

Palm Sunday—April 2, 2023

In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

God did not save you to be afraid of what is to come. God saved in Christ to be confident and unafraid because you know what Christ has accomplished for you, what you have in him now, and what he promises you is to come. Palm Sunday looks to the week ahead where there is great suffering to be sure, but this is your redemption as Jesus took your place and atoned for what you cannot. A new week, a new day, follows this week where victory death has been defeated. In the reading today the prophet Zechariah is quoted, “Fear not, daughter of Zion; behold, your king is coming, sitting on a donkey’s colt!”

Zion is called to fear not, and God means it when he says it, because Jesus goes forward steadfast toward the shame of the cross. That’s where he’s headed, and he knows it. He knows what’s going to happen in a few days and the cost that will be paid. But still, he goes as the Lamb uncomplaining forth bearing the guilt of sinners, your guilt. He goes on as the man of sorrows in love toward his people. His mind is set on your redemption and will accomplish it at the cost of his own life.

God calls you to have the mind of Christ. In the Epistle reading he says, “Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.”

The mind of Christ, which is to be your mind, is a steadfast humility. It’s to look outside of yourself setting your mind and heart on the things of God loving him with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength and loving your neighbor as yourself. Going through this life you fix your eyes on Christ and find rest in him. You place all your trust in the one who emptied himself so that you are redeemed from sin, death, and the devil. It’s all yours as the burden has been borne for your sin and you are righteous before the throne of God.

This life is lived in that reality of who you are in Christ and what you have in him. Jesus was heading toward death as he rode through the streets but next Sunday is Easter Sunday. Death could not hold the Son of God as he rose from the grave. Baptized into Christ that’s the same for you. You head closer and closer to the grave, but your grave stands open. Easter is always and will always be your future.

It’s easy to get caught up in things that we think living here and now and the things of this world as the greatest good. Human wisdom walks by sight and experience not by faith. But that’s not what the Scriptures teach you about life lived in this world as the people of God. The Bible shows you there are things far more deadly than death and that God alone is to be feared, because he alone can rightly send you to eternal condemnation and suffering in hell. Likewise, God tells you in his word if one loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him and whoever loves his life will lose it. These are not the way of walking with God by faith hearing and keeping God’s word for those things lose sight of who God is and what he done. That’s not what and where your minds are to be. “Fear not, daughter of Zion; behold, your king is coming, sitting on a donkey’s colt!” When you are tempted by the devil, the world, and your own fallen flesh to fear or forget these promises of God, repent, and tell those things that this is not the mind of Christ you are to have as a Christian.

Right after the Palm Sunday Procession reading in John some Greeks came to Phillip and said, “Sir, we wish to see Jesus.” What a confession and example for you to always have on your hearts and minds. On Good Friday you hear from John and throughout this week, in between, it is appointed to hear Mark and Luke’s accounts. It is good to hear these things because it not only reminds you of your Lord’s work, but it gives you Jesus who has done this. When you hear those words of the suffering and death of Christ you see your sin has brought this about, but you see the God in the flesh who humbled himself to fulfill God’s law in perfect obedience to the Father and suffer the wages of your sin paying the price you deserve under God’s wrath. Make use of your baptism when you hear these words of God today, this week, and every day and know this is all yours. See Jesus riding on in majesty in lowly pomp riding on to die for

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you. See him on the cross and behold your salvation. See that it has been done and his resurrection from the dead proclaims this victory is won and is yours. These accounts from the Gospels orient you and your life toward the future and see your life lived now with all of this in view even as at the vigil you see all of God's works are pointing to the redemption you have in Christ.

Think about these things and set your mind on them. That's what you have today and what you face each day. The future is certain, your future is known because Jesus has accomplished your salvation. He says to you today, "your sin is forgiven, fear not daughter of Zion I came for you riding on a donkey heading to the cross so that you are my child and an heir of eternal life." What a wonderful thing to behold this mind of Christ for you and what he gives you which casts out all fear and rises each day the Lord grants you on this earth knowing that the day is coming when you will rise from your grave and be forever with the Lord.

Greet your humble King who rides on in majesty to die. Wave the palms and cry out, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!" He truly has come and is here now. Blessed indeed is he and blessed are you dear daughter of Zion. Fear not. Rest easy in him.

You see the mind of Christ in all this too as you see his work for you. "Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross."

The mind of Christ is to take on the form of a servant. This had to be done and who he is as God in the flesh. It is necessary for him to have done this all and this is his mind which set about to do it. In stanzas two and three of the Hymn of the Day, Paul Gerhardt, captures this mind of Jesus and the Father as the Lord is sent and willingly goes to do the will of the Father. Listen again to those words preach to you. Listen to them as the Father speaking to his Beloved Son and his the response of an obedient Son who loves his Father.

"This Lamb is Christ, the soul's great friend, the Lamb of God, our Savior, whom God the Father chose to send to gain for us His favor. 'Go forth, My Son,' the Father said, 'And free My children from their dread Of guilt and condemnation. The wrath and stripes are hard to bear, But by Your passion they will share the fruit of Your salvation.' 'Yes, Father, yes, most willingly I'll bear what You command Me. My will conforms to Your decree, I'll do what You have asked Me.' O wondrous Love, what have You done! The Father offers up His Son, Desiring our salvation. O Love, how strong You are to save! You lay the One into the grave who built the earth's foundation."

Dear people of God; sons and daughters of Zion. Behold your King has come in great humility, but this is his great glory as he has come to save you. What a joy this day to behold this all and receive what your Lord has done. You are on this side of this story now as the Passion has been accomplished. But you see you have all that has been accomplished. Baptized into Christ you have this all and the Lord delivers this all to you today through his word and sacraments. You are reaping the benefits of Jesus's Passion. Ponder it all and consider what the Lord has done. Behold this glorious story and know that you now have the glory of your Lord's work. Take it all to heart and consider yourself. Repent of your sin which tears you away from your Lord has been paid for it. Rejoice in the Lamb of God who takes away your sin and be hearers of this word this week, and every day, as you go forth covered in Christ and treasuring what your Lord has done. Greet, then, your glorious King. He's your King and you are his people. Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey. . . Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!" Blessed indeed is he and blessed indeed now are you. Hosanna in the highest. The King is here, and you are his now and forever.

In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.