

"On Bended Knee"
Philippians 2:1-10, 13 (Inclusive Bible Version)
Rev. Chris Mereschuk
October 1, 2017

Prayer...

On Bended Knee:

"Christ, though in the image of God, didn't deem equality with God something to be clung to —
but instead became completely empty and took on the image of oppressed humankind:
born into the human condition, found in the likeness of a human being
Jesus was thus humbled
Because of this, God highly exalted Christ
and gave to Jesus the name above every other name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bend,"

Jesus Christ - - Immanuel, God-Made-Flesh dwelling among us, entitled to all rights divine and sovereign - - bent the knee, humbled and vulnerable:

Desperate and alone in the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus "withdrew, knelt down, and prayed.

'Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me;
yet not my will, but yours be done.'¹

On bended knee, it was God at work within Christ
Scared and scarred, tearful and hopeful, tentatively obedient
Emptied of himself and filled with God's Spirit
Then rising to face his accusers and his fate
So, like Jesus, we are on bended knee
We, like Jesus, on bended knee: humbled and vulnerable, desperate and afraid, pleading for the strength to rise and endure

"Christ, though in the image of God, didn't deem equality with God something to be clung to —
but instead became completely empty and took on the image of oppressed humankind:
born into the human condition, found in the likeness of a human being
Jesus was thus humbled
Because of this, God highly exalted Christ

¹ Luke 22:41-42 NRSV

and gave to Jesus the name above every other name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bend,”

On bended knee in heart or in body we come to pray

On bended knee in heart or in body we come to the Welcome Table

“Let us break bread together on our knees”

Humbled, in need, asking for help

“When I fall on my knees with my face to the rising sun, O Lord have mercy on me”

On bended knee we long for that celebration of the Kin-dom where no knee is bent and all stand as equals, beloved.

Grace and mercy

Everlasting peace

Nourished, revived, rising

On bended knee, it is God at work within you

I bend the knee by the bedside,

so I am face-to-face with you in your sickness and your healing.

I bend the knee to be with a child,

because I was once a child, and my bent-knee Lord and Savior taught me that I must enter the Kin-dom like a child

I bend the knee when to stand would be to put myself over you, unequal

When it would mean that I have not emptied myself of conceit and pride, unequal

“Christ, though in the image of God, didn’t deem equality with God something to be clung to —

but instead became completely empty and took on the image of oppressed humankind:

born into the human condition, found in the likeness of a human being

Jesus was thus humbled”

Christ on bended knee in the image of oppressed humankind

Through centuries and generations,

Sisters, Siblings, Brothers of Color have been driven to their knees:

From chattel slavery to Reconstruction: Driven to their knees.

From Jim Crow to “I can’t breathe”: Driven to their knees.

From black hoodies to BB guns to selling CDs and “loosies” to wrong-place-wrong-time to matches-the-suspect’s-description to sudden moves to itchy trigger fingers lest they forget their place:

Driven to their knees

Christ reflected in the image of oppressed humankind: Driven to his knees

But now on bended knee as if to say:

“Look and see what has been done: Look and see how we are on our knees;

What more could you do? How low must you force us? We are already on our knees.”

What was meant for weakness, now a sign of strength
What was meant for obedience, now a sign of resistance
What was meant for compliance, now a sign of defiance

The raised fist of John Carlos and Tommie Smith in Mexico City 1968 is now the bended knee of Colin Kaepernick in 2016 - -

Public, unashamed
as if to say, "You will see me. I will not be ignored.
You might have me down, but I am not out.
What have you to fear? I am already on my knees."

Christ reflected in the image of oppressed humankind: Driven to his knees

"Christ, though in the image of God, didn't deem equality with God something to be clung to —
but instead became completely empty and took on the image of oppressed humankind:"

To break chains and bring hope to oppressed humankind

*"Long lay the world in sin and error pining
'Til he appeared and the Spirit felt its worth
For yonder breaks a new and glorious morn
Fall on your knees and hear the angels' voices*

*Truly he taught us to love one another,
His law is love and His gospel is peace
Chains he shall break, for the slave is our brother
And in his name all oppression shall cease"*

And at his name, knees shall bend
On bended knee, it is God at work within you

On bended knee in heart or in body,
kneel beside the Christ reflected in oppressed humankind: Driven to his knees
On bended knee in heart or body, pray you understand why they kneel
On bended knee in heart or body, breathe in the Holy Spirit
Fill your lungs
Kneel and rise with God's liberating love at work within you

On bended knee, it is God at work within you
On bended knee we give our honor
On bended knee we seek forgiveness
On bended knee we seek at-one-ment
On bended knee we seek to save ourselves and others

Like the color guard on bended knee solemnly handing the folded flag to the veteran's
widow

Like the repentant believer on bended knee before the altar

Like the caring parent on bended knee with their crying child

Like the full-hearted lover on bended knee proposing a covenant forever

Like the first responder breathing life

Like the one who's weary, broken, bleeding

Like the one who beaten but not defeated

We take a knee before we rise

On bended knee before we rise

On bended knee before we rise

Humility

Vulnerability

Scared and scarred

Make visible the invisible

Repentant and pleading

Bruised and bleeding

Down but not out

Beaten but not defeated

On bended knee before we rise

On bended knee before we rise

Before we rise

Before we rise

Until we rise

Until that day

Thy Kin-dom come

We will be

On bended knee

Amen.