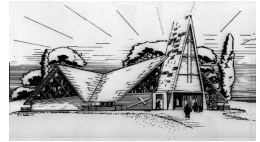




Sermon- Palm Sunday



• The Word of God for this Sermon is written in Philippians 2, 5-11:

- **ESV Philippians 2:5** Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus,
- **6** who, though He was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped,
- **7** but made Himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form,
- **8** He humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.
- **9** Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on Him the name that is above every name,
- **10** so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
- **11** and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.
- Let us pray: *Come Holy Spirit, open our ears, inspire in us the love for Your person and work and create Your new Spirit in us. Amen.*

• **Dear Beloved in Christ!**

• Today I want to start the sermon with a parable originally told by A.T.L. Armstrong: On the Last Day, as millions of people were gathered before God's throne, there was a small group heavily disputing an issue. "How can God judge us?" snarled a Jewish woman who had been driven into the gas-chambers at 17. "What does God know of our suffering?" A black man from the USA nodded his head in agreement. He was hanged together with his son by the whites because they were slaves. Then there was a German girl with a deep frown on her face. The word "adulteress" was burned invisibly on her forehead: "The shame I had to endure in my little village! And God did nothing!" These and more around agreed with one another, that God could only judge them if He would go through all they had gone through, without making use of His divine powers. God should live in this world as a helpless human being. He should be born as a Jew in a dark corner of the world. As child he should flee from his country and be homeless. Later on

his closest' friends should betray him. On the basis of false witnesses he should be accused and be judged by a chickenhearted judge.

• He should fall into the hands of an unruly mob and should suffer mockery and violence whilst dying slowly in great pain. This verdict over God was proclaimed loudly. A great mumbling and grumbling was heard in the crowd. But, when the last sentence was uttered, there followed a deep silence! All, who had accused God, stared at each other, with shock in their eyes. Nobody said a word! For, suddenly, all had realised: God has taken this punishment on Himself in His Son Jesus Christ! It is fulfilled!

• Our Lord Jesus Christ, judge and Saviour of all people, did not cling to His divinity, as a thief clings to his stolen goods. He went the other direction! Jesus made Himself nothing. He was not grasping and clinging to every bit of power, like rich and poor do in our days, to demand their desires! He went to the lowest level of society being a slave, a servant, willingly! And more, He climbed down to die a shameful and cursed death on the cross! Jesus Christ sacrificed His life for humankind which did not know Him, did not ask Him to save them! It sounds crazy, but this is His real humble and selfless Love for us.

• That we need this kind of salvation has to do with the fact, that a real robber came and attempted to steal equality with God from God so that he would not have to serve any more, but rule, not obey any more, but demand, not have God central in our life, but sidelined. In God's place, Self- upliftment!

• This good-sounding and good-looking fruit was offered to Eve and then Adam by the serpent, and the rest is a sad history. We have to deal with these things daily: **All-knowing**, like God man wants to be! Yet, how ironic, how little people, in our scientific age, know God's Word and the Way to His Life? **Allmighty**, like God, man strives to be. As soon as man has gained a little power he immediately misuses it against others! The sighs of the weak, of the many refugees and suffering people shout to heaven! Mighty men and women are frightening to those under them! **Omnipresent**, like God. Man tries to be at many places at the same time. While driving from one place to another we speak on the cellphone with someone else from yet a completely different place. And this in many cases, almost 24/7! To leave a legacy, for money or to simply survive. No wonder people loose their bearings! The result of this original robbery is sin and death, not life in paradise!

• We have to see this today. Christ is on a different trajectory than humankind, by

its fallen nature! Our deepest wishes and desires have a tendency to go upwards. But, the end of those is down, death.

• Jesus goes the other direction. He makes Himself nothing. He did not come to seek His own pleasure or fulfilment of life. He became human like us and went down into death and then He went up, again, not for Himself, to be able to pull us from death to Life. We took the wrong road. It ends in a dead end. But Jesus took the low and humble road for us, so that we may reap the God- given fruits of Paradise!

• We see this low road also when He enters Jerusalem! When He rode into Jerusalem the officials did not even greet or welcome Him! There was no reception for God's own Son in the capital of Israel from the upper-class! Yet, He did receive His prophesied hosanna in the highest, from the people who were following Him! Indeed, He is the King of the Israel, of God's Israel. On that day He entered Jerusalem, soon to be crowned, but not with a golden silver crown, with a crown of thorns causing blood to flow from His head! The King of Israel rejected by His own people!

• But He knew the true God, the Father in Heaven! He knew what kind of mind the Father has. Not a mind of Self-Love, not a mind of boastfulness, not a mind of showing off, not a mind of misusing power, but a mind of mercy, willing to forgive, quick to reconcile, a mind of peace, an attitude of loving the Truth! On the other hand, yes, God hates sin, He hates lies and all deception more than we can ever imagine, because these destroy His people!

• Jesus knew His Father's will and therefore His reign as king of Israel starts with suffering under the results of satans' original rebellion. His Way ends in victory and ascension, receiving all authority in heaven and on earth from God the Father. He is the One at whose Name every knee should bow!

• Therefore, *“have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus,”* Jesus has done His new Thing with us. He has placed us on the new road with Him. Therefore, we should have this mind amongst ourselves! We should be amongst ourselves as those who serve each other! We look first what serves the other person! This is difficult, because what if that other person is a sinner, a real sinner? It is easy to serve the pleasant person who likes us, with whom we have a good understanding. But what about those who don't like us? Does the word give us any concessions in their cases? Not really!

• Let me turn it around and ask you, would you have liked it if the Lord would have said, with this man or with this lady, too great a sinner, don't take his or her interests into account, with him or her you can skip acting out my mercy? Not at all!

• The power to begin to do this, lies in the continual connection with our Lord. He needs to give that attitude and mind to us. And He does. He is giving it to you right now. As the King of Israel has baptised you, you have received His mercy and kindness. Jesus sees you as a member of His Body. You are a citizen of the heavenly Jerusalem, although you still have sin on you. And those others in His Body are also citizens, are also under the mercy of God. So, we need to see the others, like the Lord sees them! As members of His Body!

• This we can begin to practice very well in a small congregation! In a larger congregation one can still avoid others completely, those you don't like! But in a small congregation, we cannot completely avoid each other! What a perfect practice space for the mind of Christ!

• The result of this Way, which initially goes down, down with the Self, and in fact continues to go down with the Self, as long as we live, but at the same time, a new I, peace of heart, joy, willingness to forgive, found participating in the building up of the Body. This until we finally enter the Kingdom of God in full outer glory! Then we will live out perfectly what we could only practice with great difficulty and suffering whilst still pilgriming in this world.

• That is why Our Lord is present here today to put us on His way again, to give us power and insight to start to walk along his Way. And when we fall or get tired, He is here Himself, with His forgiveness, with His mercy, with his food and drink from heaven to strengthen us and lift us up again. He still is the One who is amongst us as the One who serves us!

• *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.” Amen. [Eph 1,3].*