

# “Name above every name:” Christ’s name in liturgy and life

The fifth Sunday of Lent – April 3, 2022

Holy Trinity Church - Tom Mount

## Scripture Reading: Phil 2:5-11

### Introduction

- In these verses, many scholars suspect the Apostle Paul was quoting a well-known Christian hymn. Whether Paul is adapting a Christian hymn or not, three points are beyond dispute. 1) The intent of the passage is to challenge the believers in Philippi to be humble, gracious, forgiving and Christ-centered, 2) The main reason Paul gives for a humble, self-giving, generous approach to life is the example of Jesus, 3) Paul borrows language from Isaiah 45:23-24 to prove that the highest possible honor has been given to our Lord Jesus as a result of his self-sacrificing work. The resulting text is one of the most succinct and beautiful overviews of Christ’s humiliation and exaltation found anywhere in scripture.
- Before we look at the text, let’s look at how worshipfully and lovingly the Church of Christ throughout the centuries has revered the sacred name of Jesus Christ.

### Christograms: our Lord’s name in letters and symbols

- **ICXC** – “Jesus Christ”. Used frequently with NIKA, “Conquers”
- **IHS** - **JESus** is spelled “IHΣΟΥΣ” in Greek.
- **XP** - **CHRist** – Labarum used by Constantine in AD 312
- **ΑΩ** - Alpha and Omega (Rev 22:12-13)

### Exegesis of Philippians 2:5-11

**“Who, being in very nature God”**, lit. “who existed in the form, *morphe*, of God.” *Morphe* denotes those essential features that make a thing what it is. Cf. Heb 1:3; Col 1:15; 2:9; John 1:1-3.

**“he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant”**, *doulos*, lit. “slave.” He reversed the course of Adam.

- In doing so, Jesus demonstrated that his nature, God's nature, is not fundamentally acquisitive. His nature is fundamentally one of self-giving resulting in the blessing of others.
- The verb Paul uses here for "making himself nothing" is *kenoo*, lit. he "emptied himself." He divested himself of certain divine prerogatives by becoming a human, including: 1) his special, uninterrupted face to face intimacy with the Father, 2) his riches of glory in heaven, and 3) his independent exercise of his authority (cf. Heb 5:8; Jn 5:30; 5:19, 14:24; Isa 42:1-9; 49:1-9a; 50:4-11; 52:13-53:12; Lk 22:27).
- While remaining God, he gave up these divine privileges to become a human being. And not a human being in a pristine condition, but one born into a fallen, weakened condition, sharing in the loneliness and alienation of humanity in exile from God.

**"And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!"**

- Jesus lowered himself to the most degrading of all deaths: the shaming, tortuous, dehumanizing execution of being nailed to a Roman crucifix.
- After having the skin beaten off his back with a Roman flagellum, he was made to carry his own cross outside the city, to a place of shame and contempt where criminals were made public examples (100-300 lbs). There he was stripped naked and impaled on the cross in full view of everyone, in an effort to bring maximum ridicule (cf. Dt 21:23). For six hours, our Lord died by slow, tortuous asphyxiation.

**"Therefore God exalted him to the highest place."**

- This is single compound word in the Greek: "super-exalted." Cf. Heb 7:26; Eph 4:10; Mk 16:19; Acts 2:33; 5:31; Rom 8:34; Heb 1:3; 12:2; Eph 1:20-22. The NT writers are straining the limits of human language to express the infinite majesty and splendor and unexcelled glory of the regal Son!

**"gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord."**

- At this point, Paul cites Isaiah, 45:23. He is stating that Jesus is Yahweh; Jesus is the one to whom every knee will bow and every tongue confess the truth about him!

- When will this happen? At his return. The unfallen and redeemed will do it joyously! The unrepentant will do it remorsefully, lamenting their prideful hardness of heart (cf. Rev 5:6-14; 6:12-17). All will take the name of Jesus on their lips and finally speak the truth about him: κυριος ιησους χριστος, “Jesus Christ is Lord!”
  - Jesus – *Iesous, Yeshua* – “salvation” – The name given at Jesus’ birth
  - Christ – *Christos, mashiach* – “anointed one” – The name conferred at Jesus’ baptism
  - Lord – *Kurios, Yahweh* – The name celebrated at Jesus’ coronation
- “You, Jesus, are salvation, you are the Anointed One, you are Yahweh!”

**“to the glory of God the Father.”** Nothing gives the Father greater pleasure and glory than that all created things give to Son the honor he is due as our Lord and King.

## Takeaways

**Let’s reverence the name of the Lord Jesus Christ in our affections, discussions, prayers and praises.**

**Let’s honor his name in all our thoughts, words and actions**

**Let’s wield his name in spiritual warfare as we battle the forces of darkness.**

**Let’s unapologetically declare his name to everyone who will listen: that the Lord Jesus Christ is the only salvation, the exalted King, the One deserving all our gratitude and service and worship.**