

Philippians 2.5-11; Matthew 21.1-9
Palmarum
10 April 2022
St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church, Topeka, KS

+ Iesu Iuva +

Beloved in the Lord: Grace be unto you and peace from God the Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

"Let this mind be in you that was also in Christ Jesus." So begins the epistle reading for today. A tall order, indeed.

But there couldn't be any better words to instruct us in our daily life than those. Imagine how life would be, imagine what a blessing you'd be, if in all your dealings with everyone you know—your spouse and children and parents and neighbors—you "let this mind be in you that was also in Christ Jesus."

And we get no better picture of that than in the Gospel lesson. Just days earlier the voice had boomed out from the cloud at His transfiguration, "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased."

And now this Son of God has descended to the dusty valley road to Jerusalem. The people of Israel shout out their ancient greeting for a king, "Hosanna to the Son of David," as their King passes by not a chariot, not leading war captives and a treasure chest in triumph, but humble, mounted on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.

For now the God whom all men must serve rides toward Jerusalem in the form of a slave to serve them all.

Now the God who cannot die steps into His Passion and lays aside His immortality to die for those who made themselves repugnant to Him their sin.

Yes, let *that* mind be in you that was also in Christ Jesus. Christ was in the form of God but considered equality with God not a thing to be snatched. It's as if Paul were saying, "Jesus could have laid down this trump card. He could have played the God hand. But He didn't. Instead, He humbled Himself. This is the one who washed the feet of His own disciples, the master for His servants, and told His disciples that they must love one another. This is the one who says of Himself, 'The Son of Man came not be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.' And this is the mind that is to be in *you*."

It means viewing yourself as Jesus viewed Himself—as someone whose only goal, aim, heart, and purpose is to serve others.

As someone who, like Christ, would rather operate at His own loss than at the loss of others.

As someone who, like Jesus, was obedient to the servant will of His Father to the point of death—and a most shameful death, at that.

It means living your life like what it is—a redeemed life, a life freed from sin and from death and from the power of the devil so that they not only have no claim over your actions,

no claim over your words,

no claim even over your *thoughts*, so that every word and action springs from pure compassion and mercy toward others.

This shouldn't surprise us. After all, Jesus said, "Whoever would come after Me, let him take up his cross and follow Me."

Your life, redeemed by the Cross of Christ, must also be conformed to the cross of Christ. And that means living faithfully in your vocation. It means not taking the apparently easy, but sinful, way out of sticky situations, but staying in your vocation and loving your neighbor as yourself.

It means swallowing hard and taking your lumps. It means having infinite patience with those you deal with every day.

It means putting to death the flesh that seeks its own best interests and not those of your neighbor.

It means being conformed more and more every day to the sufferings of Jesus, who was obedient to the point of the death, even the death of the cross.

But in you this work has only just been begun. The Lord's humility is a perfect humility. Infinitely merciful and patient that forgives sins. Ours falls far short. It's imperfect, sullied by selfishness, self-assertion, unwarranted pride, and sin.

It's precisely to and among people like us, and *for* people like us, that the Lord comes in His humility. That's what Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday is all about. The people who acclaim Him with shouts of "Hosanna to the Son of David!" and with cries of "Blessed is He who comes in the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!" are people just like you and me—called to lives of sanctified holiness. Called to the life of the redeemed people of God, made holy by His Word and holy living. Called to follow the 10 Commandments, the truest expression of love for God, the highest statement of selflessness and service to neighbor.

But like you, they, too, failed.

So their cry of Hosanna, then, is no cry of victory.

It's a cry of defeat—their own defeat.

It's a cry that recognizes their own imperfect, selfish, self-assertive, self-centered "love" for neighbor.

It's their cry of despair in themselves as they hold themselves against the mirror Paul points to, "Let this mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus," as that humble God-Man passes before them.

Their cry says nothing about what they've done; it's a plea for mercy to the Lord; "Hosanna! Save us!"

And their cry was well-aimed.

For four days before His Passion for us all, the Lord rode into Jerusalem as *the* Paschal Lamb, the Lamb of God who bears the sins of the world. For on this very day, the 10th of the Hebrew month of Nisan, every year for 1,478 years in a row, beginning with the Exodus, the Jews had chosen from their flocks a one-year-old male lamb, perfect, without blemish, without broken bone.

Four days later on the Passover they slit the lamb's neck, drained his blood into bowl, and then painted their doorframes with it on a brush of hyssop.

The lamb's death for their lives;

the lamb's blood that theirs not be shed;

the lamb's flesh as their meal of deliverance from the last plague, the midnight of death that touched every household in Egypt but theirs.

Four days before His Passion for us all, on the highest, the greatest 10th of Nisan, Palm Sunday, today, the Son of God stepped forth and presented Himself to His own people, to the world, as the Greater Lamb, who sheds His blood for the sin of the world.

This is His great humility.

This is the great condescension of God.

This is how greatly God loves His creation.

To spare His people from death in Egypt, He gave them the blood of a lamb—its life for theirs.

To spare the world from its sin and death, once for all, He now gives the Greater Lamb, His own Son.

No cheap gift, this. This isn't the kind of lamb that if you sacrifice it this year, there'll be another one next year for the Passover. This is the once-for-all Lamb of God. It's His perfect life for their imperfect; it's His guiltless blood instead of theirs.

Even more, it's His perfect life for *your* imperfect and His guiltless blood instead of *yours*.

That's what the crowds shouting Hosanna! Save us! knew and saw and believed.

In Him they saw the great, condescending humility of the Son of God. In perfect obedience to the Law—that is, in perfect, selfless love for His creation—the Son of God stepped forth as the Greater Passover Lamb to give His life for theirs. Here the Son of God came in a love for them they could never quite muster for the other.

In perfect faith and trust in the will of His Father this Lamb sought only good for the other at the expense of self. The redemption of His people from sin and the devil's power at the cost of His own blood. The rescue from death and hell by suffering hell in His Passion and succumbing to death on His holy Cross.

Here was the Lord of His creation who to serve it took on the form of a slave. And in perfect obedience to the Father the sinless Son of God made Himself to be sin and a curse in our place so that His cry of dereliction, "Eli, eli, lama sabachthani, My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me?" would never have to be uttered from the lips of His beloved creatures. Hosanna! Save us! indeed!

That's what the people along the road to Jerusalem saw and knew and believed. And they were stirred to faith by the great condescension of God, who took on their flesh to bear their sins, who died that they might live, who suffered hell to give them heaven. Never again would they celebrate the remembrance of the Passover with the blood of a lamb, for here before them was *the* Lamb, the Son of God, whose "blood cleanses us from all unrighteousness."

And there's where their great comfort lay, and yours and mine, too. We remain called to these words: "Let this mind be in you that was also in Christ Jesus." Redeemed by Jesus, we must live like Jesus. But this new life in Jesus remains imperfect in us until the day we die and are taken from this world of sin. Until then, we daily sin much and surely deserve nothing but wrath.

But the Palm Sunday Lamb, the Lamb of the 10th of Nisan in the year 33 A.D., is *God's* Lamb. His death is God's death—and covers all sin. His blood painted on your door through faith is God's blood, and makes all death pass over, for He says, "Whoever believes in Me, though He die, yet shall He live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die."

Beloved in the Lord: paint His blood on your door. Lay hold of Him in faith. Take His perfection for your imperfection; take His humility for your haughtiness; take His righteousness for your sinfulness, His sinlessness for your sin. He wants to give it to you.

That's why He came 2000 years ago, humble, mounted on a donkey and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

That's why He comes to you today in Blessed Word and Holy Sacrament—to give you a goodness and holiness and righteousness not your own, but His—To stir up faith in you to love Him the more for His condescension—To find in Him your deliverance and redemption from sin and from death and from the devil's power.

May God grant you all such faith as you ponder His Passion and death this holy week. Amen.

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