

**Palm Sunday**  
**April 9, 2017, Year A**  
**St. Dunstan's Anglican Church, Largo, FL**

Matthew 21:1-11

Psalm 118

Isaiah 50:4-9a

Psalm 31:9-16

Philippians 2:5-11

/Matthew 26:36-27-54

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

In our New Testament reading this morning from Paul's letter to the Church in Philippi, Paul wrote, "Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus." Put another way, the New International Version translates this passage as "Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus."

Think about that. "Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus." The two Palm Sunday gospel readings provide us with the starkest contrast of who Jesus was and is. When we blessed the palms this morning, we heard the account of Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem. The city turned out to greet him with all the pomp and circumstance they could muster. They welcomed him as they would a king, or a conquering general who had defended them in war.

And with 20/20 hindsight, we know they were indeed welcoming the King of kings and Lord of lords, the ruler over everything that is in the physical world, the spiritual world and throughout all of creation and time. This is our God, in human form, who has come among us to lead us in this life beside still waters, to restore our souls, to set a table before us in the presence of our enemy, the Devil, as declared in poetry by King David in the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm, and to give us joy and peace in this earthly life.

This is our king who has brought truth to life and created the way to an eternal life of joy and peace with our God for our spirits, the same king who at the end of time will return in great power and glory to restore his kingdom on earth as it already is in heaven, as we say in the Lord's Prayer, and raise our physical bodies to be reunited with our spirits for evermore.

Paul wrote, "Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus." What does that mean? How can we have an attitude like the King of kings and Lord of lords? In his second letter to the Church in Corinth, Paul wrote, "We are ... Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us" (2 Cor. 5:20). You and I are not just in this world taking up space. We have been sent here on a mission by God himself as his ambassadors. We represent the kingdom of God in this foreign land we call Pinellas County, and we have been granted full authority by God to represent him here.

How will we do that? How will we use the power that we have for the purpose for which it was given to us? Have you ever prayed for someone or something and had your prayers answered? Many of you have shared specific stories with me about how God has worked in you or through you.

I know I've seen that. We have access to the power of God right now right here if we choose to put it to use – power to set wrong things right, power to love those who are hard to love, power to bring healing to physical and emotional hurts, power to stand up for what is right, and true power to share the love of Christ with those who still need to meet God and find the eternal joy and peace we already have.

“Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus.” He came to do all those things, and he left us with the power to continue his work to love God and love our neighbors. We are his ambassadors. Our attitude should be exactly the same as his if we are to represent him properly. There is power in the Word of God, and as we speak those words to others in conversation or prayer, God will act through us. The power is his, but it is available to us, his followers, to use in his Name.

The second gospel we heard read this morning portrays the crucifixion. Again, we have the words of Paul, “Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus.” Jesus was humble. From the betrayal in the garden to his final words, Jesus never lashed out at others or argued or pleaded for mercy. He never attempted to force his will on others or prevail over them. He was willing to give up his rights in order to obey God and serve people.

Jesus had an attitude of servanthood. He knew that the only way we could be saved from eternal death and destruction was to pay the ransom for our sin with his own blood. He saw the need of others as more important than his own comfort or pride. He was willing to risk everything, to give up all privilege, to allow others to accuse him falsely and convict him unjustly – not because he was unwilling to fight; he could have summoned legions of angels to prevail in battle; not because there was no way out; he could have performed a miracle of some kind – if he could walk on water, feed 5,000 with a few scraps of bread and some fish meal, and raise Lazarus from the dead, clearly he could have changed the minds of the Sanhedrin or Pilate, rendered the soldiers powerless, or just walked away. But he didn't.

He knew that our only hope for salvation was for him to pay the price for our sins, because we could not. We were without hope, and he knew it. He did what was needed to restore us to right relationship with God the Father.

Paul wrote, “Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus.” So what does that look like for us? How do we emulate Christ in light of the Passion Gospel?

Matthew, Mark and Luke all record Jesus as having said “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me” (Mt. 16:24, Mk 8:34, Lk 9:23). Luke even says we are to take up our cross daily and follow Jesus. So there must be something to this.

As we interact with others in our daily lives, we are often faced with situations where we have to decide whose needs come first, ours or someone else's. But this attitude of Christ is about something deeper than that. What Jesus did for us was to rescue us from oblivion, and he did so by giving up his own life. The sacrifice was supreme for something of immeasurable importance, his life in exchange for ours.

We are called to do the same. Just like Jesus, we hold the key to eternal happiness, peace and joy for people who need to get into right relationship with God. Jesus died once, and he died for all, but he left instructions for us to go tell people about it. Taking up our cross daily is about mission.

It is about telling people the reason for why Jesus came to live among us and why he died on a Roman cross.

Having the attitude of Christ is about being willing to do whatever it takes to present the gospel message of salvation to a confused and hurting world. Sometimes sharing our faith can be painful when we are rejected or scolded by someone who does not want to hear it. Missionaries in some parts of the world risk their lives to share the faith. It is a good thing for the rest of us to support their efforts with prayer and giving.

A Christ-like attitude is something we grow into. It takes practice. We are expected to grow in our walk with the Lord, and that takes hard work. The writer of the Letter to the Hebrews wrote, "Let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds" (Heb. 10:24). Our salvation is personal and unique to each of us. But our walk as followers of Jesus Christ is very much a team sport. We grow and serve together to deliver the unchanging message of Jesus Christ to a changing world.

We choose the kind of attitude we have. Jesus was and is the most powerful person ever to live, yet he humbled himself to be the servant of all. He made the power of God available to us and called us to be his representatives to the world in which we live. He created the means for mankind to be restored to their God, and he gave us the tools to make it happen. One of those tools is a model for a Christ-like attitude. "Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus."

So "let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father, who is in heaven" (Matthew 5:16).

And now unto you, O Lord, be ascribed all might, majesty, power and dominion. In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.