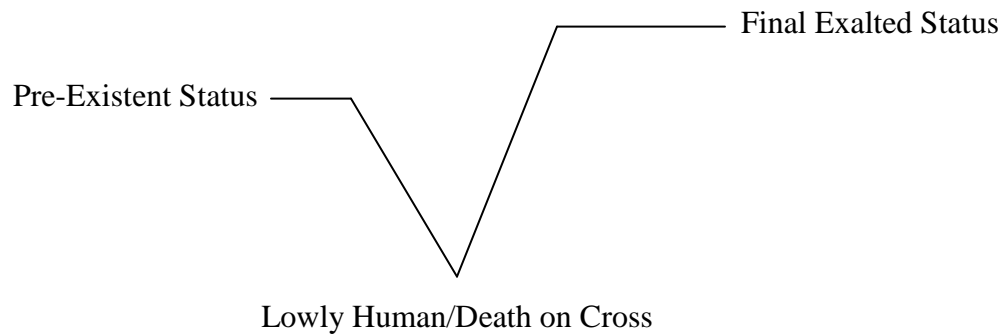


Winning By Losing

On Sunday, we continued our study of Philippians 2:1-11, which quotes the words of one of the earliest Christian worship songs.

1. At the outset of Sunday's sermon, Jeff told how, when he was a boy, he climbed up a 20 foot diving platform, but couldn't bring himself to jump. Instead, as everyone watched, he climbed back down, to his eternal humiliation.
 - a. When you were a kid, what's one of the scariest things you ever faced?
 - b. As an adult, what's one of the scariest things you've ever faced?
 - c. Imagine yourself standing on the edge of a 20 foot diving platform, with lots of friends watching and cheering you on. How would you feel? What would you do?
2. Once again, let's read Philippians 2:1-11. This passage can be divided into two parts. Verses 1-4 are words of exhortation from Paul. Verse 5 bridges from Paul's words into his quotation of the early Christian worship song, which is found in verses 6-11. The song tells us that Jesus faced a choice: (a) exploit his divine status and stay in the safety and splendor of heaven; or (b) give it all up to come to us in human form.
 - a. Jeff described the choice Jesus faced this way: "Jesus stood on the edge of heaven, looked down at this water-blue earth, and jumped – gave it all up to be born a human into a peasant family and ultimately die a brutal, humiliating death." As Jesus stood on the edge of making his fateful decision to leave heaven, what do you think he may have thought and felt?
 - b. What do you suppose Jesus missed most about heaven while on earth?
 - c. Jeff described a time in his life that was so "heavenly," it was hard to leave behind. He described a close-knit circle of Christian friends at law school and the great times they had journeying together. Tell us about a time in your life when, if you could have, you might have chosen to stay there forever.
3. Jesus took the leap. He became human, he experienced illness, he lost loved ones to death, he saw his people brutalized by the Romans, he had to drag himself out of bed early in the morning to do the work of a carpenter, he experienced the loneliness of being single, he experienced his family turning on him early in his ministry (Mark 3:20-35), and ultimately he endured the pain of being beaten to a pulp, then nailed to a cross to die as a common criminal.
 - a. At that point, how do you think Jesus felt about his choice to become human? Do you think he was still glad to have become human? Do you think he was tempted to give up?

- b. The graph below depicts the trajectory of Jesus' existence. The cross represented the low point. We all experience low points – maybe because life has pushed us off a cliff or maybe because (like Jesus) we've made a bold choice that leads to hard times. In your life so far, what's been the lowest point?



4. Read verses 9-11 again. This part of the song tells us that, because Jesus took the leap and gave away his divine prerogatives, risking it all, he ended up in an even better place than where he started – his post-existence status greater than his pre-existence status.
- These verses tell us that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow and every tongue confess Jesus as Lord. Do you think this will literally happen? If so, how and when?
 - When Jesus returned to heaven to his exalted status, how do you think he felt about the choice he'd originally made, all he'd been through, and where he now was?
 - We often see the "Jesus pattern" repeated in our own lives. On Sunday, Jeff gave the example of Steve Jobs (who was kicked out of Apple, retooled his life in the wilderness, then was invited back into Apple even more triumphant than before) and the example of John Riordon (who was living the cushy life of a young banker, escaped Vietnam, but then chose to return to save his friends, and ultimately was hailed as a great hero). With both these individuals, talk through how they might have felt: (a) when everything was going well; (b) when everything fell apart; and (c) when they eventually ended up in an even better place.
 - When in your life have you experienced this kind of great triumph of faith – where you took a great fall (either by choice or by force of circumstances) only to rise thereafter to an even better place than you started?
 - In your life right now, what does the 20 foot diving platform represent? Is there a bold choice, a leap of faith, that God might be calling you to make at this juncture in your life? Are you ready to jump? Why or why not?