

Palm Sunday

March 28, 2021

Philippians 2:5-11:

“From Empty to Full”

- I. Emptied Himself. (5-7)
- II. Obedient to the Point of Death.
- III. Now Highly Exalted.
- IV. Back to Our Mind.

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Philippians 2:5-11

Dear Friends in Christ,

This is, of course, Palm Sunday; the Sunday of the Passion; the Sunday we remember the last part of Jesus' journey to secure eternal life for us. I don't know the author of the following but I've come across it a number of times, and it might be familiar to you:

"I lift my gaze beyond the night, and see
Above the banners of Man's hate unfurled,
The holy figure that on Calvary
Stretched arms out wide enough
For all the world."

It's where the entrance into Jerusalem will take us: To "The holy figure on Calvary;" His "Stretched arms out wide enough For all the world." He's taking us . . .

FROM EMPTY TO FULL

I. Emptied Himself. (5-7)

I have stated in the past that my family and I first came to Pilgrim at the beginning of 1972. In Lent of that year we started Bible Investigation classes. Among all the wonderful hymns we sang during the Lenten season, "Ride On, Ride On in Majesty" set forth in song for us a most powerful scene of God in the flesh sitting on a colt, willingly making His way to suffer and die a most horrendous death.

Please recall the words of stanzas 2 and 5. First, stanza 2: "Ride on, ride on in majesty! In lowly pomp ride on to die. O Christ, Thy triumphs now begin O'er captive death and conquered sin." He rides on to conquer what we can't: sin and death. Then, stanza 5: "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." The King of kings left His throne to suffer and die in order to rescue those trapped in sin - and death - and hell.

The KJV Bible Dictionary defines majesty, in part, as "the quality or state of a person or thing which inspires awe or reverence in the beholder." Seriously, can we truly grasp God becoming one of us because He loved us so much that He would pay for our criminal, death penalty sin? To do that so we could be received into His eternal Kingdom? Our text begins with:

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. (vv.5-7)

God in the flesh would empty Himself - become one of us - would bow His "meek head to mortal pain." As our text says . . .

II. Obedient to the Point of Death.

And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on the cross. (v.8)

Years ago I read about a Scottish doctor who was noted for his love for people as he was for his medical skill. After his death some of his family went through his record books. They were surprised when they found a fair number of his accounts with the following words written across them in red ink: "Forgiven - too poor to pay."

His wife had a different mind-set and demanded that the accounts be paid. The story goes that she took the issue to court. After examining the books the judge asked her, "Is this your husband's handwriting in red ink?" She replied, "Yes." "Then," said the judge, "there is not a tribunal in the land that can obtain the money where he has written 'Forgiven.'"

This is what our Lord Jesus who became "obedient to the point of death, even death on the cross" did for us: wrote in blood across the accounts of your life and my life, which are filled with sin, guilt and shame - wrote across our accounts, **Forgiven - too poor to pay.**

We must listen to and take with us God's Word, "I, I am he who blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and I will not remember your sins." (Is. 42:25) We must listen and rejoice when He says, "I have blotted out your transgressions like a cloud and your sins like a mist; return to me, for I have redeemed you." (Is. 44:22) We must listen when He says through the Apostle Paul: "And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh (dead in unbelief), God made alive together with him, having forgiven all your trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross." (Col. 2:13-14)

III. Now Highly Exalted.

And then, after emptying Himself for us, we're told:

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 Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (vv. 9-11)

As stated at the beginning of this sermon, "This is, of course, Palm Sunday; the Sunday of the Passion; the Sunday we remember the last part of Jesus' journey to secure eternal life for us." He would completely empty Himself!

We know what awaits Him upon His entrance into Jerusalem: the Cross! We also know what awaits Him on the other side of the tomb: Victory! He would be full; fully in use of His divine powers. *From Empty to Full.* He has won for us forgiveness of all sin and the assurance of everlasting life.

But there's a footnote here . . .

IV. Back to Our Mind.

A footnote that pulls us back to verse 5 of our text: "Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus...". Mind-set is defined as "the established set of attitudes held by someone." In this case, we are to have the mind of Christ. There are four terms used in our text that direct us. They are "emptied himself...servant... humbled himself...obedient." *Empty ourselves* of self worship. *Servants* of the Lord. *Humble.* Strive for *obedience.*

In the verses preceding our text for this morning, Paul writes:

So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy being of the same mind (mind-set), having the same love, being in full accord of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. (Phil. 1:1-4)

Do you remember this scene: "(Jesus) rose from supper. He laid aside his outer garments, and taking a towel, tied it around his waist. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with a towel that was wrapped around him."? (Jn. 13:4-5)

Do you remember this scene: "(Jesus said to the disciples) "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. It shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be your slave, even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."? (Matt. 20:25-28)

He served us to death that we might have eternal life. Before He entered our lives, we were full of this world which ends in death. We were actually empty! Through faith in Christ, we have been moved from eternal emptiness to everlasting life - eternal fullness - uninterrupted joy and peace! On this Palm Sunday we pray the Holy Spirit use us to point others *from empty to full*. Indeed . . .

"I lift my gaze beyond the night, and see
Above the banners of Man's hate unfurled,
The holy figure that on Calvary
Stretched arms out wide enough
For all the world."

Amen.

Pastor Bill Abbott