Questions (Pastor William R. Horne):

- (1) Read Philippians 2 together. What observations do you make, and what stands out to you? How would you summarize the chapter?
- (2) Re-read Philippians 2:1-2. The first thing Paul wants us to be of the same mind about is the Gospel and our citizenship. What is the Gospel of Jesus Christ? Why do you believe it is important for us to be in unison about where our citizenship truly lies?

- (3) Re-read Philippians 2:3-4. The second thing Paul wants us to be of the same mind about is the value of others. How does Paul define “humility” here in Philippians 2? What is one practice we can adopt this week to “value others above yourselves”?
- (4) Re-read Philippians 2:5-8. How does Jesus exemplify what true humility looks like? How is God revealed in Jesus “emptying himself” to the point of death on a cross?
- (5) Re-read Philippians 2:9-11. What does it mean to you that Jesus is LORD? How does this claim change everything?

Important Notes (Pastor William R. Horne):

Notes on Q1: Again, as always recall the context of the letter, found [above](#). “Therefore” anchors us back into Paul’s command found in Phil 1:27 “Whatever happens, lead a life worthy of the gospel of Christ.” That is - whatever you do, whatever circumstances you face, strive to live a life consistent with the good news of King Jesus. See Paul calls us, to wake up every day with the resolve to be formed by the Good News of King Jesus and the Kingdom - not the different stories the world has to offer. So “living worthy of the Gospel” is always a question of growth and formation. What stories are forming me?

Notes on Q2: To be of the “same mind” means to be united in the same priorities, purpose, and goal. Being of the “same mind” DOES NOT mean we will have the same opinions about everything, but we will be like-minded about two foundational things: (1) the Gospel and our Citizenship and (2) the value of others.

The Gospel of Jesus the Christ is a royal announcement that Jesus is King and his Upside-Down Kingdom will reign forever. We have been invited to give our faith, trust, loyalty, and allegiance to King Jesus and join his Upside-Down Kingdom. Out of this good news flows all of the other beautiful truths we find in Jesus - like our deliverance from sin and death, eternal life, adoption into the royal family of God, and transformation through the Spirit. Key in this good news is the *idea of citizenship* - those who give their allegiance to King Jesus are now citizens of another Kingdom and are called to live by its vision and ethics through the power of the Spirit. This idea of citizenship is of supreme importance to Jesus followers living in cultures of strong patriotism and nationalism, like the church in Philippi was. Throughout the letter to the Philippian church, it is evident that the church community is not lacking love for one another. Paul’s concern is not that there is a lack of love, but that the existing love will be eroded by internal friction in the community by their not having the same mind about what it means to be the people of God in Philippi.

Notes on Q3: The Christian virtue of “humility” is not living life with a lack of self-esteem, but is the action of putting others’ needs and well-being ahead of your own. The world’s logic is to pursue prestige and self-fulfillment at the expense of others. Other people are only as good as what they can get me. That’s why we invest our time in “networking” instead of authentic community. The Kingdom’s logic takes the focus outside of oneself and truly sees, cares, and values others we encounter. The way of King Jesus prioritizes communion by creating belonging for the other. It moves towards a different type of gathering that breaks boundaries and crosses borders.

Notes on Q4: Jesus “emptying himself” not only bought our deliverance but also reveals what God is truly like. God is not like the picture of god found in the civil religion surrounding us that combines patriotism, power, and violence. These misconstrued notions of divine power have nothing to do with who God truly is. **God is not a being of “grasping, seizing, and self-interest,” but a God of self-giving for the sake of the other.** God’s majesty is most revealed and made known through the weakness of the cross -as he looked not to his own interests but to the interest of us. And we are most like God when we choose to “empty ourselves” on behalf of the other. And when we do this as a community, we function as the true Church of Jesus Christ.

Notes on Q5: This statement - the “name above every name” is incredibly rich both theologically and politically. But, it is often glossed over and not understood in our church spaces as it is used so often. Every knee will bow at the name of Jesus because he has been given the “name above every name” - LORD. Jesus Christ is LORD.

First, it would be abundantly clear to the Philippians the stark contrast between Lord Nero Caesar of Rome and Lord Jesus the Messiah. If Christ the servant has become Lord above all, then all other lords have been denied the place of ultimate authority. And if Jesus is worshipped as LORD, then the title and worship must be denied to Caesar, whose character is quite the opposite of “emptying oneself” on behalf of the other. If Jesus is Lord, then Caesar (and all other rules for that matter) are not.

Second, it would be clear for those who knew the Hebrew Scriptures, how striking this claim is theologically. Whenever one would read the Hebrew Scriptures and come across the name of God YHWH, they would read it as Adonai (which means LORD), out of reverence for God. This is why in many of our English Bible translations, you will see places where the word LORD is in all capital letters - indicating that the Hebrew word behind it is YHWH, the name of God. The Divine Name has been given to the Lord Jesus - the Suffering Servant Messiah.

The last line here, of Paul’s poem, is a quote from Isaiah 45:23. “Turn to me and be saved, all you ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other. 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. They will say of me, ‘In the Lord alone are deliverance and strength.’ ” Paul’s point here is very clear - that Jesus is God. In the crucified and risen Jesus, we discover that the one God of Israel consists of God the Father and the Lord Jesus! We then find out through Jesus’ teaching and the book of Acts that the one God of Israel includes the person of the Holy Spirit. The one true God exists in the mysterious 3-in-1 - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Trinity.

Thus, when we confess that Jesus is Lord - we are making a bold, universe-changing claim.