

March 29, 2015  
Philippians 2:5-11

Palm Sunday/Passion Sunday B  
A Cry of Confession of Faith

*Melissa, Brady, Josh, parents, grandparents, family and friends, and members of Trinity Lutheran Church. Grace, mercy, and peace be yours from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, our Palm Sunday and Triumphant King. Amen.*

I'm assuming you've all seen one before, whether it be on TV or in person or I know you've all heard about one or read about one before. When I was a kid I was always thrilled to go the Homecoming, Memorial Day, Fourth of July and Christmas Parades in town. You'd hear the music of the high school band. You'd see the local dignitaries, the floats, firetrucks, police cars, etc. Parades typically happen because of some local or national celebration. In my previous parish, the town or the lack of a town by the small church would swell in size on the Saturday around the 4<sup>th</sup> of July. It was when they had their Fourth of July festival. From the Parade to contests, bake sales, etc. it was a cause for celebration. It was a great time.

Today in our Palm Sunday Processional reading, you heard about a different parade. You heard from the Gospel of John where Jesus was entering into Jerusalem on the back of a donkey, hearing cries and shouts of "*Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord! Even the King of Israel!*" These were words of victory. This was supposed to be a victory parade. These people were shouting a confession that Jesus is the one who comes in the name of the Lord, who is the Lord Himself. They were making a confession of faith. Perhaps it could compare to Peter's confession of the Lord, when He says, "You are the Christ!"

Even as we remember and celebrate today a good confession of faith, we begin to focus on the Holy Passion of our Lord. The people were gathering in Jerusalem for the Passover celebration. Some would argue that the Palm Sunday crowd was different than the Good Friday crowd, perhaps they were, but let's assume they were the same. The crowds are fickle; Pilate would ask the crowds later in the week, either late on Thursday Night or very early Friday Morning, "Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?" The crowds would answer: "CRUCIFY HIM! CRUCIFY HIM!" Now they want Jesus dead. Now they want Jesus to die! And yes Jesus was crucified. Yes, Jesus became obedient to death, even death on the cross.

Let's step back out of the gospel timeline, out of the Passion Week narrative and look to our text for this morning from Philippians 2. As we walk this Passion Week of our Lord once again, let's see how Jesus walked His own walk to the cross. St. Paul writes: *<sup>5</sup> Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, <sup>6</sup> who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, <sup>7</sup> but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. <sup>8</sup> And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.*<sup>1</sup> Jesus Christ bore servanthood, He became a

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<sup>1</sup> *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version.* (2001). (Php 2:5–8). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

slave for you. Lenski in His commentary makes this note: “ ‘Slave’ matches ‘cross’ for when slaves were executed they were crucified.” Jesus Christ became a slave for you and died a slave’s death on the cross. He humbled himself, he became low so that you can increase, so that you can live.

In Confirmation Classes as we talk about the second article of the creed and the person and work of Jesus Christ, I share with them the states of humiliation and exaltation. I use a stair chart to show the stages of humiliation and the stages of exaltation as we confess them in the creed. Jesus Christ, although being fully God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped and emptied himself, He took on the form of a servant/slave, was born in the likeness of men. He was born of the Virgin Mary. He was born in the natural way you and I were born, through the womb of His mother.

If you have never been in a delivery room, you may not appreciate what this humiliation was all about for Jesus. Why would He allow Himself to be born in a very messy way, with blood and other bodily fluids and then have to be fully dependent on others to take care of you as you grow older? Paul talks about the servanthood of Jesus in his humiliation.

Notice the words that started our text for today, “Have this mind among yourselves...” What mind? **2** *So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, <sup>2</sup> complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. <sup>3</sup> Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. <sup>4</sup> Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.*<sup>2</sup> Really the same mind that is Christ’s. A mind, an attitude of servanthood. A mind of looking to the interests of others over and above your own.

As fallen human beings, as sinners in this world, we fail at this. We fail at it. We are selfish, we primarily look to our own interests (even if it does benefit others). You see this throughout the Passion Week of our Lord. Jesus in the temple chasing out the money changers and others. These money changers and others were seeking after their own interests. The disciples who are called upon to stay awake and keep watch in the garden fall asleep. They then run away when the Soldiers arrest Jesus. They are seeking to serve the self, and save their own lives. Peter is in the courtyard of the High Priest and he denies His Lord, not to mention Judas Iscariot, the betrayed, who betrayed Jesus for 30 pieces of silver and then, he knew what he did was wrong, but didn’t repent, instead went off and took his own life. Even the crowds shouting “Crucify Him, Crucify Him,” are looking out for their own interests.

It happens to us as well. We look after our own interests. We are selfish. Melissa, Brady, and Josh, in just a few minutes you will be asked some questions, here is one of them: “Do you intend to hear the Word of God and receive the Lord’s Supper faithfully?” As I’ve talked to you all of you, you’ve told me that you can answer that question before

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<sup>2</sup> *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version.* (2001). (Php 2:1–4). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

the Lord God Himself. This is a question of really having the mind of Christ and not selfish desires. Are you going to come to worship and receive His gifts or go off and do what you want to do, whether that is fishing, hunting, hockey, speech, spending time with family, snowmobiling, riding the ATV, basketball, sleeping in, etc? That's a question that only you can answer. Your parent's can't even ask you that question.

Now I have a question for your parents: your children are going to promise they will worship faithfully and receive the Lord's Supper faithfully. It is still your responsibility to be a servant for them, to look after their needs, their important spiritual needs and bring them to church regularly. My prayer is that regularly means every Sunday, every time we gather in this place to hear God's Word and receive His gifts of forgiveness, life, and salvation.

To the rest of you, you can look after your own needs as well. It is also part of your responsibility as members of the Church to look after the needs of others, including the young people of the church. Are you praying for them? Are you encouraging them to be in God's House and hear His word? Are you encouraging their parents?

We, too, are being called upon to humble ourselves, even as Christ humbled himself. Now we aren't going to the way of death on a cross, but we can definitely serve our neighbor with his or her spiritual needs.

Our text doesn't end there with his humiliation. Just like this Passion Week doesn't end just with Palm Sunday, it doesn't end on Thursday Night or on Good Friday. Jesus Christ is exalted. <sup>9</sup> *Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name,* <sup>10</sup> *so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,* <sup>11</sup> *and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*<sup>3</sup> God the Father exalts His Servant Son. God the Father exalted His SON for you. His exaltation began when He rose from the dead as we confess in the creed. It continues through the 40 days after Easter, to His Ascension, to reigning on the right hand of God, and will ultimately and fully be exalted when He returns to bring you to your eternal home, residing with Jesus in all perfection.

Jesus Christ is exalted for you! There is coming a yet more glorious day, when a parade is not needed, but a grand celebration will be happening, by those who believe, by those who have faith in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior.

Today, we have confessed our faith with the words of the Nicene Creed. Today we have confessed that Jesus Christ is Lord. Today, in just a short while, these three young people, will stand before God and make a bold confession of faith. Today I am not confirming them, you are not confirming them, as parents you are not confirming them. There is only one that can confirm their faith, there is only one that can make this bold confession of faith. That one person is themselves as the individual through the work of the Holy Spirits. The Rite of Confirmation is not the moment in their lives where

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<sup>3</sup> *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version.* (2001). (Php 2:9–11). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

they accept Jesus into their hearts, where they make the decision. For they can't. We can't. Jesus Christ has already invaded their hearts and minds. Jesus Christ already saved them from their sins. Jesus Christ already died for you and Jesus Christ already lives for you. They were brought into the family of God when they were brought to the font by their parents, to receive God's gifts of forgiveness, life, and salvation. Today is a day that they, that you make the bold confession of faith, that you do believe in God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and will die for that faith if called upon.

My prayer for you three is that your confession of faith today, holds true until the Lord welcomes you into eternal glory. My prayer for you today is that you do not fall away from this confession that Jesus is your Savior. My prayer for you today is that you will continue to live steadfastly in this church.

My prayer for you is that you do not become another statistic that says and over alarming number of youth after confirmation never return to church or leave the church until they want to be married or have a baby that needs to be baptized. My prayer for you is that you do not see today as graduation, even though there may be robes, certificates, flowers, cakes, and parties. We celebrate with you today, your faith in Jesus Christ. My prayer for you is that you can begin to reverse that statistic and stay in the church, that you stay an active member of the church of God, serving others.

My prayer for all us today, even as we have made the bold confession yet again that we believe in the true God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, that stand firm in our faith, that we keep those confirmation promises that we made years ago.

Even as Melissa, Brady, and Josh stand before you today and confess their faith. There is coming a day of greater grandeur where every knee will 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. We get a taste of that day when we kneel and receive the Lord's Body and Blood at the Altar of our Lord and receive forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation.

We get a taste of that great day every Sunday when we hear of God's promises for our lives. We get a taste of that great day each year when we celebrate the Holy Week of our Lord, that ends on Easter Sunday, where we celebrate Christ's victory over Sin, Death, and the Devil, where we celebrate that Jesus is alive. We will one day experience that great and terrifying day, when Jesus comes out of the clouds and returns, and then every knee will bow, every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. Yes, that is every one, that is the whole of creation. A commentator on this text says, "This elaboration makes clear that Paul is talking about far more than just the human race. All creation will bow before Him one day—not just in His presence, but at the mention of His name! Imagine a name commanding that much honor and respect!" Everyone and everything created, those that have gone before us into glory or into destruction will bow and pay homage to Jesus as Lord. Every angel and every demon will bow before the Lord of Glory.

This day will be a day of greatness for all of us who believe, all of us who have faith in Jesus Christ. This day, there will be no need for a parade, for there will be only one who receives homage and glory. There will only be one who receives all worship and praise and that one is Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world. That one is Jesus Christ, the One who lives for you and grants you life.

In the name of Jesus, we bow before you and confess before you. 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. Amen.*