

For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you.

John 13:15

The Self-Emptying Jesus

Doy Moyer

Store In My Heart

Micah 4:1-2

It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and it shall be lifted up above the hills; and peoples shall flow to it, and many nations shall come, and say: "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob, that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths." For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.

Yes, that passage is in Micah. Micah prophesied near the time Israel was taken captive by Assyria. His warnings and message of hope were needed but not heeded by those in Judah. The coming salvation was prominent in the hopeful passages of his writing.

This is one of many promises that help identify Jesus and His message of salvation.

One of the most intriguing, discussed, and challenging texts in Scripture is found in the statement made by Paul in **Philippians 2:5-8**:

"Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross."

This is said to be the mind or attitude of Christ (**v. 5**) and is set forth as the example for disciples to follow (**vv. 3-4**). This shows an attitude of humble submission, putting aside any selfish ambition, and putting others before self. If Christians do not follow this example, they do not have the mind of Jesus and are missing what discipleship is all about. It is certainly a challenge because it is the very point at which (likely) most of us struggle. Self keeps getting in the way, and I doubt I'm overstating it to say that all of us can do far better than we do.

Jesus Christ's self-denial is monumental due to His own identity as God manifest in the flesh. Part of Paul's point is to say that if Jesus, who is God, could empty Himself and put others first, who do we think we are when we act in our own selfish interests? We have no inherent claim over others, yet the God who created us all and who does inherently own our lives was willing to set Himself aside to die so that we might live. What amazing grace! How do we begin to wrap our minds around what He did?

I often like to point people to the text itself and ask, what does the text specifically say that Jesus emptied himself **OF**? So often when I've done this, I start getting answers back immediately. I might hear terms like "glory," "power," or "the form of God." I will then ask them to actually put their eyes on the text to answer the question. What does it say Jesus emptied himself **OF**? Look again.



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For Our Information

Joyce Venable has not been feeling well this past week. Please keep her and Bill in your prayers. Her health affects them both. An extra call or card might be helpful also.

Jimmy Gray has knee surgery near the end of October.

Jonathan & Amy Simpson are out of town this weekend.

Tonight we start in 1Samuel 23.

Wednesday at 7 pm in Ephesians 3:7

Pray for safety, courage & healing.

Notice that it does not say he emptied himself **OF** anything. It says He emptied **HIMSELF**. That is a huge difference. He was not just giving something of himself. He was giving himself. Completely. This is important for helping us understand how we follow His example. When Jesus tells His disciples to deny themselves (**Luke 9:23**), He was not telling them to deny themselves **OF** things. He was telling them to deny themselves. The Lord does not just want things from us; He wants us. Completely.

The self-emptying of Jesus is highlighted by the fact that He is by very nature God. He was not denying his divine nature by going to the cross. He was, however, showing the kind of God whom we serve. While the wages of sin are death (**Romans 6:23**), Jesus took the wages upon Himself in a way that likely goes beyond our full understanding. This coincides with **Isaiah 53:12**, *"He poured out Himself to death."* Why? Because *"He Himself bore the sin of many, and interceded for the transgressors."*

In coming to earth, He, being in the form of God, took on the form of the servant. I judge this to be a reference to what we normally call the Suffering Servant for which Isaiah is known (e.g., **Isaiah 49, 53**). He fulfilled what the Servant was called to do so that He would be the light to the nations and that *"My salvation may reach to the end of the earth"* (**Isaiah 49:6**). Because of what He did, the Servant *"will justify the many, as He will bear their iniquities"* (**Isaiah 53:11**). The act of emptying Himself was not just about coming to earth; it was about going to the cross in order to provide justification for His people.

On the practical application, we simply note again **Philippians 2:3-4**, which teaches us to do what Jesus did. Nothing from selfishness is allowed; others are to come first. We are to seek the mind of Jesus.

The cross was not the end of the story: *"For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father"* (**vv. 9-11**).

We do not exalt ourselves. The Lord is the One who exalts, and as Christ was exalted, so also He promises to glorify His own people. Paul put it this way a chapter later: *"For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself"* (**Philippians 3:20-21**).

May God be glorified as we seek the mind of Christ!

(Those who engage in social media would do well to follow brother Moyer. His spiritual teachings are worthy reading. DLH)

We seek only to serve God according to His Will!

