

Intro.: When we think of Palm Sunday we normally envision a triumphal ride among cheering throngs, and children with palm branches singing "Hosanna!". Actually, it is the coronation ride of Jesus to receive a crown of thorns and ascend a cross shaped throne. We talk about it as the wonderful event that captivated all of Jerusalem, but that is not exactly what happened. Yes, the people acknowledged Him for a day or an hour, but it was probably not the whole city. It was more likely just a crowd gathered around one gate as Jesus rode in on a borrowed donkey. And despite their praises Jesus still knew that He was going to die on Friday.

What must it have taken, what sort of attitude or thought process must Jesus have had to ride into town, and walk the road we call holy week only to face betrayal, arrest and death by crucifixion? It would require a real sense of mission and self-sacrifice. It would require an enormously strong will, and a great bit of humility. This attitude and **Mind of Christ** is what Paul calls us to imitate.

I. The Mind Of Christ Involves Humility

A. The chief characteristic of this attitude or mindset is humility. **"Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself [or made Himself nothing]."** That is humility. Jesus Christ was God and still is God. So whatever it is to be God, all the power and glory and everything else, Jesus had it. He could do anything, anywhere, anytime. There is no way that we could ever comprehend what Jesus had or what He gave up. But He did not count any of it too precious or too important to put away. He did not hold His own glory and power and honor as more significant or more desirable than our salvation. Out of love for us He counted it all as nothing and for the joy set before Him, the joy of our deliverance He endured the cross and bore our shame. Redeeming us was more important than the enjoyment of His own participation in the glory of the Holy Trinity.

B. But He never actually gave up being God or all the attributes that go with it. He merely set them aside for a time. He laid aside His power and took on human frailty. He laid aside His knowledge and became a child to grow in wisdom and stature. He laid aside His glory and became a helpless infant, in an insignificant family, in a backwards region of a poor nation under military occupation. That is what Paul means when he says that Jesus **"made Himself nothing and emptied Himself."** He humbled Himself beyond all imagination and set aside His own comfort, honor and entitlements for the well-being and salvation of His enemies; that means us and all of sinful humanity. He set aside what He deserved for us and never counted anything as "too much" to give for our redemption from sin and death and hell.

II. We Are Called To The Same Humility.

A. That is the attitude that [you, and all of us] we are challenged to imitate and adopt as our own. To have the mind of Christ means to emulate His humility. Nothing should be too much to lose for the sake of Christ, for the sake of His Gospel, or for the sake of the people He has purchased with His perfect life and bloody death. No indignity should be more than you can bear in His name. No insult should be too much to take on account of Him. 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.

B. Of course, that means that we have to stop the silly talk about "rights" or what we think we deserve. Jesus set aside all that He had a right to, and everything He deserved; yes, and even everything that was already His. He didn't simply do without, He **"emptied Himself"**. Even though He was God, He counted equality with God as something that He could and would relinquish to accomplish His purpose of saving you and me. So, you don't have the right to decide what you will or will not do with your life. You are not your own, any longer. You were bought with a price. You were sealed with the sign of the cross in baptism. Now it is only left for you to seek and learn and follow His decision for you. You don't have the right to do what you want - politically, as an American, you do, but not as a citizen of heaven, a Christian and a member of the Church. By virtue of your calling you are a slave of God in Christ. In the household of God all talk about rights and what we deserve and what we can do if we want must stop, and humility must rule everything we think, and say, and do. The Church is not a democracy, it is a monarchy, and Jesus Christ is King.

C. Is this Law? Well, not in the sense that you must do it or you cannot be saved. But it is the natural response of the heart to the Gospel truth. It is what happens when you have been saved. It is the obedience that results from believing in the goodness and love of God. It is the humility of life that comes from experiencing and embracing what Jesus did to redeem and save you. It is the fruit of faith, and the encouragement that leads us to respond to knowing Christ and His humility for us.

III. The Mind Of Christ Involved Sacrificing Everything.

A. You see - Jesus did not just give up glory and power. He gave up His very life. “[He] emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, and 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.” Paul is saying that Jesus totally became one of us. He 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, and all the troubles of life. He carried all your emotions – the grief and sorrow as well as the joy. He endured not being able to have it His way every moment, of having others decide for Him. He was a normal guy, except that He was also God, enduring this normal guy life and burying His power and glory beneath a human nature.

B. And then, our text tells us, He humbled Himself even to the point of death. He did not deserve to die. He never sinned. He was holy and deserved only life. But He did not demand what was His right or what He deserved. Instead, He allowed men to take Him captive - when He could have called down legions of angels to turn them into dust. He allowed them to mock Him instead of offering the praise and glory He deserved, and to beat and torture Him when He deserved to be worshipped and given tribute. He even prayed for those who tortured and abused Him, that God would not hold this sin against them.

C. Then He died. He permitted them to hang Him on a cross and kill Him. He humbled Himself to let them drive nails through His hands and feet, and like a sheep before its shearers He remained silent. He allowed them to lift Him up in shame and as a curse for us all, to fulfill what He Himself has spoken, **“He who is hanged is accursed of God” (Deut. 21:23)** He could have answered the taunts of those who mocked Him and come down. He could have revealed His divine glory and lashed out with the almighty power that rightfully belonged to Him, but instead He remained on that cross until He breathed His last and died.

IV. He Calls And Equips Us To Have The Same Mind.

A. And why would He do that? He humbled Himself for you to the point of becoming the curse for you; taking the curse of God on Himself and dying in your place. **“Surely, He bore our griefs, and carried our sorrows; Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, Smitten of God, and afflicted. But He was pierced for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastisement that brought us peace was laid upon Him, And by His wounds we are healed.”** That is how far He humbled Himself - and because of it our sins have been forgiven, we have received eternal life, and we will rise from our graves on the last day to sing in His true triumphant parade on the glorious Palm Sunday that beats all others!

B. In light of all of this, Paul encourages us to have that same attitude - to have the mind of Christ, even if it involves humility, sacrifice, and, yes, obedience unto death. To all of this Paul adds one more word of encouragement as He reminds us of the result of Jesus humility and obedience. He writes, **“Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on Him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus is Lord to the glory of God the Father.”** Christ’s glory was increased, and His joy multiplied, by enduring all the things God set before Him on His path of humble obedience.

C. Just as it was for Jesus, so it will be for us also. Because of His sacrifice and victory those things that we may think we have given up or sacrificed for Him and the Gospel are never really lost. In Him, in His saving work, and in humble obedience under His grace, nothing is ever lost. We will not lose treasures, but will gain heavenly, imperishable ones that are being stored up for us. We will not lose joy, but will receive a joy that can never be taken away. We will not lose our lives, but gain them for eternity. Any loss we may suffer now is only momentary, but the glory that will be revealed in us when Christ comes, that will be forever. Although our full enjoyment may be delayed for the strengthening of our faith, we truly have nothing to lose when we put on the mind of Christ with humility and sacrificial love for God and the people around us.

D. To strengthen us and to encourage and enable us to have His same attitude, our Lord has left us this meal. Here we receive His very body and true blood. We take Him into us and are cleansed and forgiven, strengthened, and renewed, so that we might walk before Him in humble faith as willing servants. There in baptismal waters, there in the Holy Supper, and here in the words read, spoken, sung and declared in absolution, the Holy Spirit comes to give us both the desire and the ability to have a Christ-like attitude.

Concl.: So, come, continue to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit who will give you the mind of Christ so that you may humble yourselves in service, and be exalted by the name above all names that has been given to you. Amen.