

**The Mind of Christ**  
**Sermon for Palm Sunday, 2020**  
**Philippians 2:5-11**

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Philippians 2:5-11, our Second Reading read before, <sup>5</sup> **Have the same attitude as Christ Jesus had!** <sup>6</sup> **Although He was in the form of God, yet He did not consider His equality with God as a prize to exploit.** <sup>7</sup> **Instead, He emptied Himself, took on the form of a slave and became like other human beings; and, when He was found in the appearance of a human being,** <sup>8</sup> **He humbled Himself, becoming obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.** <sup>9</sup> **That is why God also has very highly exalted Him and given Him the name that is above every other name,** <sup>10</sup> **that at the name of Jesus everyone in heaven and on earth and under the earth may kneel,** <sup>11</sup> **and that everyone may confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.**

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth, Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

Jesus had arrived at Bethany on a Friday. After the Sabbath had passed, the large crowd that had come for the feast heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, so they cut palm branches and went out to meet Him, receiving Him as a king, as the Jewish leaders feared they might.

We often reminisce on Jesus entering Jerusalem – how that crowd went and laid out branches and even placed their own cloaks on the road<sup>1</sup>, all the while shouting, “*Hosanna!*” “*Blessed is He who is coming in the name of the Lord!*” and “*the King of Israel!*” (John 12:13). While it is good to remember these things, nevertheless, let us not forget that this entry into Jerusalem signalled the ride of Jesus into the jaws of death. No matter what anyone proclaimed on that Sunday many years ago, Jesus was going to die on the following Friday.

What must it have taken, what sort of attitude or thought process must Jesus have had to ride into town, and walk the path we call holy week, knowing that He was going to face betrayal, arrest, crucifixion and death? It would require self-possession. It would require a real sense of mission. It would require an enormously strong will, and it would require humility of remarkable quality. This is the same frame of mind that we ought to imitate. Paul says: “**Have the same attitude as Christ Jesus had!**”

What is this attitude that Jesus had? He was humble. “**Although He was in the form of God, yet He did not consider His equality with God as a prize to exploit.**” That is humility. Jesus Christ was God - is God. Whatever it is to be God, with all the power and glory and so forth, Jesus had it. From all eternity, Jesus has been one with the Father, being truly God. His eternal existence as God is unshakable and unchangeable. Jesus’ divine nature is not capable of experiencing humiliation, yet Jesus, while fully retaining His divine nature, took on a true human nature. *He was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary.* He who is true God from all eternity became a true man and has dwelt among us. This is what we call the incarnation, and understand it to be one of the great mysteries of the Christian faith.

The incarnation of Christ cannot be over appreciated. Think of all that Jesus gave up. He could do anything, anywhere, anytime. Still, He did not count that possession too tremendous or too precious or too valuable to be set aside. He did not hold His own glory and power and prerogatives as more significant or desirable than our salvation. He counted redeeming us as more important than the enjoyment of His own participation in the glories of the Trinity for a time.

Jesus didn’t give up being God. He was and always remained true God, but for a while, He laid aside His power as God and took on human frailty. He laid aside His knowledge and became an infant in the womb. He put aside His

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew 21:8

glory and became not merely human, but a helpless child, in an insignificant family, in a backwards region of an impoverished nation under military occupation, at a time we would consider primitive. That is what Paul means when he says that Jesus “**emptied Himself.**” That is humility, humbling Himself beyond all reason and setting aside His own comfort, glory and prerogatives for the well-being and salvation of His enemies - us - sinful man. He counted nothing as ‘too much’ to give in order to accomplish His purpose, which is our redemption from sin and death and hell.

That is the attitude Paul is challenging us to imitate and make our own. If you want to think like Jesus - and believe me, if you are a Christian YOU DO - then this is what you should imitate, humility. Nothing should be too much to lose for the sake of Christ, or for the sake of His Gospel, or for the sake of His people. No indignity should be more than you can bear. No insult should be too much to take. No embarrassment should be enough to stop you, and no loss, even to the point of your own life, should be beyond what you are willing to give.

That was the attitude of Christ - humility which permitted Him to become one of us and to die so violently and shamefully for us. We are to partake of that humility too. We are to humble ourselves in our own minds so that our interests and our comfort *take second place* to the welfare and spiritual health of others! This is not about allowing someone to make you do something, it is about doing it yourself, because it is right, setting others and *their* needs first before our comforts, our preferences, our personal pride, and even our own needs simply because it is the will of God that we do so.

Tacitus, a Roman writer and philosopher who lived during the first century, and who hated Christians and strongly encouraged their persecution, wrote in abject wonder of the Christian Church, “*See how those Christians love one another!*” How long has it been since anyone, friend or foe, said something like that about us? But that kind of care for one another is what the humility of Christ is all about. When you look at the task, it seems too big. Who could care for others like that? How could you take care of yourself and do this? Doing this would consume all of our time and energy and our resources! We would be left with nothing! To which the Lord answers: “Precisely!”

The mind of Christ is the attitude of humility marked by love. He has loved us so much that He endured the loss of all things. He was willing to even set aside the glory of being God to take on our human flesh and blood and human nature. He loved us so much that He was willing to endure the assault of human sinfulness while He lived a perfect and sinless life. His love was so deep that He was willing to take our sin on Himself and endure the wrath of God against us so that we would never need to. The passion and the cross were truly terrible, and the wrath of God which caused Him to abandon His only Son to bleed and die on the cross alone is beyond our comprehension, and the humility of Jesus Christ has led Him to do all of that so that we may be forgiven, justified, and brought into the love of God by grace, and adopted into His family as not merely slaves, but as brothers! His resurrection and eternal life are also ours. It is won for all men and poured out on all and possessed by those that trust God and believe His Word and love. After His glorious resurrection, speaking to His disciples, Jesus said, “*He who has come to faith and been baptised will be saved*” (Mark 16:16).

Jesus did not just give up glory and power, but He gave up His life. Paul writes, “**Instead, He emptied Himself, took on the form of a slave, and became like other human beings; and when He was found in the appearance of a human being, He humbled Himself, becoming obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.**” Jesus became one of us. Jesus took on the form and nature of those He had created to be His servants - His slaves. He became everything you are, except for sin. He carried the aches and pains. He carried the troubles of life. He carried emotions and joys and griefs. He endured not being able to have it His way at every moment, of having others decide for Him. He was a normal man, except that He was also God, enduring this normalcy and humbling Himself to submerge His power and glory in this human nature, and then, “**He humbled Himself, becoming obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.**” He did not deserve to die. He had not sinned and earned death. He deserved life. Nevertheless, He allowed men to take Him captive - when He could have disabled them with a thought or wiped their existence away with a word. He allowed them to mock Him where He deserved praise and glory, and to beat and torture Him where He deserved worship and adoration. He even prayed for those who tortured and abused Him, that God would not hold this sin against them.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Luke 23:34

Then He died. His executioners did not kill Him. He set His life aside by His own power and died at just the right moment by an act of His will. Still, He humbled Himself to permit them to drive nails through His hands and feet and hang Him on a cross - an instrument of monstrous torture and death - and thereby took upon Himself a curse He Himself had spoken in Deuteronomy 21:23, namely that anyone who is hung on a tree “*is under God’s curse*” or, as the curse is paraphrased by Paul in Galatians 3:13, “*cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree.*”

Jesus **humbled Himself** for us to the point of becoming the curse for us, and, taking the curse of God against the one who would die on a tree on Himself, has died deliberately in our place. Isaiah writes, “*Surely, He has taken on Himself our sufferings and carried our sorrows. Yet we considered Him to be wounded, struck down by God and afflicted. However, He was pierced for our rebellious acts. He was bruised for our wrongdoings. The chastisement that brought us peace was on Him, and through His wounds we have been healed,*” (53:4-5). That is how far Jesus has humbled Himself - and because of it all our sins have been forgiven, we have been given eternal life, and shall one day rise from our graves to sing in His true triumphal parade on that grand and glorious Palm Sunday of eternity!

Seeing that, Paul encourages us to have the same attitude - to have the mind of Christ. Paul is inspired to add an inducement to the picture by reminding us of the reward for Jesus, for His humility and obedience to the will and plan of the Father. He writes, “**That is why God also has very highly exalted Him and given Him the name that is above every other name, that at the name of Jesus everyone in heaven and on earth and under the earth may kneel, and that everyone may confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.**”

Just as it was for Jesus, it will be for us as well. We shall not lose by imitating His humility. Having the same attitude Christ Jesus had, we receive the same good pleasure of God. The blessings are not the same, of course, just as the tasks we shall perform are not the same, but God the Father will reward our true humility with a true glory of our own and bless each of us with life eternal - and that in glory beyond our comprehension. Whatever each one of us has, is what God has given us to use in His service.

We shall not lose treasures, we shall not lose joys, we shall not lose our lives, but gain them, and far more. Any loss we may suffer now is but for a time, but the reward and the joys will be forever. God has promised to return and repay all of our losses. And it is all so that God may work through us just as He did through Jesus - that His will may be fully accomplished for us and those to whom God would have us bring the good news.

But this attitude is not something we can simply do on our own. We are not told to grit our teeth and work it up in ourselves and do the unpleasant. No, we are encouraged to live in the light of the truth of the Gospel. God loves us, and He will provide. He knows everything we need, and everything we do, and so strengthens us and encourages us to possess the mind of Christ. He not only cares for our bodies, but He also cares for our souls. We cannot outrun God’s goodness or out-give His generosity or overestimate the care and concern which God has for each one of us. Speaking through Paul, the Lord asks us to walk in His light, to have the love of God, and to live in true humility.

Therefore, we trust God to be our supply. We live knowing that God has given us everything we need and that He has placed us here to love and to take care of one another, and to share His love with those who have not yet believed. In doing so, we find true glory, for the glory of God is that He has done all that He accomplished in Jesus Christ - for sinners - for you and for me. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

#### PRAYER FOR THE SIXTH SUNDAY IN LENT (PALM SUNDAY)

Heavenly Father, we come into Your presence with thanksgiving and joy. You are a great God. You rule over the whole earth from the deepest seas to the highest hills. We bow down and worship You, for You are our Maker. We are the people You care for, and the flock for which You provide.

We thank and praise You especially that You have sent to us the living Word, Jesus Christ, Your Son. We praise You that He willingly accepted the disgrace of dying on the cross for us. Grant that we may keep our eyes fixed on Him, and may not grow weary in doing good, become discouraged, or murmur when we are chastened and corrected. Uplift us with the assurance that, as we share in Jesus’ sufferings, so we shall also share in His resurrection to eternal life.

Save us, then, O Lord, not by any good deeds that we have done, but by Your mercy, through the new birth given in our baptism and the new life created by the Holy Spirit. Rescue us from all sin, and purify us to serve and praise You.

Put Your will into our minds, and write it into our hearts. Put Your song into our spirits, that we may proclaim with joy: “Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!”

Give us the power to seek out those who are still strangers to Your salvation. Send workers to preach Your Word in truth, and to proclaim the name of Jesus as the only name under heaven through which people can be saved. Prosper the witness of all Your children throughout the world, that all may know You.

Give to all the members of the AELC the joy and energy we need to serve You. Give us all willing minds and pure hearts that we may do our utmost to build and strengthen Your kingdom.

We pray for all who are burdened by sickness, sorrow, pain, anxiety, and fear of death. Be with them as they pass through troubled waters. Give them the faith that knows that You will deliver them in Your wisdom and love. Be with those who have lost their jobs because of mass shutdowns due to the ongoing pandemic. Provide all their needs, and remind them that You are watching over them during this time and will never leave them in want or need.

Lord, You are able to keep us from falling and to bring us faultless and joyful before Your glorious presence. To You, the only God, our Saviour, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, might, and authority, in all ages past, and now, and for ever and ever! Amen.

### PALM SUNDAY

Isaiah 50:4-9a

<sup>4</sup> “The Lord GOD has given Me the tongue of disciples, to know how to use a Word to sustain him who is tired out. He awakens Me morning after morning. He awakens My ear to listen, like those who are disciples. <sup>5</sup> The Lord GOD has opened My ear, and I Myself have not been rebellious. I have not turned back. <sup>6</sup> I have given My back to those who struck Me and My cheeks to those who plucked out My beard. I have not hidden My face from insults and spittle. <sup>7</sup> The Lord GOD will help Me. That is why I have not been disgraced. That is why I have set My face like flint and know that I shall not be ashamed. <sup>8</sup> He who declares Me righteous is near. Who will contest a lawsuit against Me? Let us stand up together! Who is My accuser? Let him confront Me! <sup>9</sup> Look! The Lord GOD will come to help Me. Who is he who will condemn Me?

Philippians 2:5-11

<sup>5</sup> Have the same attitude as Christ Jesus had! <sup>6</sup> Although He was in the form of God, yet He did not consider His equality with God as a prize to exploit. <sup>7</sup> Instead, He emptied Himself, took on the form of a slave and became like other human beings; and, when He was found in the appearance of a human being, <sup>8</sup> He humbled Himself, becoming obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. <sup>9</sup> That is why God also has very highly exalted Him and given Him the name that is above every other name, <sup>10</sup> that at

the name of Jesus everyone in heaven and on earth and under the earth may kneel, <sup>11</sup> and that everyone may confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

John 12:12-19

<sup>12</sup> On the next day, the large crowd that had come for the feast heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem. <sup>13</sup> They took branches of palm-trees, went out to meet Him and began to shout, “Hosanna!” “Blessed is He who is coming in the name of the Lord!” and “the King of Israel!”

<sup>14</sup> Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, as Scripture has said: <sup>15</sup> “Stop being afraid, daughter of Zion! Look! Your King is coming, sitting on the colt of a donkey.”

<sup>16</sup> His disciples did not understand these things at first, but, when Jesus had been glorified, they remembered that these things had been written about Him and that they had done these things to Him. <sup>17</sup> Therefore, the crowd that had been with Him when He had called Lazarus out of the tomb and had raised him from the dead continued to bear witness. <sup>18</sup> This was also a reason why the crowd went to meet Him, that they heard that He had performed this miraculous sign. <sup>19</sup> Therefore, the Pharisees said to one another, “You see that you are not achieving anything. Look! The world has gone after Him.”