

When she was just 16 years old, Callie Rogers won nearly £2m in the UK lottery. She'd been working on the till in a supermarket, but she quickly gave that up to spend her winnings on things like vacations, gifts, cosmetic surgery and drugs.

A decade later, Callie had just £2,000 in the bank. And by 2021 she was penniless and living on government benefits.

It's a story that's similar to many others who've won massive amounts of money.

- 5 years after Kentucky resident David Edwards won \$27 million, he was penniless and living in a storage shed with his wife.
- 2 years after Willie Hurt won \$3 million, he was broke and charged with murder.
- 11 years after John McGuinness from Scotland won £10 million he owed more than £2 million and was about to get his house repossessed.

Tragically, many people who unexpectedly become rich, squander it all incredibly quickly, and end up with nothing.

But this morning we're going to look at a far more extreme riches to rags story. We're going to think about someone who had far greater wealth than any lottery winner, and yet he experienced a far deeper poverty than any of us will.

But incredibly he didn't lose everything through foolish decisions, self-indulgence, greed or addiction. Incredibly, he laid all of this down for you and for me.

But that wasn't the end of his story. This is a riches to rags to riches story!

But this is not just a truth for us to marvel at this morning. This is the example that we're called to follow in our lives. Each of us are called to Serve with a Christ-Like Attitude.

Read Philippians 2:5-11:

⁵Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:

⁶Who, being in very nature God,

did not consider equality with God something to be grasped,

⁷but made himself nothing,

taking the very nature of a servant,

being made in human likeness.

⁸And being found in appearance as a man,

he humbled himself

and became obedient to death—even death on a cross!

⁹Therefore God exalted him to the highest place

and gave him the name that is above every name,

¹⁰that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,

in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

¹¹and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord,

to the glory of God the Father."

1. Jesus is our Standard

Many people think that Paul was quoting here an early Christian song. We can't be sure who wrote it, whether it was Paul himself or someone else. And of course we don't know the tune.

But we do know that the words are incredibly powerful and profound. They challenge our understanding of who Christ is and what he has done.

And we also know why Paul quoted it here. . This was not just a theology lesson. He didn't just want us to learn these wonderful truths about Jesus or even just be moved to worship in response to them. He wanted us to learn from them so we'd follow his example. "Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus." Philippians 2:5

Last week we saw that if we're going to stand in the face of opposition and be effective in our witness for Christ, we need to be together in unity. Reject selfish ambition or vain conceit, think about others as better than ourselves and look out for their interests and not just our own.

But how can we do this? How can we cultivate this attitude, this mind-set, this outlook on life? Well, we need to follow the

example of Jesus.

That doesn't mean Jesus is only our example. He is far more than just a model to follow. He is our Creator, Saviour, Lord. He's the one who saves us, sanctifies us and glorifies us. He has and will accomplish so many things that we could never do!

So we'll never be exactly like him. But we are called to follow in his footsteps. Serve in a way that is like him. He's the standard for how we should live.

2. Jesus is the Son of God

We can see this balance at the beginning of this song, as Paul declared that Jesus is more than we could ever be. "Who, being in very nature God." Philippians 2:6

a) He is Truly God

Some people claim that Jesus was just a good man, a great teacher, a prophet or even an angel sent from God. But Paul was clear about his true identity. In his personal and essential nature, Jesus is divine.

He is the eternal Son of God. "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation... all things were created by him and for him. ¹⁷He is before all things, and in him all things hold together." Colossians 1:15-17 Jesus is our Creator God – the source, purpose and sustainer of this universe.

i) Recognise Our Identity

Of course, we can never step into that role. But we can learn something even from this about what it means to have the same attitude as Christ.

This teaches us that humility is not about having a low self-esteem or low self-worth. It's not about thinking that we're nothing and worth nothing.

Jesus always knew who he was. He was aware of his true identity and value. And for us, humility starts when we understand our true identity and worth. We're the crown of God's creation, valuable because "God created man in his own image." Genesis 1:27

But more than that, if we've trusted in Jesus, then we're children of God. "To all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God." John 1:12 Today we're forgiven, redeemed, justified and accepted into God's family as his kids – loved, valued and precious to him.

b) He Didn't Hold Onto His Rights

Jesus knew his true identity. So he knew that he deserved all the praise and glory, but he "did not consider equality with God something to be grasped." Philippians 2:6

He didn't cling to all that was rightfully his. He didn't use his status as equal with the Father for his own benefit or advantage.

Instead he was willing to lay aside what was his by right - his position, status, honour and glory - for the sake of others.

i) Release our Rights

This doesn't come naturally to us. We're often encouraged to assert our rights, demand what is ours, fight for our privileges and position.

But if we're going to have a Christ-like attitude we need to be willing to release our rights, for the benefits of others.

Paul did this in his own life. As an apostle he'd the right to make his own lifestyle choices, to be married, to be supported by the church. But he told the church in Corinth, "But we did not use this right. On the contrary, we put up with anything rather than hinder the gospel of Christ." 1 Corinthians 9:12

Are we willing to do that? Are we willing to lose out, so that other people can gain?

3. Jesus Became a Slave

a) He Humbled Himself

But Jesus didn't only release his rights. He "made himself nothing," Philippians 2:7. This literally means he "emptied

himself.”

That doesn't mean that he became less than divine. The Bible clearly teaches us that the Son of God was never anything less than fully God.

But rather, he emptied himself of some of the privileges of deity. “He humbled himself.” Philippians 2:8 He willingly concealed his glory, his power and his majesty.

b) He Became Human

And he did this when he became human: “Being made in human likeness.” Philippians 2:7

This is the miracle of the incarnation that we'll never get our heads fully around. That the eternal, all-powerful, all-present, all-knowing Son of God became a little baby. The creator and sustainer of the universe became dependent on his mother's provision and care and his step-dad's protection.

That, “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.” John 1:14 God in flesh. Fully God and fully man. Experiencing the limitations and struggles of humanity. And the hunger, thirst, tiredness and pain of our lives.

c) He came to serve

And he did this to serve. “Taking the very nature of a servant.” Philippians 2:7 The word here is literally a slave. The one who in his very nature is God – became in his very nature a slave!

The eternal Son of God left the perfections of heaven, he laid aside the glory of his person and power, he emptied himself of the privileges of deity, he set aside the worship and praise he deserved, he experienced the struggle of humanity to serve us, to save us, because he loved us. Jesus said: “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

i) Be Willing to Serve

And this is the example we're called to follow. To humble ourselves. To set our plans and privileges, our rights and expectations. To roll up our sleeves and serve others as a slave. To be like “Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus.” Philippians 1:1

This isn't a challenge just to get involved in a ministry for a couple of hours a week. It's not an appeal to sign up and fill a role in church. This is a call to become a servant in our very nature. For it to be who we are, in every aspect of our lives. At work and at home. In our neighbourhood and in our church. In public and in private.

Not out of guilt or duty. Not to try and earn our way to God. But out of love - love for God, for others, and in response to Christ's love for us.

4. Jesus Became our Sacrifice

This isn't easy. If we live this way it will cost us. Some people might take advantage of us. We will lose out in some way. But we can never say it costs us too much, because Jesus, the Son of God, didn't just become a slave. He also became our sacrifice.

a) He was completely obedient

He “became obedient to death.” Philippians 2:8 Jesus completely obeyed his Father's will – without limits. Even to the point of giving up his life.

This was powerfully expressed in the Garden of Gethsemane, when Jesus prayed: “My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will.” Matthew 26:39

i) Loving Obedience

We can often be tempted to put limits on our obedience to Jesus. “I'll follow you as long as you don't ask me to do something too difficult, too embarrassing. I'll obey as long as you bless me, look after my family, as long as I don't suffer.”

But a conditional obedience, is really no obedience at all. We're still in charge. We haven't accepted Christ's leadership in our lives.

Instead we're called to a wholehearted obedience. Not as a way to salvation. We are saved by grace alone, through faith

alone in Christ alone. But we are called to obey as our loving response to our salvation. Jesus said, [“If you love me, you will obey what I command.”](#) John 14:15

b) He went to the cross

But Jesus’ servant attitude didn’t just take him to death, but [“Even death on a cross!”](#) Philippians 2:8

Jesus could go no lower than that. Crucifixion was such a painful and degrading form of execution that it was usually reserved for the lowest in society, especially slaves. But more than this – the cross was a place of curse. [“Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree.”](#) Galatians 3:13

So by dying on a cross, [“Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us.”](#) Galatians 3:13 In selfless love and grace, Jesus willingly took upon himself our sin, our guilt, our shame. He was punished as our substitute. He suffered the separation from the Father that should have been ours. And he died in our place.

This is the depths to which Christ emptied himself. He went from the glories of heaven to the curse of the cross. And he did all of this, for you and for me, because he loved us.

i) Limitless Obedience

And this is the standard of selfless sacrifice we’re to follow. [“Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers.”](#) 1 John 3:16

Of course we want to shrink back from this. We want to minimise this, excuse it away. But this is what it means to follow Jesus. It is to lay down our rights, humble ourselves, become a servant, obey God’s call to each day lay down lives for others.

5. Jesus Now Reigns Supreme

a) God exalted Jesus

But this song doesn’t end with the sacrifice of Jesus. [“Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name.”](#) Philippians 2:9

Jesus humbled himself. It was his own willing action. But in response to this, God exalted him. He gave him the highest place and the highest name.

In his incarnation, Jesus concealed his glory. He willingly emptied himself of his position and privilege. But in his resurrection and ascension, God revealed his Son’s glory. He honoured him and welcomed him to that place of position and privilege that was rightfully his.

As a result, one day, [“At the name of Jesus every knee should bow... and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.”](#) Philippians 2:10-11 Today we willingly and gladly do this. We bow before our risen and exalted Saviour and declare that he is our Lord. We give him his rightful place in our lives!

But many don’t. They defy his Lordship of their lives. But one day, they’ll have to bow before him and acknowledge him as Lord – not as their Saviour, but as their Judge. On that day Jesus’ true identity will be revealed and he’ll be honoured by every knee and every tongue.

i) Wait for God’s Reward

And this is the principle of God’s kingdom. [“Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.”](#) Matthew 23:12

When we exalt ourselves, demand our rights, focus on our needs, do what we want – then ultimately we will be humbled. If someone has trusted in Jesus, they won’t lose their salvation – that’s a gift of God’s grace. But on that final day their work and accomplishments will burn up like wood, hay or straw. [“He will suffer loss.”](#) 1 Corinthians 3:15

But if a believer chooses to humble themselves now. If they release their rights, take the place of the servant, obey God and lay down their lives for others, then one day, God will reveal the quality of their service and [“He will receive his reward.”](#) 1 Corinthians 3:14

When we serve Christ with the right motivation and heart, there is a cost involved, but ultimately, in eternity, we will never lose out. Jesus said, [“My Father will honour the one who serves me.”](#) John 12:26

b) Jesus glorified God

But the ultimate result of the exaltation of Jesus was “The glory of God the Father.” Philippians 2:11 Through his willing humbling of himself, and God’s rewarding of him, God’s true character, his mind-blowing wisdom, power, grace and love are revealed. And God is glorified.

This was Jesus’ prayer before he went to the cross: “Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you.” John 17:1

i) Live for God’s Glory

God will honour those who serve him, but none of us deserve that honour. None of us have earned it. After all, the opportunity and calling to serve God and the abilities and energy we use in serving him are all gifts of his grace.

Paul said, “By the grace of God I am what I am.” 1 Corinthians 15:10. God will honour us for what we by his grace have been able to do.

And that’s why, when we’re willing to let God honour us at the right time, in the right way, the ultimate glory goes God. “If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ.” 1 Peter 4:11

Conclusion

So Jesus is the ultimate example of a riches to rags to riches story.

- He is the eternal Son of God
- Who stepped into humanity to become a Slave
- Who humbled himself to be our Sacrifice
- But who is now exalted and reigning Supreme, because he did all of this willingly, in obedience to his Father and in love for us.

And he calls us to follow in his footsteps. To humble ourselves in obedient service. So that, at the proper time, God will exalt us, for his honour and for his glory.

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