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**Palm Sunday, Lent 6 – Palm Sunday**

**“The Humble King”**

**Read: John 12: 12 – 19 and/or memorize: Philippians 2: 7b - 8**

C. S. Lewis once said, “The best thing about Christianity is that no one could have guessed it. Our Messiah is born in a stable. We let our king ride in majesty on a donkey. We hang our Savior on a cross. How odd of God? A horrible week in the life of his disciples becomes a Holy Week in the life of his followers. Who can comprehend it? Even Palm Sunday, a simple parade becomes a paradox. Those who crowned him king will soon call for His crucifixion, for God can never be put in a box.”

The Jesus I hope we will know, and want to know, is the humble king. I want to put those words together today. He became one of us, so we could become more like him. The Bible says it best in an early hymn of the church, recorded in Philippians 2: 5, “You must have the same attitude Christ Jesus had.”

We take on the attitude of Jesus when we empty ourselves. Philippians 2:6 - 8 reveals the attitude of Jesus: “Though He was God, He did not think equality with God something to cling to. Instead, He gave up His Divine privileges; He took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being. When He appeared in human form, He humbled Himself in obedience to God and died a criminal’s death on a cross.” Think about that attitude: He humbled Himself to die for us!

A man visited a rabbi, seeking spiritual enlightenment. Before they began their discussion, the rabbi poured the seeker a cup of coffee. He proceeded to fill the seeker’s cup, letting the coffee overflow into the saucer, and eventually dripping all over the seeker’s hands. “What are you doing?” asked the shocked seeker. “Teaching the lesson,” replied to Rabbi. “You came seeking spiritual guidance, but your life is already full of many things. How can I pour more into an already full cup? You must empty yourself of other things if you really desire spiritual things.”

We are very much like that young man. We often come into the presence of the Lord, seeking to ask him to fill us. But in reality, the best thing that we could do, is to pour it all out, pour out the many things in our lives, so that there is room for God to fill us with

spiritual things. That is one of the ways we prepare ourselves to come into His presence at worship.

What's the problem? We are busy people; we live busy lives. We are full of plans, projects, problems, and possibilities. We have things to do, places to go, tasks to accomplish. Into this frantic life, we try to fit a little faith. If we plan carefully, we find a way to squeeze in an hour for worship, and please don't let it be much more than an hour, Pastor, especially on a busy day. The reality is, God will have none of that.

So, perhaps, the first move for all of us, as we gather for worship is that we empty ourselves in the presence of the Lord. Perhaps the words of our confession should be just that, that we come to empty ourselves before you, Lord. The word for that is kenosis. It means "removing something from a container, or pouring something out of a pitcher, until there is no more," even as Christ emptied himself of his deity so that He could become fully human, so we want to empty ourselves of our humanity, if we are to make contact with the divine.

1. This kenosis, the emptying of self, takes place in two ways: first, in sober thinking. Romans 12:3 put it this way, "Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought to think, but think, soberly, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you." It is a reminder that, at the root of all life, we want to remember that we are people, the creation of God; He is God. We often forget that, thinking that we know as much as or more than Him.

The word, humility, comes from the root word, humus. It means "down to earth." Humility is not low self-esteem, it is not being a doormat, it is not personal punishment; it is not living with a sense of guilt. 2. Humility is keeping your feet on the ground while you keep your mind on Christ. That is how God wants us to come to Him, as humble people.

A great pastor of the 1940's, Peter Marshall, who served as chaplain to the U.S. Senate for two years, before he died, once said, "Lord, when we are wrong, make us willing to change, and when we are right, make us easy to live with." Pride, Lord, teach us how to pour it out that we may have more of you.

3. The second way in which kenosis, our becoming humbler, takes place is through servant leadership. The place where God calls us is that place where our great gladness and the world's great needs come together. God is always calling us to that place where our great gladness and the world's great need meet each other. Albert Schweitzer said, "One thing, I know, the only ones among you who will be really happy, are those who will have sought and found a way to serve others."

On the night, when Jesus was betrayed, when the devil had already prompted Judas to betray Jesus; where James and John were jockeying for position, and Peter thought of himself so highly that he felt he was above denial, Jesus took a towel and began to wash the disciple's feet. This was a normal custom for the lowliest servant in the household.

The disciples were struggling with who is going to get the best places at the table and they forgot the necessary detail of foot washing. Jesus does it, and then, says to them, "Now that I, your Lord and teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet."

4. No one stands taller than when they stoop to serve. Jesus came among us as one who serves.

God wants us to take on the mind of Christ. We do that when we exalt Him as Lord of all. In Philippians, 2: 9–10 we read, "Therefore God exalted him to the highest place, and gave him the name that is above every name, but at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord."

We exalt Christ when we kneel in worship. Worship is not designed to please us, but to exalt Jesus. As we worship, the question is not, did it please us? The bigger concern is, did it honor God? Jesus said, "God is spirit, and those who worship God must worship in spirit and in truth." Worship is not about style; worship is about spirit.

In genuine worship, God's presence is felt, God's pardon is offered, God's purposes are revealed and God's power is displayed. In genuine worship, we bow before our maker. It is a reminder of our relationship. 5. In genuine worship, we are hushed by the Divine.

In our noisy world, let us find a place to be quiet. In genuine worship, my eyes are opened to see a glimpse of the truth God has for me. Worship deserves our best attention and deepest devotion. 6. We will get more out of worship when we focus on God.

Jesus is Lord of all, Lord of our lives. The Greek word is Kyrios, which means, "a person who has authority over others, a master, a chief, a ruler." Have you crowned Jesus, Lord of your life?

Saint Augustine, one of the greatest theologians of the Christian church, used to give people a little quiz that went something like this:

What is the opposite of white? – Black.

What is the opposite of hot? – Cold.

What is the opposite of fast? – Slow.

**What is the opposite of that which is? – That which is not – nothing. Jesus is the opposite of nothing. He is everything, he is all in all. In John 1: 3 we are reminded, “Through him all things are made, and without him nothing was made that has been made.”**

**The greatest damage we do to Jesus is not our disbelief, but our patronizing attitude. Jesus is Lord, yet we insist on calling him everything else, but that. C.S. Lewis said, “I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish things that people say about Jesus, like this: I'm ready to accept Jesus Christ as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept his claim to be God.”**

**Lewis goes on, “This is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic, or the devil himself. You must make your choice. Either this man was and is the Son of God or else he is a madman or something worse. You can shut him up for a fool; you can spit at him and kill him as a demon; or, you can fall at his feet and call him, Lord. But, let us not come away with any patronizing nonsense about his being a great human teacher. He has not left that option open, nor did he intend to.”**

**You may not realize this, but the very earliest Christian Creed was simply, “Jesus is Lord!” Palm Sunday presents you with the question, are you willing to crown him lord of your life or not? Upon your answer stands the eternal destination of your soul**

**Only you can answer this question: Is He your Lord? Have you crowned him Lord of all? Is he fighting today in competition with all the other gods that we have created in our world? Would you dare to bow down before him on Palm Sunday and Crown him Lord of all?**

**Not just to the gates of Jerusalem alone does Jesus ride today, but to the gates of our hearts. There he waits, knocking, knocking, knocking. For some, His knuckles must be sore by now. 7. The gentle rapping at the door has been smothered by so many contemporary rivals that people barely hear it. But Jesus keeps on knocking. Will you let Him come in? That is the key question for your life.**

**Count me in: What humble service will you offer this week?**