

# The Story of Jesus in 5 Words

## Philippians 2:5-11

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I am here today with one goal, to make sure everyone here today knows the story of Jesus and how his story can transform your story—the one you are living and your future story yet to be lived.

I have a story. I could summarize my story in four words: *Home. Call. Ministry. Marriage.* *Home* was family and growing up years in Iowa. *Call* is my faith and my Christianity and the decision to be a pastor. *Ministry* is the last 20 years. *Marriage* is my new word. I got married this past August to Jennifer and in June I'm adding another word, *Dad*. So I presently have four words that describe my whole life. *Home. Call. Ministry. Marriage.* If you were to summarize your life story in four or five words, what would they be?

Some of the words we would pick are happy ones; some might be painful ones. But all of us are living our own personal story; our own biography. I want to show you how the story of your life has everything to do with the story of Jesus' life and why the resurrection of Jesus matters to all of our stories.

To do this, I want to tell you Jesus' story in five words. Actually, the Apostle Paul is going to tell Jesus' story, in Philippians 2. This is Paul's summary biography of Jesus Christ. The Big Picture story.

The broad context of this passage is Christian unity and the humility and the others orientation it takes to achieve it. What better example of humility and others orientation than Jesus himself? Within the call to unity is this amazing description of Jesus' whole story. Many scholars think this passage was a first century worship song. That's why your Bible may show it with indentation, like a Psalm. It's a song telling the story of Jesus.

### The Story of Jesus in 5 Words

*Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God...* (Philippians 2:5-6 ESV)

#### **Exalted (Verses 5-6)**

The story of Jesus begins in eternity past. Before the creation of the world and before anything else, there was God. In the mystery of the Trinity, God is three persons: the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. They are so unified as to be one God, yet three persons. What is it like to be God? Total glory and joy—infinately so. They eternally enjoy one another like we enjoy relationship. Only this is the perfect relationship. Love. Delight. Full sharing. Giving for one another. Within this Godhead was the Son of God—Jesus is the name given to him at birth. Jesus pre-existed as God in heaven with full divine rights and infinite privilege.

- *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.* (John 1:1)
- *He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power.* (Hebrews 1:3)

Jesus' story really has no beginning in time but what we must realize what was his before he came. We have to realize what he left. There was unending praise and worship for him. Total joy. Infinite power and strength. No weakness. No limitation. No human body with all the issues we all know too well. No need for food, sleep, or water. Think of the greatest moment in your life, the greatest thrill or happiest time; Jesus' eternal experience was far, far better and it had been that for all eternity. *Exalted*.

### **Humbled (Verse 6)**

*...Did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself. (Philippians 2:6-8)*

Jesus was exalted. He was at the highest place. Yet Paul writes that in Jesus' assessment, his rights and privileges as God were not more important than fulfilling the will of his Father. There was something more important to him than his own exaltation. He did not count these privileges of divine right as things he had to grasp or cling to. He was willing to give them up for God's will.

*...But emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.*

Humbled. This was Jesus' humiliation. He became a man and came here. It may not seem that becoming a man is humiliating, but being human is all we've ever known. All we know is weakness, so we sleep; we know hunger, so we eat; we thirst, so we drink; we have needs of all kinds, so we work. All we've known is a world of frailty where friends and loved ones get sick and there's disease, and sorrow, and pain, and death. All we've known is a world of conflict and strife. All we've known is Mr. A saying something derogatory about Mr. B, and Mrs. C gossiping about Mrs. D and E, and F murdering G, and Mr. H breaking up Mrs. I and Mr. J's marriage, and Mr. K losing his job while his wife L and daughters M and N cry at home, and Dr. O going to Rev. P to confess his sin while Q, R, and S plot how to take him down. T hates U, and V is jealous of W, and everyone's worrying about what X, Y, and Z will do. This is our normal. This is the world we live in but it's not the world he lived in.

Jesus was God. Jesus' whole eternal past was perfection, worship, and joy. To come to a world of hurts and sorrows like ours, would you call that humiliation? If he did that willingly, would that not say something profound about him?

How was he humbled? He became a servant, made in the likeness of men. Think of it. The King of all Kings chooses to become a servant of men. The highest takes the lowest place. The NIV translates this, *He made himself nothing*. (Philippians 2:7 NIV) Why? *Love*.

*Exalted. Humbled.* Here is the third word, *Crucified*.

### **Crucified (Verses 7-8)**

*And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. (Philippians 2:7-8 ESV)*

Here we see how low Jesus willingly went. Leaving his exaltation was one thing. Become a man and a servant was one thing. But dying on a cross is another thing. Let's think through the night of his betrayal and arrest. Jesus was in the Garden of Gethsemane. He was praying. There came a very large number of Roman soldiers along with Judas, his "friend." Peter wanted to fight; Jesus allowed himself to be arrested. Allowed himself to be beaten. Allowed himself to be spit upon till the spittle of others ran down his face. Allowed himself to be

mocked. Allowed himself to be treated like a rag doll. Why? All power was his at every moment of that night and day. He was the one who spoke the word and the universe and all its power from the nuclear to the galaxies was created. All it would have taken was the mere thought and his attackers, and the Jewish leaders, and the city of Jerusalem, indeed the whole world, would have vanished and he would have been right back to his place of exaltation. Why didn't he?

He humbled himself. The highest willingly became the lowest. The very lowest. How low? *Even death on a cross.*

The cross. We say the word so easily. We sing about it. We wear them around our necks. That's probably because we've never seen anyone die on one. The Romans were the ones who used this grisly execution and to them, crucifixion was such a revolting thing that they would not speak of it in polite company. The word "cross" was a profane word. They had seen men die on one. They knew what it meant.

To die on a cross was to die a slow death gradually losing all human dignity. You hung there naked. The Romans did this in the most public places, to intimidate any who defied them. There, in plain view to all, Jesus hung naked.

The physical experience on a cross is hard to imagine. The pain of the nails through your wrists and feet. The struggle to get breath by pushing up against those nails. The agony of doing this pushing over and over again as survival drives another push in spite of the pain.

At some point you lose control of your bodily functions. Due to the exposure and lack of food and water, you descend into complete exhaustion. Heaving and gasping. All of this done in full view of your loved ones and your enemies. There he is. The soldiers are mocking and the Pharisees are laughing. *How low did he go?*

Beyond the physical realities, Jesus experienced something on the cross that no one has ever felt. On the cross, Jesus became the curse of God. *Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree" (Galatians 3:13)*

Not only did his own people reject him, God cursed him by making Jesus personally guilty for the sins of the world. The lies. The atrocities that Mr. A did to Mr. B. The righteous failures of C, D, and all the rest. What makes this so devastating for Jesus is that all we've known is a sinner's conscience. We're accustomed to shame. He was the perfect and blameless holy Son of God. Sin was the polar opposite of all that he ever was. Here in his moment of physical weakness, God adds the spiritual and psychological devastation of massive moral guilt. A crushing and overwhelming agony. How low did he willingly go? Jesus bore the greatest possible human agony on the cross. He went further and lower down into anguish and misery than any human has ever gone. That is why the sky went dark at noon until 3. And at 3:00 that afternoon, Jesus cried out, *It is finished!* (John 19:30) And he died in total weakness. The third word is *crucified. Exalted. Humbled. Crucified.*

Most biographies end there. Date of death. She was born on this date. She died on this date. End of story. End of biography. The fact that this was not the end of his biography is what draws us here today and fills churches all over the world. Paul writes...

*Therefore God has highly exalted him... (Verse 9)*

How? He's dead. How do you exalt a dead man? Men have tried. Lenin's body has been lying in state under glass since 1924. He doesn't look so good. Not very exalted. When it comes to exalting dead men, Lenin is as good as anyone's come up with. But what can God do?

Jesus' body lay in the grave Friday by 6:00 pm. Friday night passed. Saturday and Saturday night passed. And here's what God did.

### ***Raised (Verse 9)***

*Now after the Sabbath, toward the dawn of the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. And behold, there was a great earthquake, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. And for fear of him the guards trembled and became like dead men. But the angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here, for he has risen, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead, and behold, he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him. See, I have told you." So they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. And behold, Jesus met them and said, "Greetings!" And they came up and took hold of his feet and worshiped him. (Matthew 28:1-9)*

The exaltation of Jesus began at first light on Sunday morning. God the Father, accepting Jesus' sacrifice for sin and to make that victory complete over death, reached into that tomb, and with power that he alone possesses, resurrected Jesus back to life. The resurrection was the first step in exaltation. That exaltation continued 40 days later as Jesus ascended to heaven and God the Father seated him in heaven's highest place of honor, at the Father's right hand. He was given a name and honor that is above every name, *so 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.* (Philippians 2:10-11)

There is coming a day when everyone from A to Z, all us sinners and all creation, will bow before Christ. In the end, Jesus is back where he began. Exalted. Enthroned. Worshiped now as God AND Savior and Lord. Jesus' story in 5 words: *Exalted. Humbled. Crucified. Raised. Exalted.*

### **So What?**

The implications for the resurrection are massive. It means God was here with us. God lived our pain. He understands our weakness. Jesus entered into our pain fully and defeated sin and death completely. It means this life is not all there is. It means this world matters and we matter and what happens to us when we die matters.

Here's what it means for you and your story. It means that Jesus can change your life. Change your story. What is your story in 5 words? *Home. Family. Career. Hobby. Marriage.* Whatever. You are living your life. Your life matters. We want life words like: *Successful. Admired. Healthy. Beautiful.* Here are God's words for us: *Image-bearer. Sinner. Lost. Hopeless. Death. Judgment.* That's our story. On our own, that's our future.

But Jesus came. He lived. He died. On the third day he was resurrected. Words for Jesus? *Hero. Conqueror. Savior. Life-changer.*

Jesus will change your life and your destiny. How? He also is the *Promise-giver*. Jesus promised to all who turn from their sin and believe in him as their personal Savior, that he will change our lives and our destinies. We were “sinner,” now we are “forgiven.” We were under the wrath of God but now we are under his love. We faced death as a terror but Jesus promises life eternal.

Jesus changes our words. Jesus changes our lives. Now everything has what we desperately long for—meaning. Life matters because it’s not all that is.

Our church is filled with sinners who were this and that, and who still struggle with this or that, but now by faith in Christ we have experienced God’s grace and forgiveness so that while we still struggle with these things, God doesn’t see us that way anymore. He’s forgiven us and made us new and we shall be this for all eternity.

Has Jesus changed your words? No? Would you like him to? How? This Easter, believe that Jesus died for your sins, he was buried, and on the third day he rose from the dead.

The highest became the lowest so that by becoming low, he could bring us up with him. That includes you—if you will believe.

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