



The Mar Thoma Church Diocese of North America & Europe Christian Education Forum

Lenten Meditations

EXAMPLE OF CHRIST

Philippians 2:1-11

This second chapter of St. Paul's Epistle to the Philippians is one of the most poignant expressions on the nature of Christ and the immensity of the Incarnation. St. Paul urges the Philippians towards unity and "Christ likeness" in their relationships. He emphasizes that faith in Jesus Christ should be emulated through His character in all our interactions and relationships.

"In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus..."

Philippians 2:5

Having the Mind of Christ: Towards True Relationships

St. Paul envisions the life of the community being formed by the mind of Christ. In other words, a community of faith, which is characterized by a spirit of humility and loving service to one another rather than competition and seeking power. Thus, having the mind of Christ ought to change our perspective and thereby shape our relationships with those in our community and the world. In so doing, we are to surrender our pursuit of selfish fulfillment and adopt the role of a servant, in whom the virtues of humility and obedience are epitomized. Our self-centered pursuits, power struggles and yearning for glory do not honor the name of Jesus. Rather, by following Jesus Christ in identifying with the least and giving ourselves away in humble service to a suffering world, we honor "the name that is above every name."

Accepting the Mission of Christ: Towards True Humanness

Jesus Christ is not a passive victim, but a passionate victor who enters completely and willingly into His mission. He empties himself of all claims to divine glory and honor to not only become human, but to reveal true humanness. As such, His humility and sacrifice even to the point of a shameful death, unveils the virtuous character to which humanity may ascend. As this passage reveals, the mission of Christ is characterized by a mission of descent and ascent. That is, our liberation comes through Christ's voluntary descent into our bondage. Thus, if we want to become like Christ, we must understand how Christ became like us, and continues to come among us.

It is said that Cyrus, the founder of the Persian Empire, once had captured a prince and his family. When they came before him, the monarch asked the prisoner, "What will you give me if I release you?" "Half of my wealth," was his reply. "And if I release your children?" "Everything I possess." "And if I release your wife?" "Your Majesty, I will give myself." Cyrus was so moved by his devotion that he freed them all. In the same manner, sacrificial love, personified through Christ is the motivational power behind true humanness and relationships.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, You are my righteousness, I am your sin.
You have taken upon yourself what was mine.
You have set upon me what was yours.
You have become what you were not.
That I might become what I was not. (Martin Luther Poem)

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