

The Nature of Jesus

by Gayle Erwin

The sermon explores the nature of Jesus as a servant, emphasizing His humanity, humility, and obedience to God, while challenging us to embody these traits in our own lives.

Duration: 38:18

Scripture: Mark 10:43

Topics: "Nature Of Jesus"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker reflects on the world's obsession with physical appearance and success. He observes a bodybuilding competition and realizes that none of the contestants are his age, highlighting the fleeting nature of physical beauty. The speaker then discusses a Christian ad featuring a man heading into obscurity to serve a God-forsaken tribe, emphasizing the world's misunderstanding of true success. The sermon concludes by emphasizing the importance of following the example of Jesus, who lived as a servant and humbled himself, and the ultimate reward that awaits those who walk the Jesus pathway.

Transcript

In our prior sessions, as we looked at the nature of Jesus as found in his greatest-in-the-kingdom teachings, and also in the passage we will continue in tonight in Philippians chapter 2, where Paul speaks of the mind of Christ, we've developed a rather interesting list so far, and I'm sure you have memorized it. Well, let's go through it. Just to make sure, the first one was servant.

He that is greatest must be servant of all, and Jesus begins to teach about himself as he says this. The second thing was not lorded over others. Very good.

And the third thing was example. You have to live and lead by example. And the fourth item was humble.

You guys are doing great. Humble, living honestly, being honest about ourselves, living without pretense, without hypocrisy. And the fifth item was as a child.

A child being humble, a child being unable to deceive, a child being unthreatening. And the sixth item was as the younger, exactly, which means understanding that we'll always be the disadvantaged ones, and also it means traveling light. Number seven and eight were last and least, which of course are quite similar.

And that completed the eight parts of his greatest in the kingdom teaching, and then that brought us to the passage we're in tonight, where in Philippians chapter 2, beginning with verse 5, Paul says to us, let this mind be in you that was also in Christ Jesus, or the same set of attitudes be in you that were in Jesus, or let the same sinful core of motivating being be in you that was also in Christ Jesus. And we've looked at three items, I believe, so far. Number nine was no force.

He used no force on us. He left us free to make a genuine choice. Number ten was no blind ambition.

He was not driven by blind ambition. His heavenly goal he achieved only by heavenly means. And then, number eleven, I think we ended on this one last week, it got rather wild and woolly, didn't it? He made himself of no reputation.

Now that brings us back to the passage that we were discussing. In Philippians chapter 2, let this mind be in you that was also in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, or he thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant. Now we've already talked about servant, so we don't need to repeat it tonight.

And then it says, and coming in the likeness of men, and being found in appearance as a man. Now, Paul isn't trying to tell us here that Jesus was a facsimile of God, nor that he was a hologram of God, nor that he favored God, or was as much like him as you were going to find here. No, he's trying to tell us that he was exactly like God, and exactly like man.

He wasn't a facsimile of man, but he was exactly like us. So I want to put as number twelve here, human. Now for some reason or other, that's a very difficult thing for a lot of people to consider, that he was fully human.

In fact, centuries ago, the church struggled with that very question. Who was he, back in the council of Chalcedon? Who was he? Was he God, acting like a man? Was he man, acting like a God? Was he half God, half man? Who was he? And they came to what I think was the proper conclusion, that he was fully God, and fully man. How can that be? I don't know.

But I like it. Now the fully God side, we seem to be able to handle that fairly well, but fully man, we still struggle with that. I'm amazed at how often people want to say, now wait a minute.

But the fact is, folks, the Bible tells us, right in the very opening chapter of John, the word became flesh, and dwelt among us. Flesh. What does that mean to you? Flesh.

Well, I know what it means to me. I am amazed at this thing called flesh. I have an ample supply of it.

Some years ago, I was in Bhubaneswar in India, the state of Orissa, which is the poorest state of India. And I happened to be walking around part of the city early in the morning. I like to do that when I'm in a foreign country.

And I came upon a dead cow, head in the ditch, body in the dusty road. It was bloated. Maggots were crawling.

Isn't this wonderful? And I don't know why, but I walked over to see it. Now, I don't have much of a need to see a dead cow. But I did.

It did not take long before I had seen all of it I needed to see. The odor overwhelming, as I walked away from it, I thought, oh, man. And then the Lord spoke to my heart and said, Gail, that's a picture of your flesh.

Flesh. And the word was made flesh and dwelt among us. This is amazing.

In fact, it goes so far as to say that God made him in the likeness of sinful flesh. Romans 8, 3, you can read it. Like us.

Can that be? I think so. How? I don't know. But I like it.

In fact, just to prove it, the Bible tells us in Hebrews that he was tempted in all points like we are. You ever thought you had any original temptations? Have you ever thought, oh, no, Jesus, you wouldn't be tempted this way. Not you.

But he was. In all points. Now, think of that, folks.

He was tempted in all points. Not most points, not a good number of points, but all points. Oh, yet without sin.

Isn't that marvelous? That just overwhelms me. Now, here is where you have to fasten your seatbelts. James tells us that we are tempted when we are drawn away of our own lusts.

What? You mean Jesus was built like us? That's exactly what I mean. That's why he's touched with a feeling of our infirmities. That's why we can come boldly before the throne of grace.

That's why, as we heard that song tonight, we can come within the veil because of what he did. Amazing. Now, that means he had a pretty well developed desire structure, didn't he? I don't know why, but I do not like peanut butter because I love peanuts.

So you can place a peanut butter sandwich by my bed tonight. It will be there tomorrow. I just don't have a desire for it.

But there are certain other things that would tempt me. Jesus was tempted in all points like we are, yet without sin. Awesome.

How could God take sinful flesh? How could he take that likeness and take the purity of himself and weld them together? It is impossible. It can't be done. I know, but he did it.

How? I don't know, but I like it. I like it. That's why he can plead our case before the Father.

Do you realize that? He understands us. Marvelous. Now that brings up one of the marvelous benefits of his being truly human.

When you are truly in touch with your humanity, you are in touch with the rest of the world. Did you know that? The Bible also tells us there is no temptation taken us, but such as is common to man. So if you know yourself, if you're in touch with your humanity, you are in touch with the entire world.

That's why Jesus, I believe, knew the heart of man. Long before I ever went to India, I knew what Indians were like. They're greedy and lustful, just like me.

Long before I ever went to Africa, I knew what Africans were like. Greedy and lustful, just like me. Long before I came to Costa Mesa.

See, I know what's going through your minds, and you'd better quit it. We're all alike, aren't we? In fact, some years ago, I was teaching in Zimbabwe, an African country. A couple of thousand pastors and their wives, different culture entirely.

And I got off on to family relationships, which is a dangerous thing to do in another culture. But fools rush in where angels fear to tread, so there I was. And at one point, I said to them, it could be that you men woke up this morning, and the first thing you said to your wives was, And I quoted something, and then you wives answered back.

And I quoted something, and then you husbands answered back. And I quoted something, and then you wives answered back. And I quoted something, and I noticed that they were looking at each other, and punching and pointing at me.

When I finished, they rushed down to the front and said, You were listening at our bedroom window this morning, weren't you? I said, No, I wouldn't do that. They said, Then you're a prophet. I said, Well, what can I say? But then I had to get honest with them and admit, Well, actually, I was just sharing words my wife and I have used with each other in the past.

And we're all the same, we're just alike. If you're really in touch with your humanity, you know what everybody else is like. There's another distinct advantage of being in touch with your humanity, being truly human.

If you understand that we are in the flesh, you're not very impressed with yourself. You really aren't. You understand, I'm just a ball of mud.

I am amazed, though, at how much attention we give this mud. You know what I'm saying? All over this state, there are mud houses designed to help you redesign your mud. It's amazing.

It costs a lot of money, of course. But they make certain promises as to what you can look like when they get through with your mud. And we do it, we go there, we spend money on it.

So we can say, Do you like my mud? I was watching one of these, I don't know, what would you call it? A bodybuilding thing on television? I'd never seen anything like that before. I couldn't believe it. These guys, as they walked out on stage, they didn't really walk out, they just sort of slunk out.

Rats and mice, it seemed, were running up and down under their skin. They went through their paces. I couldn't believe what I was seeing.

And then something dawned on me. As I watched, I realized, there's not a single person on that program my age. Not a one.

I wanted to shout at them, Hey fellas, guess what's going to happen to you? There is a very powerful force in this world called gravity. It is going to win, believe me. These muscles that are up here, I know where they're going.

You get up in the morning, make a serious mistake. You go look in the mirror. I look and I think, I have met the enemy.

And do you realize we immediately set about changing everything we see, don't we? Oh boy, my nose doesn't belong up there, let me bring it back down. And we powder and we... Behind our ears and so on. Now why do we do that? Why do we do that? It's because we know the flesh rots.

The flesh is dying. Remember the cow? Ha ha ha ha. I want you to understand, as you look in the mirror and as you spray, the job you have ahead of you.

If we truly understand that we are flesh, we're not going to be very impressed with ourselves. We'll understand. We won't get proud.

It's hard to get proud when you understand that it's just mud. Now you may say, but I'm anointed. Why? You're a greasy ball of mud, big deal.

I am convinced that some of the major failures we have seen on the public religious scene have come because individuals lost sight of their muddiness. They began to think that maybe they were a step or two above mere humanity. But folks, I've learned that if I am in touch with the reality of my muddiness, I know how to protect myself a whole lot more.

I'm more likely to pray, oh and lead me not into temptation, but deliver me from evil. And I'll understand what I'm praying about when I do that. Truly human.

And then it tells us that he humbled himself. Well, we've already talked about that up here in number four. We don't need to repeat it.

And was obedient. That'll be number 13 in our list. Obedient even unto death.

The death on the cross, number 14. That will complete our list, by the way, but let's talk about this. Obedient.

This that you see here on the chalkboard, these 14 points that we've gone over, are not only the nature of Jesus, but they have to also be the nature of the Father. Because Jesus said, when you've seen me, you've seen the Father. Now later on in our series, I'm going to go through the nature of the Father, and you'll see how it fuels this very thing.

But this has to be the nature of the Father also. And Jesus, who came and walked in the flesh, lived out this that was the nature of the Father. He was obedient to this.

In fact, there's some interesting statements in Scripture relative to Jesus. Some he made himself. He says, I only do what I see the Father do.

I'm paraphrasing this slightly. I only do what I see the Father do. I only say what I hear the Father say.

My meat, my food, is to do the will of him that sent me. I delight to do his will. In fact, I have come, in the volume of the book it is said of me, that this is why I came, to do your will.

Marvelous. As he faced what probably was his final and greatest struggling moment in that garden, you know what his ultimate statement was. Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou will.

He was obedient completely to the nature of the Father. I'm in awe of this. Even to the point of death.

The death on the cross. Now, I think his greatest temptation, personally I believe this, was to escape death. They say there is no one single drive within us quite as strong as the drive to stay alive.

So the opportunities that he had to stay alive were probably his greatest temptations. That's why when Peter recognized in Matthew 16 who he was, when Jesus said, Who do you say I am? And Peter says, You're the Messiah, the Son of the Living God. Jesus says, Way to go, Peter.

I'm paraphrasing here, too. Flesh and blood didn't reveal this to you. Your brain bone had nothing to do with this.

The Father has revealed this to you. And Peter now is basking in the glory of his revelation. But now that they know who he is, Jesus begins to teach about the difficult things that he's going to have to go through and suffer death.

And Peter becomes an advisor to God. Remember that? He rebukes Jesus. Can you see it? Come here, God.

You quit talking like that. You're not going to have to go through that. You're God, remember? I told you.

And anyway, I'm on your side, remember? And I get revelations, remember? And it was then that Jesus said, Get behind me, Satan. You don't know the things of God, just the things of men. I think Peter's attempt to rescue Jesus, which he was good at doing.

He did it again, remember? He had a sword in his hand. And attempts to rescue Jesus. I believe that was a great temptation on the part of Jesus.

If I were him, I would think, Now, let me see. I'll just empower his arm, and there will be heads all over the place. I can understand that temptation.

But Jesus resisted it once again. I think when Jesus stood before all of the courts he was in, opportunity was given to him to escape. And he resisted.

He resisted. He would not let anything keep him from fulfilling his call to come and rescue us and die for us. Death.

Sort of the ultimate test of our servanthood, isn't it? For what am I willing to die? That's a scary question, but it's a very real one. And one I guess in some way we have to face. Now, we live rather easy lives as far as that's concerned.

We don't tend to be in constant threat of death because we are here this time of the week. Death. Is there anything for which I'm willing to die? A person? A people? A place? Things? A belief? A set of beliefs? Is there any place where I say, Here I stand, and here I stake my life.

It's a good question. It's a scary question. Especially for those of us here in California, the center of commitment.

For what am I willing to die? Well, Jesus was obedient even unto death. Death on the cross. Well, when I saw this, folks, I had two reactions.

My first one was, once again, I was absolutely overwhelmed with this man, Jesus. Absolutely overwhelmed. I loved him more than I had ever loved him before.

I said, Jesus, there is no one I have ever met that comes anywhere near this. I gladly, I gladly give myself to you. I will follow you.

I will gladly follow you. But then I had another reaction. Do you remember that past you once had and the carnal nature that used to guide your life? Remember that? You don't remember? You don't remember? Remember the thought patterns it laid down and the habitual thought patterns that have sort of zinged through every once in a while in your life now? It doesn't happen? Well, it sort of zinged through to me.

And I began to think, Now, come on, Lord. You expect us to win the world being servants? Come on. You expect us to win the world being humble and as children and the last and the least? Come on.

You expect us to win the world being of no reputation? You expect us to win the world using no force? Come on, God. Give us guns. We can do it with guns, you know.

Give us money, we'll buy the world. You know we can do that. Give us influence, we'll vote the sinners out.

That's what we'll do. Then the Lord let me see that it's not over when it stops with death. It's not over.

Because the next words in that passage in Philippians, the next words in Scripture say, Therefore, God has raised him up and given him the name that is above every name. At whose name every knee shall bow in heaven and earth and under the earth. And every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

Do you see what's going on here? When you walk the Jesus pathway, you get God's results. When you do it God's way, then you hear, Therefore, God. Oh, man.

I'm excited by that. Now you folks know that you don't have to do it this way to succeed in life. You really don't.

You don't have to do it God's way to succeed. God, help us. Sometimes you don't even have to do it this way to succeed in church.

But when I see someone who really tries to live this out, usually, you know what I observe? They're going, Wow, God. How did you do that, God? Wow. Beautiful, God.

Way to go, God. And you ask them, What's the secret of your success? And they'll say, I don't know. Wow, God.

Way to go, God. I found out when I figured it out, my success is usually over. Indeed, I can do it my way, and usually I do.

But I found this out, that if I do it my way, first of all, I succeed only to the limit of my ability. Second, I damage people. Third, my fruit does not remain.

But if I walk the Jesus pathway, first of all, I succeed only to the limit of God's ability. I don't damage people, and my fruit remains. Now, I would much rather hear, Therefore, God, than Therefore, Gale, any day of the week.

In fact, I am convinced that the only way we will succeed, God's rather jealous about Himself. You know, He's rather jealous about His glory. And I am convinced that the only way we will truly succeed, with the promises that He has laid out for us, is when we do it His way, when we lean so totally on Him, when we discover, When I am weak, then am I strong.

His strength is made perfect in my weakness. But now I need to confess something else to you. I am convinced that I am so corrupt from my nature and my culture, that I really don't have a clue as to what true success actually is.

I tend to think that success is a body count. How many did we have? Or cash flow, how much did we get? Or media attention, how many cameras are there? But I don't think God's quite as impressed with that as I am. In fact, He seems to give honor to, as Paul said, the most unseemly part of the body.

That makes no sense to me. But God does it that way. In fact, He doesn't call the mighty or the noble, or at least He rarely does.

In fact, He takes the weak and the foolish to confound the strong and the wise. I don't understand why He does that. But He does.

It just doesn't fit my logic. I don't have a clue as to what true success is. Do you ever try to imagine what heaven is like? Do you ever think that the biggest mansion up there is going to go to the most successful Christian that ever lived, and when we get there we go rushing up to number one Glory Road to see whose name is on the mailbox? And we discover that it's Spifflehoofer Husky Wow Wow.

And we say, Never heard of him. I have an idea. It'll probably be that way.

Some years ago, in a magazine, I saw an ad by a Christian organization. It showed this fellow who had just forded a jungle stream. He had what appeared to be everything he owned on his back.

He was heading off into what appeared to be obscurity. You got the thought, You'll never see him again. That's it.

It's over. And the caption beneath the picture said, But Bob was voted most likely to succeed. That's the way the world doesn't understand that.

They view that and they say, Oh, how sad. He could have made a name for himself. He could have put his mark on this world.

But here he is with a PhD traipsing off into the jungle to translate for some God forsaken tribe. How sad. The world doesn't understand.

And sometimes we don't. Let me tell you another story. And this is very personal.

And if you'll forgive me, I'm going to brag just a little bit. But when I was in high school and college, I cut a rather wide path. I was not for physical reasons.

But I was president of every student body that I was part of. You know, what can I say? Big man on campus. I planned to be a medical doctor, a surgeon actually.

But there was no way I could do that. My parents invented poverty and it was hopeless. The Lord blessed me.

And I managed to win a scholarship that was so good. It paid for every dime of my undergraduate work, even gave me spending money. It was an awesome scholarship.

And because I was sort of the town favorite, the boy from across the tracks who had made good, I'd become kind of the town favorite, the fair-haired boy of town. And one of the banks in town did a most uncharacteristic thing. Their board informed me that they had decided that when I reached medical school, they would pay for my medical school expenses.

I had it made. I went off to college. And during those days, God began to deal with me.

And he said, Gale, I like doctors, but I have something else I want you to do. I said, really, what? I want you to preach. He said, okay.

I wish you could have been there when I made the announcement. You're going to what? The city fathers came the hundred miles to that university to try to talk me out of this dumb decision. The bank president sent word to me that I was no longer their friend, which is kind of the way banks deal with me anyway.

Some years later, I went back to that town for a reunion of my graduating high school class. In high school, I had a teacher who was the best academic teacher I've ever had. He was really awesome.

They ought to make a movie of his life. He was so good as a teacher. He was at that reunion.

I will never forget when he saw me. Disappointment clouded his face. He looked at me and he said, Gale, I just don't understand.

He said, I had such hopes for you. He said, I looked into your eyes and saw the answer to cancer. But this, this seems like such a waste.

I just don't understand, Gale. You could have been something. Well, I tried to get him to understand, but I couldn't.

I tried to get him to understand that I had seen more cancer disappear or be prevented this way than ever had I wielded the knife. But he was in a different ballpark. He just couldn't understand.

Folks, most of the world's in another ballpark, aren't they? They are not going to understand your relationship with Jesus Christ. Don't expect them to. But, oh, please don't be fooled by the world's view of success.

We do not have enough time left for us to be fooled by the world's view of success. Now, some of your friends and relatives will put you under great pressure about this. They will not understand your relationship with Jesus.

I know that some of you, your parents or your friends, wish you'd go back on drugs so they'd understand you. They don't understand this Jesus thing. Well, that's okay, actually.

Just don't be fooled by it. Don't be fooled by it. If God has called you to work in some ministry that is obscure and we never hear from you again, your name virtually disappears because of the obscurity of

your ministry, but you're doing it obediently and faithfully and joyfully, you are the most successful Christian on the face of this earth.

If God chooses you to work in some ministry where your name is up in lights and you're famous, and that's very dangerous, but you do it faithfully and joyfully and obediently, then you are the most successful Christian on the face of this earth. But you're not one bit more successful than the person who worked in obscurity. You look in the 11th chapter of Hebrews, that great chapter of faith, and you discover individuals who by their faith wrought such mighty deeds that they would end on the front page of everybody's newspaper because of their faith.

But in that same chapter, you discover individuals who by their faith lived in caves, were fugitives, starved, were tormented, gave themselves up to die. Failures, every one of them in the world's eyes because of their faith. But what did God think of them? He said the world wasn't even worthy of them.

Oh, folks. I'd much rather hear, therefore, God, than anything else. Than anything else.

Please don't be fooled by the world. I guess what I'm really ultimately trying to say is this. If God has chosen you to be a slave, and I suspect he has, don't lower yourself and try to be president.

Let us now go forward and follow him and watch while we hear, therefore, God in our lives. Oh, thank you, Father, for your kindness to us. Thank you, Lord, for these people who have come because their hearts are turned toward you.

Fill them with yourself. Overwhelm them with your goodness, Lord. Walk with them each step of tomorrow and tonight and the rest of this week so that they sense that you are there.

Lord, give them opportunity after opportunity to see your hand working in their lives. May joy overtake them and surprise them. May your power be evident in their lives.

May your word be so present that their lives will be filled with fruit, will never return void. I pray this in the name of Jesus. Amen.

Amen. God bless you. Have a great week.

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