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The Second Article
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Everyone loves a "rags-to-riches" story. The hero starts out on the very bottom. But through hard work, determination, and the sheer force of his will, he climbs his way to the very top. He started on the bottom and he ended on the very top. Jesus however, started out on the very top and then came down to the very bottom. When we say the second Article of the Apostle's Creed, we tell each other the story of Jesus. And the story of Jesus is the exact opposite of a rags to riches story. The story of Jesus is a riches to rags story. Listen: **"I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried."**

Jesus started off at the very top and he came all the way down for you and for me. Today we are going to follow Jesus' riches to rags story and then see him exalted back to the right hand of God.

Jesus started out on the very top. I remember a pastor once beginning a prayer by saying, "Lord Jesus, you left your rainbow encircled throne." A rainbow encircled throne. He was in glory and majesty. And he was on throne, because he is God. He is the 2nd person of the Holy Trinity. In verse 6 it says that he was "in very nature God." So he is the second person of the Trinity, living in majesty and holiness. And what does he do? He comes down! Why did he do that? Well, why do firefighters run into the house that on fire? To rescue people. So Jesus Christ left his throne in heaven and came down to save us. When Jesus came down from heaven, he became a human being in the womb of the virgin Mary. He didn't stop being God, he just became a human being also.

Why did Jesus have to become a human being? So that he could live under God's law as a human being and obey the law for us. Our first lesson said that Jesus "was born of a woman, born under the law." We had broken God's laws. And since we have rebelled against God and broken his laws, we deserve only his wrath and punishment. So what Jesus did is he became a human being so that he could live under the God's law and obey it perfectly in our place. The other reason he became a human being, was so that he could take our punishment. The punishment for sin is God's wrath and curse and death. Jesus left his rainbow encircled throne in heaven, so that he could take God's wrath and curse and death for us.

Jesus' time on earth we call his state of humiliation. The humiliation refers to the way that he lived while he was here on earth. Jesus could have been born in a palace, instead he was born in a barn. Jesus never stopped being God, but he hid his divine glory and lived a very lowly life. Our lesson says that Jesus **"did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage."** Have you ever thought about the fact that Jesus never once did a miracle for his own comfort or for his own advantage. I'm sure there were many scorching hot days in Israel, but Jesus never causes a big shady tree to appear next to him. He never creates a stream of cold water so that he can have a drink. He always does his miracles to help other people. It says, **"he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant."** (Phil 2:7) Or think of Jesus in the upper room the night before he died. Nobody washes his feet. He washes his disciples feet. He is the servant. He is hours away from immense suffering and death, but they don't encourage and comfort him, he encourages and comforts them! He is the servant. And he is the example for us. At the beginning of our passage it says, **"IN your relationship with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus."** (Phil 2:7) Just like Jesus gave himself in service to you, give yourself in service to your church and to each other.

So Jesus starts off at the top in heaven, he becomes a poor. He becomes a servant. And then he goes even further down the social ladder. We say in the creed, **"he suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried."** **"He humbled himself by becoming obedient to death, even death on the cross."** (Phil 2:8) Crucifixion was repugnant to people in the ancient world. It was horrifying to them. We don't like to think much about crucifixion and they didn't like to think about it either, that's why it says, *even* death on a cross, not just any kind of death, death on a cross! But the physical pain of the crucifixion wasn't the worst part. The worst part was that one the cross Christ suffered the wrath, the condemnation the curse that our sins deserve. Rainbow encircled throne in heaven ... death on a cross. When you look at Jesus on the cross always remember: he's taking my place. That's what I deserve and he's taking my place.

Jesus was buried and that's the end of humiliation, but it's not the end of the story. His exaltation begins Sunday morning when he becomes alive in the tomb. And the first thing he does when his body becomes alive in the tomb is he descends into hell. We say in the creed, **"he descended into hell."** A lot of people think that the descent into hell is part of his humiliation. It's not. It's part of his exaltation. The Bible passage that talks about Jesus descent into hell is 1 Peter 3:19 **"After being made alive, he went and made proclamation to the imprisoned spirits."** He descended into hell after he was made alive so he didn't descend into hell to suffer. He descended into hell, Peter says, "to make proclamation." He descended into hell after the resurrection to proclaim his victory over the devil and all his evil angels. This shows us that Jesus has so thoroughly defeated the devil that he goes right to where the devil lives and says, "I win." If on Good Friday the devil had thought to himself, "I win. Jesus is dead." Then when the devil saw the glorious resurrection body of Jesus coming right to where he lives the devil must have realized, "No, I've lost."

The next clause in the creed says, "On the third day he rose from the dead." Many have wondered, why does the Apostles' Creed have "on the third day he rose from the dead" after he descended into hell. People have said that probably what the creed has in mind with, "he rose from the dead" is that he is appearing to people publicly. SO the sequence is: 1) he becomes alive in the tomb, 2) he descends into hell 3) he starts appearing to people publicly.

He appeared to the women and he appeared to Peter and he also appeared to the disciples that evening. Jesus' resurrection body is mysterious thing. On the one hand, it's a real human body. The tomb is empty. When just appears to his disciples they think he's a ghost, but he says, "Touch me and see. A ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have." And then he eats some fish. And the other hand his body is not bound by space. Easter evening the disciples have all the doors and windows locked and Jesus just appears in the midst of them. Jesus ascended into heaven and yet he says I am with you always. Jesus is here with us this morning and yet he is also with all the other Christians who are meeting this morning at this very same time. He's in an exalted state.

Our passage ends: **"Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord."** This is an amazing passage because with the words, "every knee shall bow" and "every tongue confess" Paul is referring to an Old Testament passage Isaiah 45:23 where God says, "I am God and there is no other...before me every knee will bow and by every tongue will confess." So Paul takes a passage from the Old Testament that says, "I am the only God...every knee will bow to me" and Paul applies it to Jesus and says, "to Jesus every knee will bow and tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord." It's a very strong passage to say that Jesus is God, the 2nd person of the Trinity. But we don't have to wait until the last day to confess that we believe in God's only Son, true God and true Man. Amen.