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St. Paul's Lutheran Church
2100 16th Street SW
Austin, MN 55912-1749
Pastor Ted Barthels
Sermon preached on
April 9, 2017
Palm Sunday

Scripture Lessons: Zechariah 9:9-10, Matthew 21:1-11

Hymns: 160; 725; 162; 161:3 (244:1-3)

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Sermon Text: Philippians 2:5-11

Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, ⁶who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, ⁷but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, *and* coming in the likeness of men. ⁸And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to *the point of* death, even the death of the cross. ⁹Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, ¹⁰that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, ¹¹and *that* every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ *is* Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (NKJV)

This is the Word of God.

Sanctify us, oh Lord, through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

In Christ Jesus, our Redeemer King, dear fellow Redeemed:

INTRO: The Palm Sunday scene:

It was quite the spectacular scene on that first Palm Sunday. It was the beginning of Passover week. The feast of unleavened bread was but a couple days away. Jewish pilgrims from all over Judea and Galilee, and even from remote locations throughout the world were

steadily flowing into Jerusalem, filling every guest house not only in Jerusalem but in the surrounding towns as well. There would be crowds of people sleeping in the open country and in the surrounding olive groves, wherever they could find an open spot of land where such makeshift camping would be allowed. All these people would be going in and out of Jerusalem every day for the next week as they visited the temple, and bought supplies for the Passover feast including the lamb which they would have sacrificed by the priests at the temple the following Thursday or early Friday.

It was a very busy place. Who would notice a man riding a small yearling donkey with His companions walking along with Him? Many people did. Others asked, “Who is this?” and they were told that it was Jesus, the prophet from Galilee. The procession started near Bethphage, a couple miles southeast of Jerusalem following one of the main roads used to enter the city. The crowds grew as they began to acknowledge Jesus with the words of the Psalms, praising Jesus as the Son of David, praising Jesus with “Hosannas” and crying out that He was the blessed One who came in the name of the Lord. As they made their way toward the city the crowds began to lay their coats before the Lord so that the dust wouldn’t be raised by the feet of the donkey or the movements of the crowd. They added palm branches both waving them in Jesus honor and also laying them before the Lord to paving the way into Jerusalem. More and more voices were added to this seemingly spontaneous crowd, one that was actually called into place by the God to praise the King who made His Triumphant entry into Jerusalem.

We are all familiar with the contrast between the high praise and the lowly figure that Jesus made as He sat on that little donkey. We all know this is a day of great significance for the Lord, and for all these centuries after we have celebrated Palm Sunday in honor of our Savior as we enter that week we call Holy Week. But do we really get it? Are we observing Palm Sunday with a conscious understanding of its significance, appreciating the meaning of its spiritual counterpoints. May the Spirit open our hearts, --

THEME: Informing our Palm Sunday Observance.

I. Knowing the Humble Mind of Our King

We all have an impression of what Jesus was like. We recall what we learned about Jesus from our youth, all the way back to those early Sunday school lessons. Recalling those lessons regarding Jesus' kindness and compassion and love let us read the opening verses of our text once more.

Philippians 2:5-8 “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, ⁷ but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, *and* coming in the likeness of men. ⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to *the point of* death, even the death of the cross.

What was Jesus like as He lived 33 years on this earth? Our text says He was in the form of God. What does that mean? We want to remember that when the Son of God became incarnate, when Jesus was born and grew to be a Man, and began His public ministry He was no less God than before He was born into the flesh. He revealed His almighty power time and again. He healed many people, restored sight to the blind, stilled the storm, fed thousands of people with but a few loaves of bread, and even called the dead back to life again. He was in the form of God! His divine nature was well intact.

However, we learn something more from all these incidents, something that is important for our observance of Palm Sunday. Jesus did not consider that form of God as something He needed to hold onto for Himself, for His life. He set that aside. He humbled Himself. Since He was in appearance a man, in the form of a servant, Jesus served. When Jesus used those divine attributes He used them for others, to help others, and to reveal to others that He was the Christ. Jesus didn't live life to get all He could for Himself. That would have been pointless. **“He came to seek and to save the lost.”** (Luke 19:10) To do this He submitted to the will of His Father in heaven.

That is exactly what was happening on that first Palm Sunday. Jesus went to Jerusalem knowing all that was going to happen. Jesus understood that it was necessary for our salvation that He be

taken by His enemies, that He be mocked, scourged, and finally crucified. He prayed about this with great intensity in Gethsemane, but even as He prayed that if it be possible that He be delivered from that cup of suffering, He also prayed, **“Not My will, but Yours, be done.”** (Luke 22:42)

Jesus was obedient even to the point of death, even the death of the cross. What was it about the cross that the Spirit should emphasize that Jesus’ obedience extended to that point? Was it the agony of the cross? Yes, but something more. It was the ignominy, the deep shame and disgrace that the cross brought upon those condemned to die upon the cross. It is even as we read in the Scriptures, **“Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree.”** (Galatians 3:13)

For the Romans it was the display of execution by crucifixion that declared that this individual, this criminal is a despicable human being, the lowest of the low and so must suffer an agonizing and shameful death before all, that all might know the vile nature of his crime. And so Jesus endured the death of the cross, not only being cursed by men as the vile offender, but cursed by God as Jesus bore the filth, the unspeakable shame of our sin.

**“Was it for crimes that I had done He groaned upon the tree?
Amazing pity, grace unknown and love beyond degree.”**

(The Lutheran Hymnal 154:2)

All of this informs us concerning the mind of Christ as He sat upon a lowly donkey and entered into Jerusalem on that first Palm Sunday. It was a demonstration of His humility, the real setting aside of self out of love and concern of others, sinners though we may be. Jesus came to Jerusalem to face all the torment, the full curse of God against sin, that we might be saved. He came as our Champion, to fight our battle, to die our death, to win our salvation.

God’s purpose for the Palm Sunday event was not only to honor His Son as the Champion of salvation He is, but also guide us to –

II. Comprehending the Height of His Glory.

Again our text spells it out for us wondrously.

Philippians 2:9-11 “Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, ¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, ¹¹ and *that* every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ *is* Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

Jesus humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, and so God, His Father in heaven, has highly exalted Him. *Jesus humbled Himself. God exalted Him!* God gave Jesus the name above every name. “Jesus” became the grandest and most important name of all, for Jesus sat down at the right hand of glory. To Jesus all authority was given in heaven and on earth. And Jesus is the only name that saves as we read in –

Acts 4:12 “Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”

So it was fitting that the crowds should sing Hosannas, and call out praise to the Son of David, for all that He was going to do in our place, that God saw as being as good as done. *All glory to Jesus name!* That is exactly what we should be thinking as we observe Palm Sunday today. We sing our hosannas because we know Jesus Christ as our Redeemer Lord, We know the truth of the words of the angels recorded in Revelation:

Revelation 5:12 “Worthy is the Lamb who was slain
To receive power and riches and wisdom,
And strength and honor and glory and blessing!”

What we might fail to appreciate is that this acknowledgement of our Savior as Lord of all will not only come from those who believe and love Jesus as we do. It will come from all. Even as the crowds all joined to praise Jesus on Palm Sunday, so also at the end of this world every knee shall bow, and every tongue will confess that Jesus is Lord, to the glory of God the Father!

So then this is what Palm Sunday is about isn't it. As we enter into Holy Week again this year we are reminded of exactly how deserving of our praise and honor Jesus is. Yes, we joyfully sing

His “Hosannas” today, and next Sunday we will even more joyfully join in singing our “Alleluias,” all to the glory of Jesus’ name. But it shouldn’t, it mustn’t stop there. We need to be informed in our faith and life so that we are always –

III. Maintaining our Highest Praise.

Our text directs us:

Philippians 2:5 “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.”

This is indeed our highest praise of Jesus as our Savior God. It is not only right for us to praise Him for the salvation He secured for us, but we ought to strive to emulate His attitude, living in concern for others, humbling ourselves. In the verses immediately preceding our text this was Paul’s exhortation to the Philippians, and so also to us.

Philippians 2:1-5a “Therefore if *there is* any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, ² fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, *being* of one accord, of one mind. ³ *Let nothing be done* through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. ⁴ Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.”

Life is not all about “me!” It is not about self, not for the child of God. Yes, we struggle with selfish ambition, but we learn humbleness from Jesus. We know the love Jesus had and has for us. He looked out for our interests, saving us at great cost to Himself. Let us look out for the interests of others. Let us care for the eternal salvation of others. The highest praise we can bring to Jesus on this Palm Sunday and every day is to live with the mind of Christ toward our Lord, and toward our neighbor.

“Grant that I may willingly / Bear with Thee my crosses
Learning humbleness of Thee / Peace mid pain and losses
May I give Thee love for love / Hear me, oh my Savior
That I may in heaven above / Sing Thy praise forever.”

(The Lutheran Hymnal 140:6)

AMEN.

And the peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.