Philippians 2:6-8 Who, being in very nature God, 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. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross!

I am always amazed at how themes, or teachings sprout up and present themselves to me as I conduct my ministry. Let me explain what I mean. On Monday, even before I began to do my study for this sermon, I attended a Circuit meeting with my fellow Pastors. Now at our Circuit meetings, we spend the majority of time in study. This particular Monday we had an exegetical study on 1 John 5:6-12, a study on the Augsburg Confession and a study on Catholic beliefs. It was the exegetical study that really caught my attention. An exegetical study is an in depth study of the Greek text of the Bible and exactly what it says.

This particular text is pretty powerful. Here is what it says in verses 9-12. ***“We accept man’s testimony, but God’s testimony is greater because it is the testimony of God, which he has given about his Son. Anyone who believes in the Son of God has this testimony in his heart. Anyone who does not believe God has made him out to be a liar, because he has not believed the testimony God has given about his Son. And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is his Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.”***

In a nutshell here is what that says. God has given us his testimony, His Word, and that word is about his Son. If you believe in Jesus then you believe in His Word. If you do not believe God’s Word, then you are calling God a liar, because you have not believed the Word God has given about his Son. The point of the Word is this: God has given us eternal life in Jesus!

I can’t begin to tell you how many people, many more in today’s world, who seem to think that they can pick and choose what to believe in God’s Word. “Oh, I believe that, but I don’t believe this.” Yet, if God’s Word clearly teaches something, how can you NOT believe it? And if you sincerely believe that the Bible only contains God’s Word, that is, it contains errors and faults because men had a hand in writing it, then how can you know if what you believe is true? You want to believe this part and that, but the next person wants to believe here and over there? Who is right? What part of the Bible is human and what part of the Bible is God speaking? And I will be quite pointed with you. If you sincerely believe that man is the judge of God’s Word, what is and what isn’t God’s Word, then your faith is no better than the religion and pantheistic gods of the Greeks, Romans, Norsemen, or any other religion that exists or has existed in the world. Because no matter what, your faith is based on you and what you want to believe!

Yet the section of God’s Word we were discussing says that to do that is to make God a liar. I don’t know about you, but I would rather not get before the gates of heaven and have God say to me, “So, you think I am a liar, do you!” That just doesn’t sound good at all, does it?

So how does this apply to our text? Well, that’s what we are going to explore and consider. Our theme will be: **“HE HUMBLED HIMSELF.”**

Now I don’t want to overlook that first line of the text we are considering. It says, **“Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus.”** In the new Evangelical Heritage Version that verse is better translated this way, **“Indeed, let this attitude be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.”** I think the EHV translation helps us grasp that this idea is not God’s pious wish for you, but rather is a command, a strong urging of God for you. We are, as children of God, to imitate Christ, to have his attitude. And my, oh my, what an attitude Jesus has given us.

The description of his attitude starts this way. **“Who, being in very nature God, 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.”** So here is Jesus. Now in truth, Jesus is God, he is the Son of God born of the Virgin Mary, that he might come and be our Savior. But notice that while Jesus is serving, is being a servant, he does not hold onto or cling to the idea of equality with God. Let that sink in. While Jesus was here on earth, even though he was true God and because he was true man, Jesus in his state of humiliation as man, does not cling to his equality with God. If you want to grasp just what this is all about, then just look at the life of Jesus.

How does Jesus live? In accord with the Word of God. How does Jesus determine what is right or wrong? The Word of God. How does Jesus fathom the mysteries and wonders of God? The Word of God. On what basis does Jesus guide his life, direct his thoughts, and pursue the righteousness he has come to bring to the world? The Word of God. In others words, it is clear that Jesus in his state of humiliation, relies on, trusts and puts his whole confidence on what God’s Word says.

Now, if Jesus, even though God, because of his human side, lives and operates only in and with the Word of God, what does that say of us? And think of some of the great things Jesus said about the Word: **“Your word is truth”** (Jn 17:17), **“Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God”** (Mt. 4:4), **“This is what I told you while I was still with you; Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms”** (Lk 24:44). **“As for the person who hears my words but does not keep them, I do not judge him. For I did not come to judge the world, but to save it. There is a judge for the one who rejects me and does not accept my words: that very word which I spoke will condemn him at the last day. For I did not speak of my own accord, but the Father who sent me commanded me what to say and how to say it.”** (Jn 12:47-49). Dear people, that is but a sampling of the trust, importance and witness that Jesus makes concerning the Word of God which is God’s Word, His Word and which is the Bible from cover to cover. Our attitude is to be the same as his!

So where do you find Jesus saying, “God got this or that wrong?” Where do you find Jesus saying, “When it comes to the teaching about sin, pay no attention, for God does not care, or pay no attention because sin is just old fashioned and not really a thing.” Name one passage where Jesus even intimates the idea of, “Seriously, if you just do your best and come out looking better than your neighbor, why it doesn’t matter what you do or how you live, just so what you are doing is your human best.” In truth, Jesus, in his state of humiliation, even though God himself, lived in accord with God’s Word and truth and not upon what He thought or felt was best. And of course, Jesus as true God and Man always thought and felt God’s Word was best!! Most classic point is made in Gethsemane when Jesus says, **“Yet not as I will, but as you will.”**

Here is our call: to trust, absolutely Jesus and the Bible. It is His Word. It is God’s Word. It is the truth and testimony of God concerning his Son and even the truth and testimony of Jesus concerning God our Father. It is reliable. It is factual. It is true in everything it says. It is God’s Word. It is the Bible from cover to cover!

And here is the most remarkable fact of this wonder of Jesus. Jesus, faithful and true to God’s Word, even goes to the cross, even gives himself over to death, a horrid death, just for the sake of you and me and just because that is what His Father had revealed would be in the Word, the testimony God had given of Jesus.

Again consider Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. He is clearly having troubles. He tells us point blank, **“My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death.”** Here is Jesus sharing with us the struggle his human side was having. As God, He knew what was coming, even in his state of humiliation, Jesus knew the complete horror and sorrow, the complete agony and torment the cross and dying for the sins of the world would bring. It was his human side that mercifully cries out to God **“Yet not as I will be as you will.”** It is his human side that needs to be nurtured by the angels that night in order to be strong enough to take the onslaught that was nigh at hand. The injustice, the cruel blows, the thorns and nails, the complete hell cast upon him by his Father weighed upon Jesus at that moment.

Jesus doesn’t decide this doesn’t feel right. Jesus doesn’t begin to think that He knows a better way, that somehow God had a fault or flaw in his planning for salvation. Jesus sticks to the Word and what it says. Jesus knows the prophecy of Isaiah. **“Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.”** Jesus does the Father’s will. Jesus fulfills the testimony of God concerning his Son. Jesus becomes our Savior from sin, death and the devil.

That is why Jesus is what it is all about, because that is what God’s testimony, God’s Word is all about. And now you know why our verses continue on and proclaim what they do. **“Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and 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 confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”** These words point us to the total and ultimate victory of Jesus, a victory on our behalf.

How? Because Jesus went to the cross. Jesus there on that cross, suffered for our sins, took the punishment for our iniquities and brought us the peace of God. Peace because in Jesus we have the forgiveness of sins and eternal life. Peace because God has forgiven our trespasses and remembers our sins no more. Peace because truly and completely Jesus paid the price for our redemption. That is what God’s Word testifies to. That is what God’s Word says it is all about. Go back to that 1 John section I shared at the beginning. What did it say: ***And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is his Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.”***

So today is a great day to contemplate this truth. Because on this day our members get to come forward and partake of the Lord’s Supper. A giving of bread and wine that Jesus says is his body and blood, given for you for the forgiveness of sins. Do you believe that? That bread and wine is Christ’s body and blood! Can I explain it? Actually I would just prefer to believe what God has declared in his Word, to trust God’s Word no matter what my foolish human brain might think.

(On Sunday) We will also get to witness a baptism of an infant. God’s Word says that with the application of that water in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, God grants faith and eternal salvation to that infant, actually to anyone who is so baptized in accord with God’s Word. Your catechism proclaims to you it is not the water, not the pastor, not the setting or ritual, it is the power of God’s Word that makes this so. Do I see faith, do I see wings sprout from the child to prove that child is saved or do I just trust and put my confidence and hope in what God says is true. Yep, I trust in God and his gift in Jesus!

Do we as a church downplay and ignore the issue of sin? I think, “No way!” To me that would be the same as trying to talk about cancer without ever really acknowledging or naming the problem. Yet everyone here knows that when you hear the word “cancer” it is about life and death. You need to deal with it or you will die. The same with sin and what it is all about. It is about life and death and you need to deal with sin or you will die. The only cure I know of for sin is Jesus. That Jesus has won for us eternal life and salvation with his death and resurrection. That’s what God’s Word says!!

Lord, you sent your Son to be our Savior from sin. In your Word you testified to the truth, all the truths that we need to know to grasp this marvel of Jesus. Help us to have his attitude. Help us to humble ourselves to your Word and its promises. Help us to rely on Jesus and His power not on our feelings or our personal opinions or some sort of false and empty hope. Your Word is truth. It is about Jesus. It is about the life we have in his name. It is the point, the hope, the comfort and the one true joy of our lives. Let us then humbly bow and confess: Jesus Christ is God and Lord. Amen.