

**Sermon – Jesus-shaped Joy**  
**Sunday February 11, 2024**

If you love basketball, one of the best players and the most exciting to watch was none other than Michael Jordan.

His ability to jump, dunk, and seemingly change directions in mid-air air was spellbinding. He was a winner and led the Chicago Bulls to 6 NBA championships. He won 10 scoring titles, 5 MVPs and played in 14 All-Star teams. He was a fierce competitor, instilling fear in his opponents and spurring his teammates to play better.

In the 90s, Gatorade launched a hugely successful campaign called Be Like Mike. Kids growing up wanted be like Mike and do what Michael Jordan could do. They watched his games, copied his moves and even stuck out their tongue like Jordan did when he was going up for a dunk.

Some of these kids eventually made it into the NBA. While many of these players resemble Jordan in their playing style no one came closer to Michael's game and fierce competitiveness than one player - Kobe Bryant.

Like many others, Kobe wanted to be like Mike. He watched his games, studied his style and practiced his moves. But what Kobe helped Kobe the most to play like his hero was his desire to learn how Jordan thinks.

Early in his career, Kobe reached out to Jordan. He would call from time to time to talk to him and ask him questions so that he could understand how Jordan thinks.

How do you prepare for a game? How do you motivate yourself? What would you do in this situation?

As Kobe came to understand Jordan's mindset, he played more and more like Jordan, becoming one of the greatest basketball players in his own right.

Now most of you probably aren't aspiring to be a great NBA player. But all of you do aspire to live a great life.

- You want to live with joy even though you're facing challenges and hardship.
- You want to love others well even when they hurt you and are hard to love.
- You want to live out your calling even though it will get really hard.

How do you live this life? Is there someone who's reached that pinnacle? Is there someone you can learn from? Is there someone who can show you how?

We're in a series called *Journey Into Joy*. We're studying the book of Philippians which is a letter Paul wrote from prison. Philippians is known as the Epistle of Joy because even though Paul has every reason to be discouraged and bitter – his letter isn't filled with discouragement and

bitterness, it's filled with joy! Over 16 times in this short letter, Paul encourages the Philippians to rejoice.

Today we're talking about Jesus-shaped joy and looking at his mindset to learn how we can live with joy. I'm indebted to Skip Heitzig for a sermon he preached on this passage.

Please turn with me in your Bibles to Philippians 2:5-11. While you look it up, here's some context. In verses 1-4, right before our passage, Paul tells the Philippians how to live out their calling and identity as a church even as they start rubbing each other the wrong way. He tells them:

*Be humble. Value others above yourselves. Look to the interests of others instead of your own.*

That's what he tells the Philippians to do. But how would they do it? Paul needs to show them. And he does this by giving an example - and not just any example, he gives the ultimate example.

**<sup>5</sup>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.**

**Philippians 2:5-11**

What was Jesus' mindset? How did he live with joy? How did he love others well? How did he complete the mission his Father gave him even though he had to suffer?

We're going to look at verses 6 to 8 today and unpack them verse by verse so that we can understand Jesus' mindset. So that we can live with joy, so that we can love others well, so that we can complete the mission God has given us even though there will be challenges.

So what was Jesus's mindset? Paul starts by telling us where Jesus comes from.

### Jesus **Who, being in very nature<sup>[a]</sup> God... (v. 6)**

So who is Jesus? He's God. He's the second person of the Trinity. Jesus is divine.

Paul says that he is in very nature God and he uses an important Greek word for nature - it's the word *morphe*. *Morphe* is the very essence of something. It's the very character of a person.

There's another Greek word that describes someone's character and it's the word *schema*. *Schema* describes the characteristic of someone that changes over time. But *morphe* describes the character of someone that never changes.

So which word does Paul use to describe Jesus' as God? *Morphe*. Jesus is God. This will never change. And just so that there's no confusion, Paul emphasizes this point. When Paul says, Jesus *being* in very nature God - he uses the present active participle for the word *being*.

Now I know it's been awhile since many of you took English, so what does that mean? It means that Jesus always has been and always will be God.

It's his very *morphe*, his nature – and this will never change. Now remember this word because we're going to see it again.

So what do we know so far? Jesus is God. He enjoys the glory of heaven, he's perfectly loved by his father and he knows no pain, suffering or death. In other words, Jesus is living the good life.

But then Paul says: **[Jesus] did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage... (v. 6)**

In the original Greek, it means Jesus doesn't see his status and privilege as something to grasp or hold on to. He doesn't keep his privilege or try to exploit it.

### Verse 7 ... **rather, he made himself nothing... (v. 7)**

The Greek word for "made himself nothing" is the word *kinosis* which means to empty. But what does Jesus empty himself of? He doesn't empty himself of his divinity as some people think, because remember - his very nature is God and that will never change.

So what does he empty himself of? He empties himself of his status, his honour and his rights.

Remember, Paul is writing to Christians in Philippi. What do we know about Philippi? Philippi was a proud Roman colony known for the high importance they placed on status. Like many Roman colonies, they had a strict hierarchy and rigid social order.

There was no middle class so people were divided into two classes - the upper class and the lower class. Now even though there were only two classes, there were many subdivisions within each of these classes and sub-subdivisions within these subdivisions.

Why so many categories? Because Romans loved to know where they stood on the social ladder. They loved boasting in their status and privilege. It was their way of feeling good about themselves by defining themselves over everyone below them.

Signs of this social order were everywhere. Depending on your status, you were allowed to wear certain clothes, occupy certain jobs and sit in certain areas at public events. The higher your status, the greater your honour and the more people looked up to you.

That's why everyone wanted to climb the social ladder. They wanted to be great; they wanted to feel important.

But then comes Jesus and he turns this whole system upside down. How does he do that?

**...by taking the very nature<sup>[b]</sup> of a servant... (v. 7)**

Jesus is God: he has the highest status, the highest honour, the highest privilege. But what does he do with it? Does it hold it over people's heads? Does he use it to put others down? Does he use it to feel good about himself? What does he do with it? He gives it away; he becomes a servant.

How much status does a servant have? None. How high is a servant on the social ladder? At the bottom. What does a servant do? He serves the people above him on the social ladder – and that's everyone.

Jesus has gone from the highest place – God and he's stooped down to the lowest place – a servant. But Paul wants us to know that Jesus doesn't just take on the *role* of a servant, he takes on the *nature* of a servant.

What word do you think Paul uses to describe this?

- How many of you think he uses the word *schema* – in other words, Jesus takes on the role of a servant only temporarily?
- How many of you think he uses the word *morphe* – in other words, Jesus' very nature is a servant and this will never change?

Paul says that Jesus, who being in *morphe* God, takes the very *morphe* of a servant.

Erwin McManus once said, To say that God is all-powerful sounds like a compliment. To say that God is all-knowing, again a compliment. But to say that God is a servant sounds blasphemous. Why is that?

It's because, at the core we don't value servanthood. We want a hierarchy where the higher you are, the more important you are. That's why we value status and privilege. We want trendier clothes, newer phones, nicer vacations, better career opportunities, more likes and followers – why? Because they're signs that we're at the top, they're signs that we've made it.

C.S. Lewis once said that pride gets no pleasure from having things. Pride gets its pleasure from having more things than the next person. In other words, we want to be higher and more important than other people because that's what we think it means to be great. But Jesus turns that upside down.

In his day, people walked everywhere to get around, and remember in that part of the world, it was extremely hot. People didn't walk around in fancy Air Jordans like Pastor Kevin; they wore simple sandals made of rope and leather. And they didn't walk around on newly paved roads or sidewalks; they walked on dirt paths often covered by animal manure.

Why does this matter? Well, what happens to your feet when you walk around in dust and manure with scorching dry desert heat? They get stinky, filthy and utterly disgusting!

So when you walked to visit someone and entered into their house, what would you do about your dirty feet?

In that culture, it was customary for a servant to wash your feet. In Jewish tradition, feet were considered undignified so no self-respecting Jew would ever demean themselves to do it. The task was performed by a slave. But even for a slave, it was too demeaning so the task of washing feet was reserved for the very lowest of the slaves.

Now one night, Jesus is invited to be the guest of honour at someone's home. Jesus is a well-respected rabbi and people have come to listen to him.

But there's a problem. Jesus has walked in his sandals under the hot desert sun to get here. So what are his feet like? They're filthy. And no one has offered to wash them. Even Jesus' disciples don't seem to care about their master's dignity. Why? They're too busy arguing over the positions they want in Jesus' kingdom.

So what does Jesus - the rabbi, the master, the guest of honour, God himself in the flesh do in this moment?

He gets up from the meal, takes off his outer clothing, wraps a towel around his waist, pours water into a basin, stoops down, takes the filthy, disgusting feet of his disciples in his hands and he does the most demeaning task that no one will do - he washes those feet.

But Jesus is doing more than just washing feet. What's he doing? He's showing us what God is like. He's revealing God's character, God's *morphe*. He's revealing that at the core, the God of the universe, the King of kings, the Lord of Lords, the one who is at the highest place - is a servant. Someone who puts himself in the lowest place to serve others. Jesus is showing us that being a servant doesn't contradict his character, it is his character.

**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. (Mark 10:45)**

Jesus has been stooping. He stoops to become a man. He stoops to become a servant. But he's not done stooping yet. There's one more place to go.

**<sup>8</sup> And being found in appearance as a man,  
he humbled himself  
by becoming obedient to death—  
even death on a cross! (v. 8)**

Today, crosses are trendy. We see them everywhere - on jewelry, tattoos and church buildings. We like crosses because they represent hope.

But in Jesus' time, no one liked crosses because they didn't represent hope, they represent death. In fact, dying on a cross was so humiliating, so painful that unless you were a rebel traitor, no Roman citizen could be sentenced to crucifixion. So what kind of people do you think they reserved crucifixion for? Slaves.

First they would take the slave who had committed a crime and torture him in various ways. They would then strip off his clothes and stretch the naked prisoner out on the cross. They would drive large heavy spikes into their hands and feet. And then they would raise up the cross so that everyone could see their humiliation and eventual death.

But death wouldn't come quickly. The prisoner would die a slow and agonizing one. Over days they would experience excruciating pain, thirst, hunger, blood loss, suffocation and eventually death.

Why did Jesus choose this path for himself? Why did he choose suffering over comfort? Why did he choose humiliation over honour? Why did he choose a crown of thorns over a crown of glory?

**For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame... (Mark 10:45)**

What was this joy?

- It was the joy of seeing you set free from sin to become who you were meant to be.
- It was the joy of welcoming back God's children into the loving arms of their Heavenly Father.
- It was the joy of sending out church into the world to bring healing, joy and restoration.

Our passage today is considered to a Christological gem by theologians and the richest passage in the New Testament that celebrates the incarnation - God becoming human in Jesus. Our passage today became a hymn in the early church that was sung regularly in worship.

But why did Paul write this passage? He didn't write it to impress theologians. He didn't write it to make the Christian Billboard Top 40. In fact, Paul didn't write it as a stand alone text at all. Paul wrote it as part of his letter to encourage Christians like you and me:

- To be humble and united
- To resist the temptations of our culture
- To partner together to live out our gospel identity and mission

Jesus is our example.

- The one who came from the highest place to the lowest place.
- The one who gave up his status to serve others.
- The one whose example of self-sacrifice show us that to live out our identity and calling as God's people we need to pour ourselves out and humble ourselves.

First, we need to Pour ourselves out. **[Pour yourself out]**

Jesus let go his status and privilege. He let go of his rights and reputation. He refused to use them to his own advantage or to pursue his own gain. Instead he emptied himself, he made himself nothing, he poured himself out.

Why? So that he could do God's will. So that he could serve others. So that he could love others well. And when he was tempted to take the easy path, when he was tempted to look out for himself, when he was tempted to do things his way, he could say, Not my will but yours be done.

What keeps us from doing God's will? We want to do our will instead. Instead of building God's kingdom, we want to build our own kingdom. Instead of serving others, we want to use them for our own advantage.

That's why Jesus says, **...seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. (Matthew 6:33)**

Pouring yourself out means:

- Emptying yourself of your personal ambitions.
- Surrendering your desire for recognition, success, financial security, the approval of others, the need to always be right.
- Renouncing the idols of your heart so that you can give your life away for others.

Pouring yourself out is an act of surrender.

- It's presenting yourself as a living sacrifice,
- It's offering yourself to be used for God's purposes,
- It's saying to God, All of me to all of you – not my will but yours be done.

There's a song that speaks to this. The lyrics go like this:

**Jesus, all for Jesus  
All I am and have  
And ever hope to be  
Jesus, all for Jesus**

All I am and have  
And ever hope to be

All of my ambitions, hopes and plans  
I surrender these  
Into your hands

For its only in  
Your will that I am free

Jesus, all for Jesus  
All I am and have  
And ever hope to be

How can you give all of yourself to Jesus? How is Jesus inviting you to pour yourself out? What do you need to surrender to Jesus today?

To live out our identity and calling, we need to pour ourselves out. We also need to Humble ourselves. [**Humble yourself**]

- We live in a celebrity culture where we're obsessed with self-promotion, status and fame.
- We live in a me-first culture where we think we deserve everything and people exist to serve me.
- We live in a status culture where the way up is up. To get up, you need to climb up, lift yourself up, do anything to move up.

But is up really where God wants you to go? Is up really what you were created for?

You see the Kingdom of God is an upside down kingdom.

Jesus said, **For those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted. (Matthew 23:12)**

In other words, the way up is down and the way down is up. Greatness isn't climbing up so you can have more status. Greatness is stooping down so you can serve.

Pastor Rick Warren says: **The world defines greatness in terms of power, possessions, prestige, and position. If you can demand service from others, you have arrived. In our self-serving culture with its me-first mentality, acting like a servant is not a popular concept. Jesus, however, measured greatness in terms of service, not status. God determines your greatness by how many people you serve, not how many people serve you. (Rick Warren)**

While the disciples sat around arguing over their status, Jesus stoops down to wash their feet.



Then he says, **Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. <sup>15</sup> I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. (John 13:14-15)**

How can you cultivate a heart of humility? You can practice:

- Listening well... and I mean really listen. When someone's talking, don't think about what you want to say, don't think about why they're wrong - give them your full attention and simply listen to understand them and love them.
- Compliment others without feeling threatened by them.
- Admit your mistakes when you're wrong.
- Do the thing you feel is beneath you to do.
- Resist defending yourself over every perceived offense and misunderstanding.

The way up is down and the way down is up.

C.S. Lewis said that humility isn't thinking less of yourself, it's thinking of yourself less. Why is this so helpful? Because when you're thinking of yourself less, who are you thinking more of? Others. When you humble yourself, you can value others above yourself and look to their interests instead of your own.

This is what Jesus-shaped joy looks like.

- Pouring yourself out so you can give your life away.
- Humbling yourself so that you can serve others in love.

Where do we see the ultimate expression of this? On the cross. On the cross where Jesus pours himself out and humbles himself by becoming obedient to death.

Why did Jesus do this? He did this because of his love for you. He did this for the sake of his mission. And he did this – and this is so important – he did it because it's who he is. Because at the core, Jesus is a servant - it's his character, and it's this character that he's shaping you and me together in:

- So that we can be unified
- So that we can partner together in loving service
- So that we can go out and live out his mission in the world.

But it won't be easy. Our hearts are too full of pride and our relationships are too full of conflict. The only way to move forward in love is to experience a death to our sin.

Jesus said, **“Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. <sup>25</sup> For whoever wants to save their life<sup>[a]</sup> will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it. (Matthew 16:24-25)**

## Instructions for Lent

This Wednesday is Ash Wednesday. It which marks the beginning of the Lenten season. Lent is the 40-day period leading up to Easter. It's a time to reflect on Jesus' journey to the cross, it's a time of spiritual discipline and renewal, it's a time to:

- Give up something specific that hinders your relationship with Jesus.
- Take up a spiritual practice that will help you grow closer in your relationship with Jesus.

These practices help us to prepare our hearts to celebrate Jesus' cross and resurrection on Easter weekend.

At this time, please pull out your Lent Commitment Cards. You should have two of them that were placed on your seat. In a moment, you'll have a chance to make a Lent Commitment but first we'll walk through this card together. If you're watching online, we invite you to participate as well by going to the information on the screen by filling out your commitment card online.

[Cornerstone Lent Page <https://cornerstonechurch.ca/lent-commitment/> ]

So on your card, there are three boxes to fill out.

1. First, write your name.
2. Then under "This Lent, I will Give Up" - prayerfully consider what God would have you surrender. What are some things you will give up that are hindering your relationship with Jesus?

For example, you could give up:

- TV or Netflix (this could be for certain shows or altogether)
- Internet, social media, video games (this could be for certain times or altogether)
- Working beyond normal work hours
- Staying up or sleeping too late
- Food indulges where you try to "feed your soul" with things other than Jesus like chocolate, coffee, sugary foods or eating out
- Or anything else. The idea is to give up something that hinders your relationship with Jesus.

3. Then under "This Lent I will take up the practice of" – consider what you will do to draw closer to Jesus.

This year, we're encouraging you to go through our Journey Into Joy Devotional & Prayer Guide - which is connected with our Journey Into Joy sermon series. This guide is designed to lead you into meaningful times of prayer and reflection for both your personal walk with Jesus as well as Cornerstone's life and mission as a local church.

Each daily devotion includes a reading from Philippians that connects with one of Cornerstone's seven distinctives. These distinctives represent some of the values and practices that make us the unique church that God has called us to be.

If you're newer to this church, this guide will help you understand what Cornerstone is all about and give you space to discern how you might engage deeper into the life and mission of this church.

If you've been with Cornerstone for awhile, this guide will reinforce your sense of what God is calling us to be as a local church and stir your heart to see what He might be asking you to do next.

Cornerstone has been growing so much and God is doing so many exciting things. But we know he's not done yet – we believe he has many more exciting plans ahead! That's why we hope all of you will use this Lent Guide so that God can unify our hearts around Jesus so that we can serve faithfully together to advance the mission God has given us.

The guide has a 7-day cycle of devotional readings so you'll go through them about 6-7 times during Lent. This is intentional; it's meant to reinforce what you're learning and deepen your sense of what God is saying to you.

You can use this guide on its own or in combination with another practice – for example, you could use the Lectio 365 app or check out other ideas on our Lent page.

If you have kids, we also do Lent together as a family. You'll definitely want to check out our Lent page because we have family Lent activities, readings and tips on how to explain Lent to your kids. So check out our Lent page for lots of great ideas!

4. Now, you have two cards. In a moment, we'll give you time to fill out both of them. Then, when you're ready, we invite you to come out of your seat, walk up to the front and place one of your cards here at the foot of the cross. The other card is for you to keep as a reminder of your Lent Commitment.

While you're here, you can pick up your Lent Guide and then make your way back to your seat.

5. Some final instructions:

- Again, ideas and resources can be found on our Lent Page on the screen.
- There are pens in the seat pouches in front of you. If you need a pen, raise your hand and one of our ushers will give you one.

- And if you need assistance with bringing your Lent Commitment Card to the cross and getting a Lent Guide, again just raise your hand and one of our ushers will be happy to help.

Some music is going to play now. And we invite you to take this time to prepare your heart. Ask God, What Lent commitment do you want me to make this year? Write it down and when you're ready, we invite you to come up, place it at the cross and grab your copy of the Lent Prayer Guide.