

## Philippians 2:5-11 - Palm Sunday. 20.3.2016

### *Being more like Jesus*

<sup>5</sup> Your attitude should be the same that Christ Jesus had. <sup>6</sup> Though he was God, he did not demand and cling to his rights as God. <sup>7</sup> He made himself nothing [Or: He laid aside his mighty power and glory]; he took the humble position of a slave and appeared in human form. <sup>8</sup> And in human form he obediently humbled himself even further by dying a criminal's death on a cross. <sup>9</sup> Because of this, God raised him up to the heights of heaven and gave him a name that is above every other name, <sup>10</sup> so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, " and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. [NLT]

What did the people who welcomed Jesus on the first Palm Sunday expect of him? To bring changes? - changes to the public life in Israel? - possibly changes for their own lives?

What do you expect of Jesus, as we look forward again to follow him on the path of suffering on Good Friday, and then to celebrating his resurrection at Easter? - what changes do we want him to bring to our world? - what do we expect him to change in our lives?

Jesus certainly came to change things, not least our life. He came to change us - not in the way we may expect, but in the way in which we may truly live as people of God. That is why Paul says in this passage that in our relationships we should be

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As Jesus rode into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday it is not so much about the procession who go to meet him - that kind of thing, where people line the streets to greet their leaders, happens all the time.

It is about **how** he entered Jerusalem. Anybody who wants to attract people and attention would arrive in the latest model luxury car - or in terms of the 1<sup>st</sup> century, on a beautifully groomed horse. We know, because we have heard the story over and over, that Jesus came, riding on a young donkey. Did he not care about the opinion of others? Did he not want to project power and glory for all to see?

What Jesus did when he entered Jerusalem, was what he had done from the moment of being conceived by Mary: **He made himself nothing [Or: He laid aside his mighty power and glory]; he took the humble position of a slave and appeared in human form.** The way in our world is mostly to make a grab for power and glory - not to put it aside. We are inclined to do everything possible to be more, and to get more.

Jesus' path is so different. He had everything, and he gave it all up - and the only reason he did so was that he did it for me and for you - and for all the people in the world. Jesus did not come into the world, because he could get something - he did not come for the applause of those who had their own hopes and expectations.

Jesus came to Jerusalem with one purpose in mind: to sacrifice himself! That was God's plan, as Paul indicates here, **in human form he obediently humbled himself even further by dying a criminal's death on a cross.**

The leaders of our world hate not winning - they believe that the only thing which counts is a victory, even if that victory is entirely meaningless to the people they are meant to represent. Its all about preserving appearances. Even if things are falling apart in their countries, many 'leaders' still jet around the world, living in absolute luxury, while their people struggle to find something to eat or to get meaningful work.

Jesus chose to follow the path which led him to what looked like the ultimate defeat. Even as he enters the city, his thoughts go out to the people of Jerusalem, who fail to see what will truly give them life. At the end of the week he allows himself to be captured, to be subjected to a mockery of a trial, to be beaten, spat on, whipped. Then, at the deepest point - by our thinking - he is led away to be publicly crucified, the final nail in his humiliation, since anybody who hangs on the wood of a tree must be cursed by God.

Yet, what had seemed to all to be a defeat, is part of the victory God had planned, by which you and I have life. By giving up his life, by subjecting himself to torture and humiliation, Jesus achieved what all the world summits could not and cannot: he brought about peace! Peace with God - and then also peace between people.

This is not peace which is simply achieved hearing about what happened in that Holy Week long ago. It is not just about remembering Good Friday and Easter Sunday. What happened there has to change how we think, how we value things. Instead of our demands for wanting it ‘my way’ of getting our way, we are reminded, **Your attitude should be the same that Christ Jesus had.**

This past week both the Mercury and the Daily News had the front page in black, with white lettering which read: “Say no to racism!” - and then what is going to happen. Will things change, simply by saying no?

Of course I realise, that those who make this call want people to change - but how does this change happen? By trying harder? Or by the threat of being prosecuted, if people feel that they have been racially abused?

Campaigns like this are doomed not to succeed, because we can’t expect people to change, if they have not first been made new! You and I do not have it in our power to change ourselves from the inside and all the way through. It’s true, way may modify certain things as far as our external behaviour is concerned - but what happens when there is pressure? What happens when something goes wrong - and when the person we feel responsible for what happened is of a different race, where is our: ‘Say no to racism!’ then?

**Your attitude should be the same that Christ Jesus had.** This is not a call to change ourselves, but to accept the change that has been brought about in us. On Easter Sunday we will once again remember our Baptism and pledge to live as people of God. We can only do that because Jesus has made us new - a promise that was sealed for each one of us in our Baptism. What happened on Good Friday, when Jesus **obediently humbled himself even further by dying a criminal’s death on a cross**; and what God did on Easter Sunday when he **raised him up to the heights of heaven and gave him a name that is above every other name** has become part of your and my life.

Jesus came into our world with one purpose: that by his death on the cross for us and in our stead, and by his being raised to new life, we should have new life. We often look at our life - at the world around us -, and we think that we can’t change. [It’s strange that we can confess that God created the heavens

and the earth out of nothing, but then not believe that he can change me!] *Being more like Jesus* - that does not mean that we become superman or superwoman. But it does mean that we accept the change God has brought about in our lives, and that we live this change - one day at a time.

As we confess our faith, using the words to Martin Luther’s explanation of the Second Article, let us do so remembering what Jesus did to make us his people, and that our response is ‘to be his own, and to live under him in his kingdom ...’

I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true Man, born of the Virgin Mary, is my Lord, who has redeemed me, a lost and condemned person, purchased and won me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil; not with gold or silver, but with his holy, precious blood and with his innocent suffering and death, that I may be his own, and live under him in his kingdom, and serve him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness, just as he is risen from the dead, lives and reigns to all eternity. This is most certainly true.