

## Devotional for March 19, 2021

By Major Brian Coles

In his letter to the church in Philippi, Paul the apostle writes, “In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:

- <sup>6</sup>Who, being in very nature<sup>[a]</sup> God,  
did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;  
<sup>7</sup>rather, he made himself nothing  
by taking the very nature<sup>[b]</sup> of a servant,  
being made in human likeness.
- <sup>8</sup>And being found in appearance as a man,  
he humbled himself  
by becoming obedient to death—  
even death on a cross!
- <sup>9</sup>Therefore God exalted him to the highest place  
and gave him the name that is above every name,  
<sup>10</sup>that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,  
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,  
<sup>11</sup>and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord,  
to the glory of God the Father.

“He humbled himself,” say Paul in v.8, aptly describing Jesus’ death on the cross.

Today we view the word *humble* as a virtue, and we often mean by this term someone who is self-effacing, not seeking the limelight, but willing to do lowly tasks.

But Jesus’ death was not “humble” in that sense; rather it was *humiliating*. Crucifixion degrades and dehumanizes its victim.

The body is stretched out on a cross, stripped of clothing and dignity, exposed, naked, shamed, disgraced.

Isaiah describes the Suffering Servant, in 53.3, as one from whom people hid their faces, as one rejected and despised.

The whipping and scourging prior to the crucifixion render the victim subhuman, and the weakened body affixed to the cross is a laughingstock, a fool to be mocked.

Such a man, the crowd says, is not “one of us.” Yet Paul makes clear in this Christ hymn in Philippians 2.6-11, that Christ is indeed “one of us.”

For love’s sake, Jesus, the Christ, embraced humanity and became a man. The Hebrew writer tells us in 12.2, that Jesus “endured the cross, scorning its shame.”

He chose humiliation - the unspeakable torture and degradation of the cross - to condemn sin.

On the cross, Christ bore our sin and shame, and defeated its power.

Christ endured the spikes driven into his hands and feet, that he might redeem a people to be his hands and feet in humble service to others.

Let us, then, acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father, and humbly seek to do his will.