

“Don’t you know who I am!?!” You wouldn’t be surprised to hear that from someone standing at the executive class check-in who isn’t getting the kind of service he thinks he deserves. Of course you don’t have to be a minor celebrity or a high-powered CEO to demand: “Don’t you know who I am!?!” You might say that if you’re in grade nine and are being disrespected by a kid from grade seven. Or you might think that when the new guy at work asks you to photocopy some stuff for him and to bring him a coffee while you’re at it. Throughout his life on earth Jesus, the Son of God, was often treated so poorly that he would have been justified in exploding: “Don’t you know who I am!?!” Through the words of the Apostle Paul this morning we’ll learn again who Jesus is and what that means for us.

Our text is a portion of a letter Paul wrote to the Christian congregation in the Greek city of Philippi. Paul had great affinity for this congregation and wrote to thank them for support they had sent while he was in prison. Paul also took the opportunity to encourage the congregation in Christian living. He said: “Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus, who being in very nature God did not consider equality with God something to be grasped”.

If you walked into Platinum Investments in Los Angeles California, to meet Tom Gores, the new owner of the Detroit Pistons Basketball team, you’d be in a state of shock to find him scrubbing the guests’ toilets, before your meeting, wouldn’t you? That’s not what “Billionaires” are expected to do. On the contrary important people usually expect us to worship the ground they walk on. But Jesus was not like that. Who was this Jesus who rides into Jerusalem on a donkey? The Bible says, “he is in very nature God.” On the Forbes 400 of the wealthiest people in the world, Jesus would be number 1. The silver and gold, real estate of the world, all belongs to Him. In him all the fullness of the deity lives in bodily form. He is equal to the Father in glory, majesty, honor, power, wisdom. He is the King of Creation. He is the one to whose voice the very winds and waves must listen and obey. He is the Alpha and Omega, the first and the last. There is nothing that can be said of the almighty, eternal God that cannot be said of him, because he is God.

Although he is God from eternity Jesus never used his deity for self-glorification. He never acted like the Super-Bowl-ring-wearing football star who gets annoyed when he’s pulled over by the cops. “Can’t they see the honking ring on my finger?” he thinks. “These guys should be awed to be in my presence. Who do they think they are trying to give me a speeding ticket?” That wasn’t Jesus. He didn’t show off by riding into Jerusalem on the wings of angels on Palm Sunday, though he could have. Instead he borrowed a donkey and clip-clopped into the city. When he fed the 5,000 with a little boy’s lunch it wasn’t so people would make him king (though they tried). He performed this miracle because people needed to eat. Jesus used his divine power to serve, not brag or show off. In fact of all the miracles Jesus performed before his crucifixion I can only think of one that was done mainly to show off his divine glory – and that was done in secret. Only Peter, James, and John saw Jesus shine in brilliant glory on the Mount of Transfiguration.

Listen to our text: **“He did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.” (v. 6b-7)** Do you get what he is saying here? Jesus is God, and he has never stopped being God, but his attitude was that didn’t need to hold onto that or make a show of it. He didn’t need to hold on to his power and glory as God for his own self-glorification. The full use of all the glory, all the power that are his as God he was willing to lay aside to take on a servant’s form.

In Mark Twain's novel, *The Prince and the Pauper*, the prince, the heir to the throne, gave it all up for a time. He traded places with a poor, underprivileged, abused boy. During this time the prince found out first hand what it meant to live the life of a pauper. What a change that must have been! From riches to rags. From privilege to poverty. From treasured to trashed. But now think of what this meant for the Son of God. Jesus gave up the throne of heaven to live on earth. He left the praise of angels for the insults of men. He left his Father's side in perfect joy and peace to live in the loneliness and difficulty of this earth. If he had chosen to do that just to find out first hand what life on earth was all about that would be pretty amazing.

But that's not why he took the trip to this earth. Paul says, **“And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death – even death on a cross.” (v. 8)** Jesus, true God, who is under no one and subject to no one, chose to subject himself as a slave – chose to do this! He lived his life as a perfect innocent – a man of 33 years with absolutely not the least mark of imperfection or sin against him. He, the innocent, took upon himself the punishment reserved for and earned by sinners – death. He did this voluntarily. He chose to live man's life and to die man's death, in order to carry out his Father's will and accomplish the work of saving. And what's more, Paul tells us that he subjected himself to the death of the cross. Jesus did not come to hurl Satan into hell by a divine word. He came to execute divine substitution, obedience, suffering and dying in order to pay the sin guilt of man. Nothing would stop him from accomplishing this, not diaper rash, not acne, not the flu, not blisters from walking in open-toed sandals, not ridicule, and not even death. Unlike kings who go out to fight their enemies with armor, shield and sword, Jesus went to fight his enemies by setting aside the full use of his heavenly armor.

Two quick stories to illustrate the point of Jesus' awesome attitude: There once was a righteous king, who had to deal with his kingdom, plagued with adultery. He sent out a decree, that those caught in adultery would have to pay by having two eyes gouged out. To the king's horror, his daughter was soon caught in adultery. Being a righteous king and a just king, he ordered that two eyes be gouged out – his own – in order to fulfill the law and spare his daughter's eyesight. There once was a chaplain who was speaking to a soldier on a cot in a hospital. "You have lost an arm in the great cause," he said. "No," said the soldier with a smile. "I didn't lose it—I gave it." Jesus, the righteous king, took a punishment he didn't deserve in order to give him righteousness to us who did not deserve it. Like that soldier Jesus did not lose his life as though somebody took it from him kicking and screaming. He gave it willingly and he gave it purposefully.

Would you do the same? Would you jump into the sewer and dive underneath the foul water with your eyes open to find and save someone who had stumbled into that slime while trying to throw rocks at you? That's what Jesus did. Perhaps Mark 10:45 says it best: "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many."

"The Son of God became your servant," says Paul. "Now imitate his humble service." Really, how can we complain about having to clean the bathroom when we consider what great lengths Jesus went to cleanse us from our sins? How can we whine about spending five minutes picking up a mess we didn't make when Jesus hung from a cross for six hours to tidy up after our sinful mess? A seminary professor demonstrated well his Christ-inspired servanthood. After using the washroom he regularly wiped the sinks with his paper towel. No, he hadn't made a big mess, students had done that. But in a "Why me?" world, this professor said: "Why not me? Why don't I clean up this mess and not bother the janitor with it even though that's what we pay him for?" Friends, when people treat you poorly or ask you to do something you find demeaning so

that you want to demand: “Don’t you know who I am!?!” Answer your own question the way Jesus did. “I’m your servant. So yes, I’d love to do what you’ve asked me to do for you.”

But if we act like everyone’s servant, won’t people take advantage of us? Didn’t they take advantage of Jesus? The Jewish leaders certainly did. They misinterpreted Jesus’ meekness for weakness and had him arrested and then crucified. But Paul speaks to that point when he wrote: “Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, 10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Philippians 2:9-11).

The Jewish leaders’ last view of Jesus was a broken man hanging on a cross. Their next view of Jesus will be much different. They will see a glorified and exalted Jesus. The way Jesus appeared at his “private” transfiguration will be apparent for all to see on Judgment Day. Even now Jesus reigns as Lord high above all other names. Since Jesus has conquered and reigns as Lord live in anticipation of your heavenly crown, Brothers and Sisters. For example many in the scientific community may snicker now at our belief in a six-day creation but in the end we will be proved right. Or your friends may roll their eyes when you refrain from joining them for that raucous party but the isolation and rejection you feel now will be nothing compared to the rejection unbelievers will feel on Judgment Day when Jesus says to them: “Away from me you evildoers. I never knew you.” You may not have very much in this life while blatant unbelievers have everything. So what. The heavenly crown that you’ll receive will never tarnish or break. It will forever mark you as a favored child of God.

Anticipating receiving your heavenly crown means living in hope now. It doesn’t matter what kind of trouble you’re in. You may be in over your head financially, or the doctors may not understand what is wrong with your body but whatever is over your head is still under Jesus’ feet! Paul told the Ephesian congregation: “And God placed all things under [Jesus’] feet and appointed him to be head over everything for [Christians]” (Ephesians 1:22). When Satan is pushing your buttons and trying to make your life a living hell, go ahead and demand of him: “Don’t you know who I am!?! I’m God’s child. Holy Baptism assures me of that. And so one day I will tread all over you, Satan, for I will wear a crown with Jesus who crushed your head at the cross!”

Others may not know that you are a martial arts champion or that you make a six-figure salary. We may not realize that you’re at the top of your class academically or that you make the best chocolate chip cookies in the world. This lack of recognition may make you want to scream: “Don’t you know who I am!?!” But you won’t get frustrated like that if you remember who you really are. You’re a humble servant just like Jesus your Savior. Living to serve others doesn’t mean that you’re weak or unimportant. On the contrary. Those who serve are great, says Jesus. The greatest in my kingdom is the servant of all. And we can afford to put others first because we know what awaits us – a crown of glory. Don’t You know who I am? I am a child of the King, the Servant King. Amen.