

The Servant King

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Holy Week / Servant of the Lord; Kingdom of God; Humility; Exaltation of Christ / Zechariah 9:9–12; Psalm 118:19–29; Psalm 31:9–16; Philippians 2:5–11; Mark 14:1–15:1; Mark 15:1–47; John 12:20–43

- › Grace, mercy, and peace be yours from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, our Palm Sunday King. Amen.

Today we remember the day that our Lord rode into Jerusalem on the back of a donkey with shouts of Hosanna and the waving of Palm branches. Today is a day of celebration or it appears that way. That's what our Palm Sunday Gospel showed us. It looked like a celebration of a King coming into town. Today is also known as Passion Sunday as well, where we hear a large amount of the passion narrative, this year, from the Gospel of Mark. Today in the Church Year is really a transition day. Today we go from great celebration and into a week where everything is going to change.

Paul understood change. He understood transformation. Paul understood what it was all about and in our text today, He shows us who Jesus is. He shows Jesus not just as a King, but really as a servant. And St. Paul calls us to really have the same mind as Christ Jesus.

Paul knew well—and maybe we do too—the mind-set of human beings. Over the last year, a Pandemic year, we have seen the biggest idol that we face come out. Our biggest idol is that we want things done our own way. By nature we are self-centered and selfish. It's all about me. We think about our self first. St. Paul in the words immediately preceding our text calls us out:

English Standard Version Chapter 2

3 Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. 4 Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.

He knows and you know the selfishness that we each battle. You know you think about yourself first. This has been humanity's mind-set since the fall in the Garden of Eden. We've been thinking of ways to get ahead or to protect ourselves ever since that fateful moment. We've been thinking only of ourselves, our wants, our desires, our rights, since the beginning of time. We are selfish.

This natural mind-set that we all have is sinful. It doesn't fear, love, and trust in God above all things. It doesn't love our neighbor as ourselves. It doesn't serve others. It does destroy Christian congregation and unity in faith. It does destroy personal and family relationships. Oh and haven't we seen that in history, but also in the last year, where it's been all about me and what I want. We've placed our fear and trust in other things than God. We've allowed fear to keep us away from God. We've allowed a lack of trust to invade our lives. Quite frankly during this last year, a Pandemic year, and a year of political turmoil we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves...whether you are a masker or nonmasker, whether you are a republican or democrat, whether you are going to get the vaccine, have it, or not. No matter where you stand, you are a sinner, and you are selfish. This is your mindset and it was the mindset of the Philippian congregation as well, and Paul encourages the Philippians to have a new mind-set.

The other troubling thing about this natural mind-set is that it even thinks that I can be my own God. That we do not need God to direct our lives, but that we can. The ultimate conceit is thinking that I am better than the next guy and because of that I can punch my way into heaven—without a Savior. Our selfishness brings us trouble. Our selfishness is not servanthood.

But Christ, as our Servant King, brings us to his mind-set. Christ transforms our mind-set by taking the form of a servant and being born in our likeness. The mind-set that Christ calls us to have is that of a servant! He calls on you and I serve. Isn't that what Christ told his disciples in the Gospel reading from last week...don't lord it over others, but be servants. This is why I came.

HE calls us to a new mind, a new mind to serve, to count others more significant than we are. But no one has ever served quite like he did. Sure, we could get on

our hands and knees and wash feet. We aren't God though. He possessed all glory from eternity and left that for one purpose and one purpose only...to save you. As He served, as he lived his life as a servant. He was poor, he was rejected, he was mocked, and he was hated!

He was hated so much that he was sent to the cross. Yet, he it was him humbling himself to death on a cross. Death on a cross was for criminals, but Jesus wasn't a criminal. You are. He was innocent. You're not. And death on a cross was slow and it was suffering. You would suffocate. Since he was innocent, he took your guilt, your crimes, and he died for you. With his shed blood and death, Christ atoned for your sins of being self-centered, not just those sins, but all sins.

Your new mindset: you stand forgiven, possessors of eternal life by Jesus paying the full price for you. And your new mindset worships God. Your new mindset worships Christ Jesus, the Savior we didn't think we needed. And eventually every knee will bow before Jesus, like it or not...because Jesus is more than a servant...He is King of Kings! Next Sunday when we gather again, we will rejoice together at the celebration of our Lord's Resurrection. His Resurrection also exalts us!

Therefore, we now live the mindset of Christ! We look to Jesus, the one who served, but the One who is also our king, to enable us to live humbly. Jesus forgives you day after day, week after week—this very day---in the Gospel and at his altar. Knowing that you are forgiven, that you have eternal life, you live a life that is not seeking recognition, but you live a life for others.

Our new mindset in Christ causes us to live to serve one another in humility. Rather than selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility," you do "count others more significant than yourselves," you do "look not only to Your own interests, but also to the interests of others." We want to be a help to others in whatever ways we can.

Most importantly, we want to witness Christ to them with our life and our words. We want to witness to them that Jesus is their Savior who died for their sins, in which we remember his death this very week. And frankly as we live our lives

differently, as we live in this new mind-set the world will notice, and it could cost us greatly, it cost Jesus greatly.

As we live in this new mind-set, as we serve one another in humility. As we look to others more importantly than our own lives, we also live glorifying our Lord and Savior with life and voice.

Today, is Palm Sunday, on this day we remember that Jesus entered Jerusalem with the people singing “hosannas” to him...and welcoming Him as their King. We live our lives to his glory and praise him as the King of kings and Lord of lords with our voice. What a joy and blessing it is to remember and celebrate this week together this year. What a joy and blessing it is to be gathered together this week this year to sing those songs of Zion together, those songs that we cherish. This week we will gather many times for worship, on Thursday as we remember that Lord instituting the Lord’s Supper, washing His disciples feet, and serving us. On Friday, where we remember his ultimate act of service as He dies our death on the cross. And then in just one week, we gather on Easter to celebrate the fact that our Lord is alive. We will speak the Easter Acclamation many times...probably more so this year than ever before, because it will be such a Joy to be together and celebrate our Lord’s Resurrection and sing His praises and the joyful alleluias!

Jesus is your servant, He is also your King and Savior. One day, yes, every knee will bow and every tongue will confess Him as Lord. He showed his humility as he rode a donkey into Jerusalem. Which is drastically different than Chancellor Bismarck of Prussia who in the 19th century rode a white horse into Jerusalem and accompanied by a large army where even sections of the wall had to be removed.

A person of greatness as our world sees it comes with great pomp and circumstance, but our Lord, the Christ, our Servant King enters on a lowly donkey. He came as a servant to serve all of us and to save us. Thus we can sing with one of our hymns: “Ride on, Ride on in majesty! In lowly pomp ride on to die. Bow Thy meek head to mortal pain, Then take, O God, Thy pow’r and reign.”

In the name of Jesus. Amen.

- › Now may the peace of God which passes all human understanding, guard your hearts and your minds and keep them focused in Christ Jesus our Lord and Savior, our Servant King. Amen.