

Daily Devotional, December 18, 2020 The Emptying That Brings Fullness

⁵ In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: ⁶ Who, being in very nature^[a] God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; ⁷ rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross! Philippians 2:5-8 (NIV)

Christmas is approaching quickly. For some of us, it is a time of happiness mixed with sadness. We Christians are certainly joyful about celebrating the birth of the Christ child. At the same time, there will be empty chairs at the dinner table, maybe for the first time due to someone's passing, but more likely due to restrictions that allow us to gather together at this time. Lost loved ones, broken homes and illnesses can lead to the empty chairs and the silence that rings in our ears.

Every year as we decorate our Christmas tree, I can see my reflection in some of the glass ornaments hanging on the tree. As I look at my reflection, I remember Christmases from the past, like when my grandmother died. As a kid, I would always try making funny faces appear on the round colorful balls hanging from the tree at Grandma's house. I confess to being disciplined for breaking a few, but fond memories, nonetheless.

That was far too many years ago, yet the powerful emotions of Christmas make memories linger on. My family has developed its own traditions. These traditions are the constants during the hectic time around Christmas. Christmas Eve evening, after church, we would all put on our p.j.'s park in front of the television for Christmas movies and a large assortment of snacks. It's different now, our kids are all grown up and no longer live with us. As I reflect on those times together, I find they are bittersweet memories that I cherish, yet I lament the fact that they are in the past, not to be revisited.

Christmas must bring bittersweet memories for God the Father, as well. I cannot imagine a pain greater than losing a child. I do know the great joy and blessing of seeing my own children born. I cannot imagine God sending His Son into our world, knowing that His mission was to be killed.

In Philippians 2:7 we read, "*rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness*

Don't skim over the above verse and take it too lightly. Jesus was equal in every way with God. I'd like you to grasp the significance of these words. Jesus gave up His place with God. He was there before the beginning of time, receiving the praises of the angels. He gave up his position, to become like you and me. Would you and I have done that? The Christ child's birth was a *gigantic* divine demotion. It is hard for us to understand. Think of how we have scratched, clawed and climbed ladders for promotions in this world. Christ was illogical in every way. Why? He became like us, to share all our emotions and experiences. He became like us, to be able to be a very personal God—a God that fully understands us spiritually, emotionally and physically. He became like us, to die for all of us.

If painful memories and sad emotions begin to grip your heart this Christmas season, I pray that you will remember the divine demotion that Christ took for us. Whatever emotion you are feeling, He has felt. Whatever troubles are weighing you down, He has been there. Friends and family members sometimes abandon us, but He never does. Those of us who are Christ-followers know that we truly have a friend in the Christ child.

I no longer call you servants because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends. John 15:15 (NIV)

Prayer: Lord, help us to focus on that Baby in the manger, Who could have come as a ruling King, but instead humbled himself, even to death, to become one of us. Thank You for giving us a Savior Who knows our troubles and our faults, yet still calls us friends. In His precious name we pray. Amen.