

**MINISTRY BY MAIL**  
**Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship**  
[www.lutheranlccf.org](http://www.lutheranlccf.org)  
**Second Sunday in Advent, December 4, 2016**

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(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)

Hymns: 56, 105:2-3, 114, 351, 73:2.

Lessons: Isaiah 52:13 through 53:12, 1 Corinthians 2:1-16, John 19:1-20.

Sermon Text: Philippians 2:1-8.

Sermon by Pastor Robert Mehlretter

In the name of Jesus Christ, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

Last Sunday you were reminded that Jesus Christ is true God and true man. You heard briefly about his office, that is, his official duties as prophet, priest and king, and you were reminded that his work is called redemption.

In order for Jesus Christ to accomplish the redemption of mankind he had to be born as a man. In three weeks we are going to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ, God's Son, as a human baby.

If we look past all the decorations, all the worldly music, past all the hype to buy things, we still have a hard time seeing the genuine Jesus Christ in Christmas. At Christmas we see a baby in a manger, usually in idealized, perfect beauty and surroundings. But what kind of stable was Jesus born in? We don't really know, but it is probably safe to say it wasn't a sterile, clean, pleasant environment. Chances are that if you have been in a stable or a barn even recently, you probably wouldn't want to sit down on the floor and eat your lunch there. I suspect that the people of Bethlehem, and even the shepherds might have been shocked at what they really saw as the birthplace for a child, much as we should be shocked when we see a homeless person sleeping on the streets or under a bridge. I don't think that we would have wanted to stay in that stable any longer than necessary, to say nothing of having our baby be born there.

Today, let's remember that

**JESUS CHRIST REALLY, TRULY "HUMBLED HIMSELF"**

- 1. Jesus Christ, God's Only Son, our Lord, was conceived by the Holy Ghost.**
- 2. He was born of the Virgin Mary.**
- 3. He suffered under Pontius Pilate.**
- 4. He was crucified.**
- 5. He died, and**
- 6. He was buried.**

We confess in the Apostolic Creed that we believe "in Jesus Christ, his Only Son, our Lord; Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost; born of the Virgin Mary; suffered under Pontius Pilate; was crucified, dead, and buried." These are the words we use in the Apostolic Creed to speak of Christ's humiliation

The term humiliation is used when talking about Christ coming to earth so that he might live and die in a lowly way. Christ's humiliation means that Christ chose not to make full use of his heavenly power and glory from the time he was conceived until the time he died.

How did Christ humble himself? Christ humbled himself by the lowly manner of his conception, his lowly birth and life, his suffering under Pontius Pilate, his crucifixion, death and burial.

We must remember that Jesus Christ is true God as well as true man. Until that moment when he was conceived by the Holy Ghost into a virgin's body, he had existed only as true God and he is and will be true God forever. At the very moment of his conception, Christ was made man and he now also is and will be man forever.

His humiliation from exercising all of his true Godly, divine powers, was instantaneous. At the moment of conception he became a man. And so he was no longer only true God, but both God and man in one person.

Christ's humiliation did not only consist in this that he became man, for his humiliation came to an end with the burial of Christ, but he did not then cease to be man. Incarnation is not identical with humiliation.

Humiliation is a state or condition in which a person of high degree and position humbles himself and becomes lowly, as when a king, who has great power, refrains from using this power, and acts and lives like a poor peasant. We see what the humiliation of Christ is from our sermon text. ***"Being in very nature God"*** means that when the Son of God was made man, divine attributes, majesty, and glory were given to the human nature. The King James Version speaks of him being in the ***"form of God"***. That does not mean the shape of God. Because of this also the human nature was at all times ***"being in very nature God"*** because the entire person of Christ really and truly possessed divine majesty and powers. Occasionally Christ also showed his divine power, such as when he performed miracles and on the Mount of Transfiguration. But he ***"thought it not robbery to be equal with God,"*** (KJV) he ***"did not consider equality with God something to be grasped."*** This is a peculiar expression, and refers to a common practice in those days. Whenever a victorious general returned home with his army, and was allowed to enter the city in triumph, then he and his army would display the spoils of battle, and thus make a public show of the things they had taken from the enemy. To "think a thing robbery", therefore, here means to make a public display or show of it.

Ordinarily, people like to 'show off' with what they are and what they have, but such a mind was not in Christ. Although he really and truly was ***"equal with God"***, and possessed divine majesty and power, he did not make a public show of it. In the "days of his flesh" he did not walk among the people constantly displaying his divine glory so that everybody could recognize him as God, but he ***"made himself of no reputation"***. Although he was in the ***"form of God"*** he appeared to men in the ***"form of a servant"***. Although he was ***"equal with God"***, he was ***"found in fashion as a man"***. Christ could have appeared and acted among men in the full splendor of his divine majesty, but, like a king who hides his royal garments under a beggar's cloak, he hid the ***"form of God"*** under the ***"form of a servant"***, and for this reason he was not always recognized as the ***"Lord of glory"***. Thus the humiliation of Christ took place in his human nature, and it consisted in this that in this nature he did not always make full use of the divine attributes that he, as God, had from eternity.

This humiliation was necessary; for if Christ had not refrained from using his divine power, his enemies could not have captured and killed him. By the non-use of his majesty he "humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross". Like a giant who does not use his strength but allows little children to tie him down, so Christ did not use his almighty power but allowed men to put Him to death.

The humiliation of Christ also teaches us an important lesson for our life. ***"Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus"***. We should not be proud and arrogant, showing off before men what we are and what we have, but we should be humble in our mind and in our conduct.

The humiliation of Christ was not really steps, or degrees. Jesus humbled himself totally and completely when he was conceived. It is much more accurate to speak of Christ's humiliation as 'stages' – showing or illustrating the different ways throughout his life on earth in which Christ willingly humbled himself and was humbled.

Thus in the creed we speak of Christ being "conceived by the Holy Ghost; born of the Virgin Mary; suffered under Pontius Pilate; was crucified, dead, and buried."

Jesus was in every respect like other human children, except that first of all he was not begotten of an earthly father. Joseph was his foster-father but Jesus truly was the Son of God, who by the miraculous working of the Holy Ghost received a complete human nature from his virgin mother Mary; and secondly, he was a holy child, without original sin. His, and his only, was an immaculate conception. And, of course, he was also without actual sin, for he did not sin at all.

The Scriptures teach that in his earthly life Christ suffered poverty, and persecution and was despised. ***"For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich."*** 2 Corinthians 8:9 (NIV) He himself tells us ***"Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head."*** Matthew 8:20 (NIV) From our Old Testament lesson you heard: ***"He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows,***

***and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not.***” Isaiah 53:3 (NIV)

He also suffered under Pontius Pilate. Christ suffered extreme agony of body and soul. Jesus suffered in his body when scourged by the soldiers and nailed to the cross. Listen: ***“Then Pilate took Jesus and had him flogged. The soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on his head. They clothed him in a purple robe and went up to him again and again, saying, “Hail, king of the Jews!” And they struck him in the face.”*** John 19:1-3 (NIV) ***“Finally Pilate handed him over to them to be crucified. So the soldiers took charge of Jesus. Carrying his own cross, he went out to the place of the Skull (which in Aramaic is called Golgotha).”*** John 19:16-17 (NIV) He even had to carry his own cross to the place of execution.

But much greater was the suffering of his soul, for he felt the heavy burden of all our sins resting upon Him and experienced the full measure of God's anger against sin. All this suffering was laid upon our Savior by God Himself, who, making use of the wickedness of Judas, Caiaphas, Pontius Pilate, the soldiers and others visited on him the iniquity of us all. Therefore we with our sins, too, have mocked, scourged, and crucified the Lord.

And then Christ died on the accursed tree of the cross. Jesus did not merely faint from physical exhaustion or pain, but he really died. His soul departed from his body. Because the work of our redemption was finished, Christ now did the last thing yet to be done, he died. To die on the cross was a shameful and a cruel death. Men treated the Son of God like a criminal. He ***“was despised and rejected by men”***. (Isaiah 53:3), Forsaken and cursed by God he hung on the accursed tree. And, as the last stage of his humiliation, Christ's body was laid in the grave and remained there to the third day, but without seeing corruption, or decay. ***“But the one whom God raised from the dead did not see decay.”*** Acts 13:37 (NIV) This very action was foretold by the Psalmist: ***“you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay.”*** Psalm 16:10 (NIV)

In those words we see the hope and assurance of the Exaltation of Jesus Christ. And what did all this humiliation of God's Son made man accomplish?

The humiliation of Christ was done for you, for me, for all mankind. He took this upon himself, that we – all mankind – might be redeemed, and that having been redeemed, might serve him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness, just as he has risen from death and lives and rules eternally. This is most certainly true.

He humbled himself to serve as our Redeemer. God had condemned man to death because of his disobedience. The God-man Jesus Christ paid that price. Do not forget that his death and burial is the end of his humiliation. We firmly believe that Jesus Christ was also exalted in this way: he descended into hell; the third day he rose again from the dead; he ascended into heaven and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; From thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

It was necessary that man obey God's laws perfectly in order to be redeemed, to be rescued from death, from the power of sin, and from the power of the devil. Because no human could do that, Jesus Christ accomplished that perfectly for us in his humiliation. The time of our sermon today has come to an end. But just as the manger-cradle of Jesus must be seen in the shadow of the cross, so in future sermons we shall continue to examine Jesus Christ as he is presented in the catechism, seeing in the Babe of Bethlehem all the salvation mankind needs. May we believe that and receive that eternal salvation! Amen.