

PALM SUNDAY

March 29, 2026

Philippians 2:5-11

The Mind of Christ

- I. Emptied Himself
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Philippians 2:5-11

Dear Friends in Christ,

Though this was recently written the author is unknown: "In 200 years, we and everyone we ever loved and care about will be dead and forgotten. Our houses, our pensions, memories, passions, and every other thing we cared about will be forgotten forever." I would say, the forgetting will come quicker than 200 years. But listen to what the person went on to say: "Presently I work in a branch of healthcare where I meet very elderly patients, and when they show me photos of their youth, it is incomparable to what they have become. And I realize that man is just a flower, a fading flower. And it has made me depressed and stoic. We are all in the state of decay."

The mind thinks what it wants to think. And look where human thinking has brought us. Change and decay have never changed. In fact, they're speeding up. Our journey to Calvary continues. This Palm Sunday we consider...

THE MIND OF CHRIST

I. Emptied Himself

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.

That's really something isn't it, God in the flesh "emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men."? It's really something isn't it, that God the Son surrounds Himself with what this world would consider nobodies, and in some cases, what some might call losers: tax collectors and sinners (like us!), a prostitute, unknowns? We've witnessed the efforts of many churches trying to make Jesus a "be happy with this world" savior, or a heavenly banker, or an enlightened psychoanalyst. You know, let's bring God down to the way we think and to what we want! I say, stop it! Stop the nonsense!!

Human reasoning is a flop! God says, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord. Whereas the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts (Is. 55:6-9)." I've held on to this statement that was made long ago by the English author and Anglican priest, William Ralph Inge, "He who rides a tiger must make plans for dismounting." We should really think about that in light of the way this world thinks and where its thinking takes everything. It's a tiger that can only end up devouring its rider – or should I say "riders"? Again, God says, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways."

You'll recall that our sermon hymn for this morning was, Ride On, Ride On in Majesty. Each stanza captures both the humiliation and exaltation of Jesus' journey through this world to the Cross. Consider the 5th and last stanza: "Ride on, ride on in majesty (exaltation)! In lowly pomp ride on to die (humiliation). Bow Thy meek head to mortal pain (humiliation), Then take, O God, Thy power and reign (exaltation)." It fits with our text, doesn't it? "(Jesus) did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped (exaltation) but emptied himself by taking the form of a servant (humiliation)..." – and that for us – just everyday people.

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).

This is phenomenal! God in the flesh enters this horribly fallen world that is filled with madness, to remove the debt we owe God; a sinless life. Paul wrote, "And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven all our trespasses, by cancelling 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)."

I cannot forget the account of the Scottish Doctor who was noted for his love for people as he was for his medical skill. The account reads, "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 mindset and demanded that the accounts be paid. The story then reads, "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.'"

In a sense, this is what our Lord Jesus who became "obedient to the point of death even death on the cross" did for us: He 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."

I have 2 Scriptures I want to put in front of you. First, "I, I am he who blots out your transgressions for my own sake and I will not remember your sins (Is.42:25)." Second, "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)." Though we still struggle and stumble with sin, the Lord forgives the repentant heart.

III. Confession

And so, the Son of God enters Jerusalem on a donkey and is greeted by everyday people. John writes: "... the large crowd that had come to the feast heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem. So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, crying out, 'Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the king of Israel (Jn.12:12-13)!" Palm Sunday.

Of course, we know where this is going: The Roman cross! You might recall those words of Jesus as he was being led to Calvary: "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children (Lk,23:28)." He said that after being whipped, beaten, and tormented, "Do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children." That doesn't make much sense to the unbelieving heart. I have kept the following insight made by one of my seminary professors from many years ago:

The person who weeps for Jesus Christ usually thinks of him as a martyr, not as the Captain of our salvation, going out to battle against the evil foe. He pictures Christ as the victim of circumstances, not as the Victim chosen by God as the substitute of the whole human race. But, friend, such thoughts of martyrdom are not merely foreign to the Scriptures, but directly contrary to the word of God.

Indeed, Christ was not a victim of circumstances. The real victims are you and me. We are the victims of our sin. Christ is the victor over sin, death, and the devil. Our text for this morning closes with these words:

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).

Make no mistake about it, every knee will bow and every tongue will confess Jesus Christ is Lord on that great Day of Judgment. As Jesus said, "When the son of man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats (Mt.25:31)." We thank God that the faith God has given us - the faith to know that Jesus is our Savior and has made us His sheep.

IV. The Mind of Christ

And all this calls us back to these words from verse five of our text: "Have this mind set among yourselves, which is yours in Christ...". Mindset is defined as "the established set of attitudes held by someone." In light of our text, we are to have the mind of Christ. There are 4 terms from our text that guide us. They are "emptied himself" - "servant" - "humbled himself" - "obedient". Empty ourselves of self-worship and with humility become obedient servants of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We cannot ignore these words of Jesus recorded for us in Saint Matthew's gospel: Jesus said to his 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 (Mt.20:25-28)."

Christ served us to death that we might have eternal life. Before He entered our lives, the only certainty we had was death. Now we have an eternal inheritance that will never perish, spoil, or fade! We pray the Lord gives us strength to share that with others.

So – what is set in your mind?

Amen.

Pastor Bill Abbott