

Philippians 2:5-11

ILCW A—Palm Sunday

April 5, 2020 at Peace, Wautoma

The part of God's Word that we will think about for a little while this Palm Sunday morning is recorded for us in the letter of Saint Paul to the Philippians, chapter, 2, verses 5 to 11. Let us pray. Lord Jesus, help us follow you this Holy Week with humble and repentant hearts while we watch you fulfill our salvation. Amen. Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Throughout Scripture, the principle is very clear. The Lord laid it out for his prophet Samuel as he prepared to anoint David the next king of Israel. "Man looks at outward appearances, but the Lord looks at the heart." God cares most about the attitude in our hearts which lies behind our actions. The motivation is the most important thing. Jesus impressed this upon his disciples one day as they watched different people bringing their offerings to the temple. Rich people brought large sums of money. The middle class brought average amounts, but Jesus took no notice of any of these people. Instead, he pointed his disciples to the least likely person, a poor widow who dropped but a few small coins in the offering box. Jesus hailed her as giving a greater offering than all the others, for she gave all she had in the faith that the Lord would provide for her. Time and again, God makes his point. What you see on the outside doesn't matter. What goes on spiritually beneath the surface is most important.

Perhaps nowhere is that distinction more important or painted in such a striking contrast as during Holy Week. To outward appearances, Jesus is weak and helpless. These events are the depths of his defeat, if anything at all. But when we see them with the eyes of faith Paul did while writing to the Philippians, everything changes. We see Jesus' sufferings and death for what they really are: the heart and soul of our faith, the most important events in the history of the world. As we begin the solemn journey to the very core of our faith today, let us do as Paul suggests in his beautiful summary of the spiritual side of Holy Week and Easter. **Consider the attitude of Christ Jesus as he becomes obedient to death and as we confess him as Lord!**

Consider the attitude of Christ Jesus as he becomes obedient to death! This attitude of Jesus toward the way in which he would go about saving us from sin and giving us heaven is as much the opposite from the attitude of our sinful hearts as it could possibly be. "Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped." In heaven at the right hand of the Father, Jesus had literally everything he could possibly want. From his side of things, there was no motivation for him to leave his throne and do what he did for us.

Purely out of grace, Jesus willingly accepted the rescue mission on which the heavenly Father sent him. Our Lord set aside the full use of his power as true God to be confined to time, space and place in the womb of a virgin. Jesus took upon himself human nature. He lived his life as our substitute, perfectly obedient to the entire will of his heavenly Father for each of us. Paul describes Jesus' earthly life this way, "but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness."

Starting today, that humility gets lower and lower. Jesus freely subjected himself to the utter torture of body, mind and spirit Holy Week offered him. But our Savior sets out to accomplish all of this today with the resolute confidence that it is as good as completed even now before it all begins! As Zechariah wrote in our first lesson today, "Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey. I will take away the chariots from Ephraim and the war-horses from Jerusalem, and the battle bow will be broken. He will proclaim peace to the nations."

Jesus comes in the name of the Lord with a single-minded goal: remove every barrier between us and heaven. Consider his attitude while accomplishing all of this for us. No pride motivated his actions. No shred of self-preservation came from his mouth. What profound words of humble love we hear Jesus speak this week. Yes, there are words of judgment too, but even these are meant as a loving call to turn from evil and find everlasting salvation in the work of their Savior being carried out before their very eyes. Let us ever walk with Jesus this Holy Week, not just in the joyful Palm Sunday parade today, but also in everything which follows. It is not pleasant to contemplate these things, but it humbles us and makes us all the more grateful for the blessings Jesus gives us in these special events. As the very Son of God becomes obedient even to death for us, let us consider the attitude he displays in all of this for us!

In Jesus, we have the most beautiful source of strength and motivation for our faith and lives as Christians. He has faced every possible temptation or challenge we will face in life, yet was without sin. When we face troubles or temptations of any kind in our lives, we can turn in faith to our perfect Savior and know he will give us the strength and courage to get through even the worst of situations. Especially in Holy Week, then, let us **consider the attitude of Christ Jesus as we confess him as Lord!**

In Paul's letter, we get a little taste of what comes after the cross for Jesus. "Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name." From the standpoint of our human eyes, things will get unspeakably bad for Jesus this week. But after the agony of the cross and the sting of death will come the victorious exultation of Easter and the Ascension. In Holy Week, Jesus gives us the reason he is worthy of our honor and praise, our lives of faith and love.

Jesus' suffering and death, his Holy Supper and all that goes along with them give us the motivation we need to make this journey each year. Because of what Jesus has done for us, we are moved by the Holy Spirit to confess him as the Lord of all and Savior he is. Instead of holding on to his glorious place at the right hand of his heavenly Father, Jesus let go of all that. In love for our eternal welfare, he let go of his heavenly Father and the full use of his power as true God for a time so that we might take hold of our heavenly Father through the work of his Son. Our Lord even let go of his life on the cross to forgive our sins completely. By the powerful working of the Holy Spirit on our hearts, we receive the blessings of Jesus for our own. In the water of baptism, we were made God's children. Whenever we hear the Word, we are made stronger in our faith. The benefits of the cross come to us in the wonder of the Holy Supper. In these, God's chosen means of grace, we are drawn near to him through the atoning life, death and resurrection of his Son.

With this powerful motivation, let us consider the attitude of love Christ Jesus had for us! Let us confess him as our Lord and Savior. He has answered our prayers for deliverance from all the evils which assail our souls each day. His kingdom has spread, according to his Word, all the way from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth. We have the peace which was prophesied by Zechariah. The One coming in the name of the Lord brought it to you from his cross and vacant grave. Rejoice in the blessings you see Jesus riding into Jerusalem to bring you today. Holy Week is all about you and Jesus. We are about to see him draw us close through his sacrificial love. Hosanna, this Holy Week, Jesus. For in you the kingdom of grace is made a part of each one of us. Because you completed your saving work for each of us, we will one day have the glory you even now enjoy at God's right hand. Until then, we confess with those first Palm Sunday worshippers today, "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD! Hosanna in the highest!" Amen.