

Saint Luke Ev. Lutheran Church
Sermon by Pastor A. E. Schultz
Palm Sunday, March 24, 2013
Philippians 2:5-11



Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in the very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death – even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, 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.

People of God – rescued from the flaming lake of fire in hell by the innocent blood of the very Lamb of God:

There was a little boy named Garrett – just 6 years old – looking over the edge into the river – the cold icy river full of great white foam from fertilizer and other pollution being swept along by the river. Little Garrett was looking over the edge when he slipped and fell into the river. His sister Madison – 16 years old – jumped in after him. A young man named Lyle jumped into the water, too. Down the way – somehow – it's all kind of confusing – Garrett was rescued – he was grabbed and rescued – but his sister and Lyle died. They died – drowned in too cold deep water! How can they possibly have a Happy Easter? How can they celebrate next Sunday? I can tell you – they will not be distracted by marshmallow peeps nor ham and cheesy hash-browns nor deviled eggs and chocolate bunnies. Their only hope for peace in their hearts – will be the Easter Gospel – that Jesus died and rose again – so we can live forever in Heaven. This Easter will be the time for them to remember as never before Jesus is the resurrection and the Life. Today we worship the crucified and risen Christ – as we celebrate Palm Sunday. God's Word reminds us:

Understand The Attitude of Christ Jesus

- 1. Jesus humbled himself**
- 2. Jesus' Father exalted him.**

Context! 44 years before Jesus was born – March 15th – a week ago last Friday, Julius Caesar was assassinated! Ambushed – they say Julius Caesar was attacked by some 60 enemies. They say Caesar’s after death autopsy – was the first ever recorded. That he was stabbed some 33 times. That only the second stab wound to the chest was fatal. That he was stabbed so many times that he probably died from blood loss. It wasn’t long after this – a terrible battle was fought by the city of Philippi – named after Philip the father of Alexander the Great! On the one side the rebels – the traitors – the assassins – Cassius and Brutus. On the other side Mark Antony and Octavian! Antony and Octavian won – and Octavian returned to Rome to become the new Caesar. Ought not Caesar to have a more imperial name – a name more fitting – a name more *august*? And so he changed his name to Augustus – Caesar Augustus. You have known of him ever since you were in Sunday School! **And it came to pass in those days there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus – that all the world should be taxed. And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was Governor of Syria. And all went to be taxed – everyone into his own city. And Joseph also went up from Nazareth in Galilee – into Judea – unto the city of David which was called Bethlehem – because he was of the house and lineage of David – to be taxed with Mary his espoused wife – being great with child. And so it was that while they were there – the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger – because there was no room for them in the inn.”** Luke 2 KJV.

The part of God’s Word we are concentrating on – just part of Paul’s letter to the believers in the city of Philippi. We will with Jesus’ permission read from the 4 chapters of Philippians 5 times this year. Two Sundays in Advent – the 3rd Sunday of Lent – Palm Sunday and Maundy Thursday. People have studied the letter to the Philippians – in a very scholarly way – appreciating how it is a prime example of classic Greek rhetoric. Paul begins with a prayer – that anticipates all the major themes of the Book. The key theme is living according to the Gospel of Christ. It illustrates the paradox – the seeming contradiction – though none exists – between Jesus having done everything to redeem us – and yet – how it is important to live a new life – in light of being blood bought children of God. Paul warns against people who spread the Gospel out of bad motives.

Pastor Gartner mentioned last week – about Judahizers. Remember? People who said – sure Jesus died for you – but you still need to keep Old Testament Ceremonial Law. All of those “touch not, taste not, handle not” rules and regulations. Don’t eat bacon or ham or shrimp-fest or crab-fest or lobster-fest – no cheese-burgers – no sausage and cheese pizza – no clam chowder – no parmesan cheese on your spaghetti – if there is meat in the sauce! Little baby boys need to be circumcised on the 8th day. Touching blood makes you unclean. Touching anyone or anything that is dead makes you unclean. Giving 10% is a rule – not an option! Sabbath – sun down Friday until sun down on Saturday – rest – no starting a fire – even the little fires that pop from a spark plug. No cooking – no warming up soup on the Sabbath! It was to people proud of their citizenship in Rome – that Paul wrote – **our citizenship is in Heaven**. That’s all that really matters. That’s all that really counts!

On Palm Sunday – the start of Holy Week – a roller-coaster ride through Easter – we consider part of the letter to the Philippians. **Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in the very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.** Attitude! Attitude is everything! What a wondrous attitude the Son of God had – that he should leave the wondrous joy of Heaven – to come down to this sin infected world – to be born a little baby – born in a cave where sheep and goats and cows – found shelter from the weather. To be wrapped in soft strips of cloth and to rest in a feed box – on the hay and clover and alfalfa. Jesus did not consider equality with his Heavenly Father something to be grasped – literally hung on to. Instead Jesus made himself nothing – taking the very nature of a slave – made like one of us in every way – except Jesus never ever sinned!

And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death – even death on a cross! Being found... the Greek word has the flavor of an unexpected discovery! Who knew? Who knew that the Carpenter from Nazareth – at 30 years of age – turned traveling Rabbi – was in fact the Son of God – the Redeemer of the world? Who knew? Spend the day with Jesus and you will see. Listen to Jesus – who taught with authority! Read your Bible and with each verse you will be more and more persuaded by the power of the Holy Spirit working through the Gospel that Jesus is your Savior! They say Hugo Chavez –

when he was too weak to talk – moved his lips to say, *“I don’t want to die! Please don’t let me die!”* They say the Cancer overwhelmed him. They say his heart gave out! Not so – the death of the Lord Jesus. God’s Word records Jesus said in John chapter 10 – where Jesus says he is the Good Shepherd who lays down his life for his sheep. Jesus said, **“No one takes my life from me, but I lay it down of my own accord.”** John 10:18 Jesus said from the cross with a strong voice, **“It is finished!”** Jesus said with a strong voice, **“Father into your hands I commend my spirit!”** With that he bowed his head and! **gave up his life** Jesus decided how he would die. And Jesus decided when he would die. Jesus didn’t lose his life. Jesus gave it up – to forgive us!

Jesus **humbled himself and became obedient to death – even death on a cross!** A young man in Ohio – 17 when he committed the crime – now 18 – pled guilty to murdering 3 classmates and wounding 3 more. Before the judge passed sentence – the families of his victims and survivors gave victim impact statements. They have time to address the court and the person who sinned against them. I cannot begin to know the horrible pain they must know. How sad when again and again they say what you would expect. They say, *“I hate you! I hope you suffer horribly in prison. I hope you rot and burn forever in Hell!”* I can appreciate that’s how you would feel. What is far beyond human reason to understand is how Jesus could suffer on the cross – to pay for the sins of a murderer who has absolutely no remorse! A murderer who sneaks a pen and writes killer on his undershirt and mocks all his victims and their survivors. For such unspeakable evil and worse – Jesus humbled himself to cover that stain with his innocent blood. How amazing is grace like that?

Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, 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. On Easter morning Jesus was alive again. That morning Jesus descended into hell – to declare his unconditional victory of the devil, sin and death. God’s Word doesn’t say too much about the descent into Hell. Simon Peter – inspired by the Holy Spirit wrote, **For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring us to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit, through whom also he went and preached to the spirits in prison who disobeyed long ago when**

God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built.

1 Peter 3:18-20a. Some time between being made alive again on Easter morning – and appearing to the women and the disciples – Jesus descended into hell. There he preached – proclaimed his ultimate victory over death and the grave. Anyone in hell – Satan, demons, souls of the damned – from as far back as Noah and even before that – who rejected the Gospel saw that Jesus was the victor! Paul wrote about Jesus' unconditional triumph over the devil in his letter to the Colossians. **God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross. And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.** Colossians 2:13b-15 Imagine defeated soldiers stripped of their armor – stripped of their weapons – stripped of their clothes – exposed to utter shame and defeat. Thus Jesus crushed the devil and the demons – death and the grave itself. We are set free even from the fear of death for Jesus' sake!

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.

Have you ever met someone famous? I once met Jimmy Gantner – who played 2nd and 3rd base for the Milwaukee Brewers for some 17 years and then coached! I met him at the birthday party of my friend Mike Floyd. I didn't know what to say – at all. It was embarrassing. Sammy Narges – my member was Jimmy Gantner's coach when Mr. Gantner played Little League. I met Bart Starr once and had my picture taken with him. I met Lynn Dickie – who was quarterback for the Packers, too. I met him down at the Elias Inn on a Friday night – out for fish! I met Charleton Heston – Moses? Surely The Ten Commandments will be on TV this week. I have met the Governor of the State of Wisconsin and I met one of our Senators at farmer's breakfast at Lynn Schmidt's farm! I have friends who could – without too much trouble – introduce me to both of the Presidents Bush. A different friend who could introduce me to the Queen of England! But the fact is – none of that really matters. All that really matters is that one day I will meet Jesus. And when we do – Jesus will be glorious – and we will want to kneel before him. But Jesus will not want us to be afraid of him. Jesus wants us to know very simply that we

are home – home in Heaven by grace alone, faith alone and Scripture alone.
Amen!

To God alone all glory!

Rev. Anthony E. Schultz