

Palm Sunday

Epistle: Philippians 2:5-11

⁵ Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:

⁶ Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:

⁷ But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:

⁸ And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

⁹ Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name:

¹⁰ That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth.

¹¹ And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Gospel: Matthew 27:1-54

²⁷ When the morning was come, all the chief priests and elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put him to death:

² And when they had bound him, they led him away and delivered him to Pontius Pilate the governor.

³ Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders,

⁴ Saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said, What is that to us? see thou to that.

⁵ And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself.

⁶ And the chief priests took the silver pieces, and said, It is not lawful for to put them into the treasury, because it is the price of blood.

⁷ And they took counsel, and bought with them the potter's field, to bury strangers in.

⁸ Wherefore that field was called, The field of blood, unto this day.

⁹ Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him that was valued, whom they of the children of Israel did value;

¹⁰ And gave them for the potters' field, as the Lord appointed me.

¹¹ And Jesus stood before the governor: and the governor asked him, saying, Art thou the King of the Jews? And Jesus said unto him, Thou sayest.

¹² And when he was accused of the chief priests and elders, he answered nothing.

¹³ Then said Pilate unto him, Hearest thou not how many things they witness against thee?

¹⁴ And he answered him to never a word; insomuch that the governor marvelled greatly.

¹⁵ Now at that feast the governor was wont to release unto the people a prisoner, whom they would.

¹⁶ And they had then a notable prisoner, called Barabbas.

¹⁷ Therefore when they were gathered together, Pilate said unto them, Whom will ye that I release unto you? Barabbas, or Jesus which is called Christ?

¹⁸ For he knew that for envy they had delivered him.

¹⁹ When he was set down on the judgment seat, his wife sent unto him, saying, Have thou nothing to do with that just man: for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him.

²⁰ But the chief priests and elders persuaded the multitude that they should ask Barabbas, and destroy Jesus.

²¹ The governor answered and said unto them, Whether of the twain will ye that I release unto you? They said, Barabbas.

²² Pilate saith unto them, What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ? They all say unto him, Let him be crucified.

²³ And the governor said, Why, what evil hath he done? But they cried out the more, saying, Let him be crucified.

²⁴ When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it.

²⁵ Then answered all the people, and said, His blood be on us, and on our children.

²⁶ Then released he Barabbas unto them: and when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified.

²⁷ Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the common hall, and gathered unto him the whole band of soldiers.

²⁸ And they stripped him, and put on him a scarlet robe.

²⁹ And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head, and a reed in his right hand: and they bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews!

³⁰ And they spit upon him, and took the reed, and smote him on the head.

³¹ And after that they had mocked him, they took the robe off from him, and put his own raiment on him, and led him away to crucify him.

³² And as they came out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name: him they compelled to bear his cross.

³³ And when they were come unto a place called Golgotha, that is to say, a place of a skull,

³⁴ They gave him vinegar to drink mingled with gall: and when he had tasted thereof, he would not drink.

³⁵ And they crucified him, and parted his garments, casting lots: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, They parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots.

³⁶ And sitting down they watched him there;

³⁷ And set up over his head his accusation written, This Is Jesus The King Of The Jews.

³⁸ Then were there two thieves crucified with him, one on the right hand, and another on the left.

³⁹ And they that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads,

⁴⁰ And saying, Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself. If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross.

⁴¹ Likewise also the chief priests mocking him, with the scribes and elders, said,

⁴² He saved others; himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him.

⁴³ He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him: for he said, I am the Son of God.

⁴⁴ The thieves also, which were crucified with him, cast the same in his teeth.

⁴⁵ Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour.

⁴⁶ And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?

⁴⁷ Some of them that stood there, when they heard that, said, This man calleth for Elias.

⁴⁸ And straightway one of them ran, and took a sponge, and filled it with vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave him to drink.

⁴⁹ The rest said, Let be, let us see whether Elias will come to save him.

⁵⁰ Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost.

⁵¹ And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent;

⁵² And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose,

⁵³ And came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many.

⁵⁴ Now when the centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God.

Introduction

The Collect

Almighty and everlasting God, who, of thy tender love towards mankind, hast sent thy Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ, to take upon him our flesh, and to suffer death upon the cross, that all mankind should follow the example of his great humility; Mercifully grant, that we may both follow the example of his patience, and also be made partakers of his resurrection; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

²⁴ Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. (Matt. 16:24)

"Take up your cross and follow me" spoken by Jesus in Matthew's gospel, is a call to absolute surrender, requiring disciples to deny themselves, endure daily hardships, and prioritize faith over comfort. It signifies dying to self-will, embracing sacrifice, and following Christ despite potential persecution or suffering. Our Collect for today also urges us to "follow the example of His great humility". During the Stations of the Cross this concept resonated with me, and I thought back to when I was recently in school and examining my life in terms of serving our Lord. I had the opportunity to read about many people who gave their life, all of their life, to Christ. One that really inspired me was George Herbert.

George Herbert was an English poet, orator, and priest of the Church of England. Living in the 17th-century, he was born into a high-status family with a promising career at the royal court. In his youth he received a good education that led to his admission to Trinity College, Cambridge,

in 1609. He enrolled intending to become a priest, but became the University's Public Orator and attracted the attention of King James I. He sat in the Parliament of England in 1624 and briefly in 1625. After the death of King James, Herbert renewed his interest in ordination. He gave up his secular ambitions in his mid-thirties and took holy orders in the Church of England, spending the rest of his life as the rector of the rural parish of Fugglestone, just outside Salisbury. Despite wealth and prestige, he famously "emptied himself" of worldly ambition to become the humble rector of a tiny parish. On the day he was inducted into his church, he was found prostrate on the ground before the altar, overwhelmed by the weight of the office and the humility of Christ. He was noted for unfailing care for his parishioners, bringing the sacraments to them when they were ill, and providing food and clothing for those in need. Henry Vaughan, a Welsh poet, author, translator and medical physician, called him "a most glorious saint and seer".

Herbert understood that to be a servant of the King, one had to go "downward." Having the "mind of Christ" often looks like a loss to the world but is actually the beginning of true formation.

Body

On this Palm Sunday, we stand at the threshold of Holy Week. We have heard the shouts of "Hosanna," and we have seen the palm branches strewn across the path. But as we transition from the gates of Jerusalem to the shadow of the Epistle, St. Paul calls us to look beneath the surface of the spectacle. He commands us: *"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus."* (Phil. 2:5)

For the Anglican, the Christian life is not merely a matter of correct opinion, but of formation. To have the "mind of Christ" is to undergo a radical reshaping of our desires, our

ambitions, and our very identity. It is to move from the world's logic of ascent to the Gospel's logic of descent.

St. Paul describes the journey of our Lord in terms of a profound "emptying." Christ, being in the very form of God, sharing the co-eternal majesty of the Father, did not consider that equality something to be "grasped" or used for His own advantage.

Instead, He emptied Himself. He stepped down from the throne of light into the darkness of our nature. From Paul's letter to the Philippians, "*But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men*" (Phil 2:7). This is the great mystery of the Incarnation that we confess in the Creeds: that the Infinite became finite; the Creator became a human creature; the Sovereign became a Subject. (Instead of saying the Infinite became finite (which can't be), I'd consider something like: that "*in Christ all the fullness of the Deity dwells in bodily form*" (Colossians 2:9), the Creator became a human creature; the Sovereign became a subject.)

As we watch Him ride into Jerusalem on a lowly donkey, we see the outward sign of this inward humility. He does not come on a war-horse of conquest, but on a beast of burden, signaling that His Kingdom is not of this world.

The descent does not stop at the Incarnation. Paul tells us that being found in human form is just the beginning. "*And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.* (Phil 2:8)

In the Roman world, the cross was the ultimate indignity, a death reserved for slaves and rebels. By choosing this path, Christ identifies with the very lowest depths of human experience. He is obedient not out of a lack of power, but out of a perfection of love.

In our Liturgy, we speak of the (one) "full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction, for the sins of the whole world" that Christ made upon the Cross. That sacrifice is sufficient precisely (I wouldn't say "precisely" because I don't think we can say total and humble obedience was the precise reason our Lord's sacrifice was sufficient. There's much more, infinitely more, to consider.) because it was (an infinite sacrifice of God Himself) offered in total and humble obedience. He gave up everything so that we might receive everlasting life.

Because of this humility, God has "highly exalted him." The path to the right hand of the Father led through the grave. (I like this sentence about the path to the Father, but it seems out of place. Maybe because it breaks up the verse you are referencing?) The Name that is above every name, the name *Jesus*, is now the name at which every knee shall bow. (Phil. 2:10)

We are reminded that in the example of Christ, the way up is down. We are exalted only when we are humbled. We find our life only when we lose it for His sake. When we confess that "Jesus Christ is Lord," we are not just stating a fact about the universe; we are pledging our allegiance to a King whose crown was made of thorns.

Action/Conclusion:

As we begin this Holy Week, let us not be content to be mere spectators of the Passion. St. Paul's challenge remains: "*Let this mind be in you.*"

Is there pride in us that needs to be emptied? Is there a way of thinking we are grasping that we need to let go of? Is there a service for others we are avoiding because it is beneath us? Have we submitted to His will, and not our own desires?

Let us follow our Lord down the path of humility. Let us walk with Him to the Upper Room, to the Garden, and to Calvary. For it is only by dying with Him that we shall rise with

Him in glory. During these last few days of Lent, let us remember people like George Herbert who realized that taking up his cross and following Jesus was the most meaningful and vital thing he could do with his life. Accomplishing wealth and worldly accolades is nothing when compared to living your life for and in Christ. As we approach Easter Sunday, let us remain focused on Christ's path to the cross. As St. Paul reminds us, *'Let this mind be in you'* as we examine our lives, our thoughts, our actions, and, through Christ, our own (and only) path to salvation.

To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.