

Made Like Us

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[0 : 00] Well, at this time of year, the royal family are often in the news, aren't they? I always feel! sorry for the poor cameraman who has to work on Christmas Day just to record the royal family! walking out of the church in Sandringham the same way they do every year. I feel like they could just use the footage from a previous year. But the traditional trip to the Christmas service wasn't the only time that the royals were in the news this Christmas period. Because a few days earlier, just over a week ago now, Prince William, together with Prince George, his eldest son, they gave up some of their time to go and help out at a homeless charity in London. They went to help with the kind of preparation and serving of the annual Christmas dinner there. And it was it was quite the sights, the heir to the throne and his eldest son. On the same day when the the royal Christmas dinner was being served in Buckingham Palace, they left the palace and went and got their hands dirty in a kitchen. And so naturally there was an article about it in almost every news outlet full of praise. Because if they remained in Buckingham Palace that day, not no one would have questioned it, would they? Not no one would have batted an eyelid.

But instead of being served, they went out to serve. And people saw and rejoiced in the goodness, the kindness, the humility of these two people leaving their position of privilege to help those in need. A feel-good story, something to put a smile on your face. It is good news.

But there is, of course, isn't there, far greater news that really should be dominating the headlines every Christmas. Because every Christmas we remember a king who came not only from a palace, but who left behind a throne.

Not only for a few hours, but for a few decades, who went not to a kitchen, but to a stable. And then to a cross, all to help those who were in the most desperate needs.

Over the last couple of installments in this short series we've been doing on the Nicene Creed, we've been thinking about who Jesus is. Who is the Son of God?

[2 : 46] Now, that is good and right to do in itself. If we love Him, we will want to know Him as best as we can. But where there are no other benefit than simply knowing more of who He is, the past couple of Sunday evenings would have been time very well spent.

But this evening, I hope you will see that those last couple of Sunday evenings will not only help us to know Him, to know who He is, but it will cause us to worship Him more because of what He came to do.

This evening, we are dwelling on the line in the Creed which we said earlier together, For us and our salvation, He came down from heaven.

For us and our salvation, He came down from heaven. As good as the work of Prince William and Prince George was, there is one who has come from a far greater height and lowered Himself to the deepest, unimaginable depths.

So this evening, all we are going to do is think about, step back and see the contrast. We'll begin by reminding ourselves of who we have seen Jesus to be, what we have seen so far in the Nicene Creed, and then reminding ourselves of how far He lowered Himself.

[4 : 15] What we think about over Christmas. And then we'll just finish by thinking a little bit about why He did that. What help He came to give those who are in need.

That is kind of the roadmap for this evening. And the end goal, the destination of this journey, is simply that we praise Jesus. That there is no other goal this evening than that we are left wanting to worship Him.

Now as we kind of start at our first point, let me just say, a lot of this might be familiar territory to many of us, but do not let the familiarity dull your reverence.

As we go over this well-trodden ground, let me encourage you to listen, perhaps with your heart more than with your mind. Not necessarily to learn what you did not know, but to sit in awe of what God has done for you.

So who is Jesus? Who is the He who came down for us? We have seen, haven't we, over the past couple of weeks, that He is the Lord.

[5 : 36] The Son of God who became man. The Lord, the infinite, eternal, and unchangeable God. We saw that in 1 Corinthians 8, it is only through Him that all things exist.

He is not part of creation. He is the one who has always been. There was never a time when He was not. And we saw last time, we were thinking about last time, weren't we, that He is the Son of God.

That distinct, but not separate from the Father. Eternally begotten, God of God, light of light, very God of very God.

There is nothing lesser about the Son than the Father. They are equal in power and in glory. They are one and the same substance.

And yet they are two. It is, isn't it? It's truths that go beyond our comprehension. And that is okay.

[6 : 45] In fact, it is good. Because He is God, and we are not. And sometimes we need to remember that.

We are finite. We are small. We are limited. We are sinful. If you feel unable to grasp at some of these truths we've been thinking about over the last few weeks, good.

Because rather than dissect God's nature, we are supposed to stand in awe of it. We don't always have to fully understand something to be thankful for it, do we?

So it's what we do, or certainly I do, with many things in life. I don't know exactly how my car works.

I don't know how computer chips are made.

I don't know how an airplane flies. If someone broke the internet, I would not be able to put it back together. I don't know how any of those things work, and that's okay, but I'm still very thankful for what they are.

[7 : 54] We are, every one of us, finite beings with limited capacity for knowledge and understanding. Some people understand some things that others don't. Lots of people understand things that I don't, but no one knows everything.

The triune nature of God is simply beyond all of our abilities to fully comprehend. But that's okay.

We are just to be thankful and worship Him for what He is.

And what He is, is Father, Son, and Spirit, one God in three persons. And that means that the Son of God, Jesus Christ, is God in His absolute godness.

That is who Jesus is. So that from before there was a beginning, from all of eternity, He was sitting enthroned in glory. To Him, the infinite Son of God, the whole universe, from end to end, is as nothing.

To Him, the eternal Son of God, all of history, from the beginning of the earth to the end of time, it is all to Him but a moment. Or whatever it pleases Him to be, whether a moment or a millennia.

[9 : 19] We heard this morning, didn't we? With Him, one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. He is unbound by space, unbound by time, enthroned in everlasting glory and splendor, worshiped by angels, ruling perfectly over all creation, in need of nothing, in need of no one, having life granted sins in Himself, forever having enjoyed and continuing to enjoy in all blessedness the perfect communion and fellowship with Father and the Spirit.

There was nothing He did not have. There was nothing He needed. He deserved everything. That is who the Son of God is.

He deserved everything. And yet He gave everything. He, He, for us, came down from heaven, sitting on an eternal throne in infinite glory, being served and worshipped rightly by all the heavenly hosts.

He came down for you, for you sitting here this evening. William went from Buckingham Palace to a clean kitchen.

The Son of God went from heaven's eternal throne to a squalid stable in Bethlehem. God did not send someone to help us.

[11 : 15] He came Himself. And He became like us in every respect, but without sin. He took on Himself the fullness of humanity with all its limitations, what did we read there in verse 17 of Hebrews 4?

He had to be made like His brothers and sisters in every respect. There was nothing subhuman about Jesus. There was no shortcoming in His humanity.

He who was fully God took upon Himself the fullness of mankind. The infinite became finite. the eternal stepped into time. The all-knowing God set aside His knowledge and learned as we do. But the Son of God, we know, don't we, He lowered Himself further still. The Son of God growing up in the grandest palace in this world would have been an incredible, indescribable condescension in itself.

[12 : 29] Jesus Christ was born not in a palace, but a manger into poverty. And He suffered.

The impassable God who had enjoyed perfect communion with the Father and the Son for all eternity suffered at the hands of His enemies. the Son of God who had spent all of history being worshipped by angels was ridiculed and scoffed at.

He was beaten and mocked. He was spat at. His clothes were ripped from His back. His crown of glory was replaced with a crown of thorns.

He carried a cross on His shoulders. He had nails hammered into His hands and feet.

He was executed between criminals. His side was pierced. His body was buried. He lowered Himself as far as it is possible to go.

[13 : 51] I wonder if you saw that in the headlines this Christmas. Have you ever seen it in the news? The infinite and eternal Son of God.

The everlasting King of heaven and earth came from the highest throne. And lowered Himself to the deepest depths. But why?

Why did He do it all? Do you remember what we confessed earlier in the service? What I repeated at the start of the sermon? Why did the eternal Son of God lower Himself to such depths?

For us and our salvation? Now this is at the very heart of the gospel and so there is so much that would be worth saying but in this passage in Hebrews that we just read from that teaches about the Son of God being made like us in every respect we get three kind of key aspects of that salvation laying before us in five amazing verses.

And so with the rest of our time this evening we are just going to briefly touch on each of these to help us understand why the Son of God came down from heaven for us.

[15 : 20] And we're going to spend time thinking about these simply so that we would worship Him more fully as we are reminded once again of what He has done for us. First then the Son of God was made like us to liberate captive humanity.

Just look there with me at verse 14 and 15 of Hebrews 2. Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood He Himself likewise partook of the same things that through death He might destroy the one who has the power of death that is the devil and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.

Outside of Christ all of humankind is enslaved to sin to the devil and so ultimately ultimately to death.

We live don't we in a culture that puts an incredibly high value on freedom. Freedom to do what you want to be who you want to be to be free from opposition and oppression.

Our world longs for freedom and yet everyone is enslaved saved. Not only to their sinful nature but to the wages of that sin which is death itself.

[17 : 00] The very uncomfortable truth that our society tries to run away from is that death is waiting just around the corner for every single person.

And I think deep time everyone knows they are enslaved to it because they treat it like a slave master. Whether by living in fear trying to run away closing their eyes and pretending they are living in a different reality.

But really everyone knows that death has its hold on their lives and it will not let go. We cannot free ourselves from its grasp. But the Son of God came down from heaven to liberate us, to set us free from death's tyranny.

And the eternally begotten Son of God enthroned forever in highest heaven did it by dying himself. That might seem like a strange way to defeat death, but it is the only way that death could be defeated. He entered into the mouth of the grave in order to burst out from within.

[18 : 40] And so destroy it from the inside out. The one who died on the cross of Calvary was without sin, eternally righteous.

And so on the cross the devil took into death one whom death could not hold. death. The wages of sin is death.

But Christ had no sin. And so death could not hold him in the grave because it had no claim to him. And so the Lord Jesus Christ came forth out of the grave, shattering the shackles of death that were bound on mankind.

And we, when we are united to him by faith, share in that victory. We are united to him in his triumph over the grave. So long as there is sin in us, yes, we will still face death in our mortal bodies.

that in Christ, death no longer has the final say. That the mouth of the beast still lies open before us in this life, but behind that mouth now lies a body that has been utterly destroyed.

[20 : 10] Instead of death behind those jaws, it is only the risen Lord Jesus. unless the Lord returns, we will see death, but it has lost its sting.

It has been swallowed up in victory. God enthroned in heaven, God himself, he cannot die, and so he cannot enter into death for us.

Unkind in our weakness and sinfulness, we could never defeat death by our own strength or righteousness, but the eternally begotten Son of God, was made like us so that he, as a man, could die in our place, enter into death itself and defeat death as one without sin, and burst forth from the grave all for us and our salvation.

The Son of God became man to liberate captive humanity. Secondly, then, the Son of God was made man in order to save sinful humanity.

Verse 16, therefore, he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God to make propitiation for the sins of the people.

[21 : 41] He says, perhaps, isn't it, the aspect of Christ's work we are most familiar with? Probably because it's the needs we are most conscious of.

But Christ defeated death, it is, isn't it, it's a glorious hope for a captive humanity, but even a liberated people have sins that need atoned for.

the defeat of death in itself does not clear our record. It removes our fear of death, but not our fear of judgment.

But Christ came not only to defeat death, he also came to pay the price of our sin by offering himself the eternally begotten Son of God coming down from heaven to offer himself as a sacrifice in our place.

The language there in Hebrew speaks about a priest, a priest is someone who stands in the place of people before God. That is who the Son of God became for us.

[22 : 56] God taking on humanity so that he could stand before the Father as one of us and take the punishment we deserved.

Think of a judge in a courtroom handing down a just sentence on a guilty criminal, rightly condemned with a sentence to serve.

But then the judge himself steps down from the bench and steps into the place of the accused who's been pronounced guilty and takes the sentence upon himself.

God came down from heaven to pay the price, to bear the punishment that our sins deserve.

Our sin, all of our sin was placed on his shoulders and he carried the infinite cost of every single one of them to the cross of Calvary.

[24 : 02] We might sometimes think our sins are not that big a deal, but because they are sins against God, they could not be a bigger deal.

My phone screen is smashed to pieces, so if someone were to come up and scratch it with some keys, I wouldn't be delighted, but it wouldn't make a huge difference, it would be very little cost to me, I might not even really notice.

But if someone went and did the same thing to a newly released iPhone, or a top of the range TV, or a brand new Ferrari, think of how you would feel in each of those scenarios, you would do it.

If you were the one doing it, your guilt would increase, wouldn't it? Because you know, even though your action may seem the same, the damage you have done is greater because of what you have done it to.

The cost of replacing my screen protector is very small, the cost of replacing the whole screen of a brand new 85 inch TV is going to be much, much higher. What we sin against makes a difference to

the gravity of our sin.

[25 : 33] God is infinitely holy. The smallest scratch is an infinite price to pay.

We could never afford it. But our sins are not one small scratch on the surface, are they? They run far and deep.

Our hearts are full of pride, of greed, of anger, of lust, sins, our words can be deliberately harsh, our motives are so often selfish, our thoughts unloving, ungracious, unkind.

sin. That is just scratching the surface of the sins we are aware of. But we know there are many we are not.

Every one of them on their own, deserving of a punishment we could never bear. God's sin, the eternal son of God came down from heaven to carry the cost of each and every one of them.

[27 : 14] Every single one. Making propitiation, satisfying God's righteous wrath, and so making God for us by shedding his own blood.

In our sin, humanity has incurred an infinite depth that we owe. Because it is infinite, only the infinite God could pay it.

And so the eternal son of God was made man. He came down from heaven so that he might save us from our sin. Thirdly, then, and finally, finally from this passage, there's so much more to rightly say about why the son of God became man.

But finally, for this evening at least, the son of God became man to help suffering humanity. Verse 18 there, because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.

even when we are in Christ, we are familiar, aren't we, with the temptation to sin and despair.

Putting our faith in Christ does not remove us from the trials of this world, often, in fact, the other way, isn't it?

[28 : 38] The devil has all the more reason now to fire his fiery darts in our direction. Our sins have been paid for, our eternal hope has been secured, but we still need help in the present.

And that is what Christ can give us because he came down for us. But most of us here will have suffered from some kind of illness, mental or physical, in our lives.

As many of you will know, I've suffered from depression in the past, and in those times, many people offer their support, which is very kind and I'm very thankful for it, but not everyone knows what to say.

It's not uncommon for people to suggest that you maybe just cheer up a little bit, maybe you just need to have a bit more of a positive outlook, or suggest that things will turn around if you just spend a bit more time in certain spiritual disciplines.

I imagine most of us are familiar with the pain of counsel from well-meaning people who care about us, but cannot empathize with what we are going through.

[29 : 58] In those moments, we can and should be thankful for their intention, but that does not mean we are necessarily helped by their counsel, because they do not know what we're going through, and because they do not know, they are not as able to help.

In the Christian walk, we need help. There is a battle that rages within us, between the old and the new. Perhaps that there are times when we try and win the battle by our own strength.

If you've done that, you'll know how it goes. We need help. help. And we have help, because we have one who knows the full experience of striving for holiness in a sinful world full of temptation.

Our high priest, the one Lord Jesus Christ, has real and genuine sympathy and compassion for what we are going through, because he himself has experienced it.

And so he is able to give us the help we need. But we might think that he does not know because he never sinned. It is true that he did not sin.

[31 : 25] He was fully human, but he did not sin. But that does not mean he does not understand the battle. Here's a great quote I read last week, speaking of Jesus in this author, writes, sympathy with the sinner in his trial does not depend on the experience of sin, but on the experience of the strength of the temptation to sin, which only the sinless can know in its full intensity.

He who falls yields before the last strain. We do not know temptation to the degree that Jesus knew temptation because we always give into it long before he did.

Think of it like a hydraulic press kind of pushing down on an object. This is more of the strange YouTube videos I watch. As this kind of press pushes down on an object, you can kind of see the force in the meter next to it being applied steadily increase.

It's going up and up and up and up. But the sooner the object breaks, the less pressure is needed. Jesus never broke.

He never broke, which means the pressure reached levels it never has and never will for any of us. Even though he never sinned, he knows, he knows that battle against sin far more than we do.

[33 : 09] And so because he came and experienced that battle, he is able to help us in our weakness. We do not have an unknowing, far-off God directing us to do the impossible from afar.

we have a sympathetic Savior who knows how great the struggle is, but who also knows that the struggle can be won, and he's there to help us in it.

We've been saved from sin, we've been liberated from death, but as we walk in this new life, we do not do so alone, but with the eternal Son of God, who came down from heaven for us as our ever-present help.

The Son of God was made like us to liberate captive humanity, to save sinful humanity, to help suffering humanity, and much more besides.

He came down from heaven for us and for our salvation. I wonder if you were at that homeless shelter when Prince William and Prince George came from the palace and spent their afternoon peeling Brussels sprouts for you, how would you feel?

[34 : 47] How would you respond? who would you tell? You would be amazed, wouldn't you? You would be overflowing with thankfulness.

You would tell everyone you knew what they had done for you, because they came from a palace to a kitchen for a few hours to make you lunch. church. We have a God who left heaven's eternal throne, who came down to the womb of a virgin, who came down to the cross and then to the grave to free us from death, to help us in a war, to save us from our sin.

William and George were rightly applauded for what they did, but as we remind ourselves again how infinitely high Jesus was, how incredibly low he brought himself for us and our salvation, how much more, how much more does he deserve our praise and adoration, the one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God who was begotten, not created, who came down from heaven for us and for our salvation.

He is worthy, isn't he? Worthy of all of our worship and worthy of all of our praise.

Let us respond by praising him in prayer and then in song together. Let us pray. Father, we do thank you and praise you for our Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God who came down from heaven for us and for our salvation.

[37 : 01] salvation. We praise him who has defeated death for us. We praise him who bore our sins as far as the east is from the west, who bore the penalty that we deserved.

We praise him who helps us now in our weakness, knowing the struggle and the battle we face each and every day. we praise you for Jesus and we pray that you would help us to praise and worship him all of our days, that all the glory might be to him.

In his name we pray. Amen. Amen. Amen.