

Palm Sunday

Philippians 2:5-11: "The Name That Is Above Every Name"

April 4/5, 2020 | Saude, Jerico, & Redeemer Lutheran Churches

In Nomine Iesu

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Almighty and everlasting God, who led Your dear Son Jesus Christ through sufferings and death to Your eternal glory, and exalted Him at Your right hand to be Lord of Lords and King of Kings, we humbly ask You, grant us Your good Spirit that with willing hearts we may receive Him as our King and follow His example of true humility, that, being made perfect through sufferings, we may enter into eternal glory; through Your Son Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, ever one God, now and forever. Amen. (*The Lutheran Liturgy*, p. 94)

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen. (Rom. 1:7, etc.)

The sermon text for today is taken from the second chapter of St. Paul's Epistle to the Philippians, beginning at the fifth verse:

Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though He was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made Himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. / Therefore God has highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. ^(ESV)

These are Your words, heavenly Father. Sanctify us by Your truth, Your Word is truth. Amen. (Joh. 17:17)

In Christ Jesus, whose name must be glorified on earth as it is in heaven, dear fellow redeemed:

When Jesus rode into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, His disciples were glad to be associated with Him. The crowds spread their cloaks and palm branches on the road and sang the praises of their king. They welcomed Him in this way because of the miracles He had performed, most recently raising Lazarus from the dead. "Blessed is... the King of Israel!" they shouted (Joh. 12:13). "Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!" (Luk. 19:38). "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" (Mat. 21:9).

The people of the crowd believed He was the promised Messiah who would deliver them from their enemies. The Jewish religious leaders who hated Jesus threw up their hands and said, "Look, the world has gone after him!" (Joh. 12:19). Even some Greeks approached one of the disciples and said, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus" (v. 21). Jesus had quite a following! The twelve disciples were glad to go along for the ride. Jesus was a "somebody," somebody people paid attention to and wanted to know.

It's amazing how quickly things can change. A person can go from a hero one minute to a villain the next, from rich and famous to poor and forgotten, from influential to ignored, from

boom to bust. We have seen this happen to celebrities, politicians, businessmen, religious leaders, and plenty of others.

Jesus' popularity took a major hit also. The week that started with crowds singing His praises and offering their cloaks for His donkey to walk on, ended with crowds calling for His crucifixion and soldiers dividing up His clothing. Such a change in fortune usually indicates that a major transgression was committed or that a clear boundary was overstepped. This was not the case with Jesus. He did nothing different than He had always done. He spoke the truth. He urged the people to *"Trust in the LORD with all [their] heart, and... not lean on [their] own understanding"* (Pro. 3:5).

He taught them to put away their self-righteousness and pride and to live a life of humble faith and service. That does not come naturally to us. By our inherited sinful nature, we care the most about pursuing our own passions and plans and receiving praise for our achievements. We can hardly "make a name for ourselves" by sacrificing our own desires for the benefit of others. It comes naturally to want to be loved, rather than to look for ways to show love.

This is why Jesus was opposed. He preached a message that was contrary to human thinking. He preached hope to the "bad" people, the cast-offs, who believed His promises. And He condemned the "good" people, the self-righteous, who were not as holy as they thought. He was no slick politician. He did not guard His words in certain company or say what each particular audience wanted to hear. He told them what they needed to hear.

That had consequences, but they were not unexpected consequences. Jesus knew what was coming. He knew what His clear teaching and His life of humble service would gain for Him. He did not live and work for the approval of the world. He cared about saving it. In today's inspired text, St. Paul wrote that Christ Jesus *"made Himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross."*

On Maundy Thursday, Jesus had knelt down and washed His disciples' feet. He had also given them a new Meal, the Supper of His own body and blood to eat and drink for the remission of their sins. And how did they show their gratitude for such love? As He walked with them to the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus told them, *"You will all fall away because of me this night"* (Mat. 26:31). Peter replied with so much confidence, *"Though they all fall away because of you, I will never fall away.... Even if I must die with you, I will not deny you!"* (vv. 33, 35). The other disciples said the same thing.

But a short time later facing a well-armed crowd, *"all the disciples left [Jesus] and fled"* (v. 56). For the next few days, the name "Jesus" was one that no one wanted to be associated with. Boastful Peter denied three times that he knew Him. The disciples all went into hiding except for John. They felt so proud to be connected to Jesus on Sunday when things were going well, but now they crouched in the darkness, ashamed.

We can hardly blame the disciples. I don't expect we would have done any better. Each of us in our own lives has been ready to give up Jesus for less. The disciples hid when their Teacher was arrested, brutally beaten, and crucified. We have left Jesus not because our lives were

threatened, but because we did not want to be made fun of, we did not want to be left out, we did not want to deny our sinful desires, we did not want to take a stand against error.

In these ways, we have dishonored the Lord's holy name. His name is hallowed "when His Word is taught in its truth and purity, and we as the children of God live holy lives according to it" (First Petition of the Lord's Prayer). When we do not teach rightly or live purely, we dishonor His name.

God wants His name to be honored because His name includes everything about Him, who He is and what He does. God told Moses to call Him, "*I Am,*" or "*Yahweh*" in Hebrew (Exo. 3:14). That is God's personal name, a name to honor in every way. When Jesus came to Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, the people recognized that He came from Yahweh: "*Blessed is he who comes in the name of Yahweh!*"

He came on behalf of His Father, with His blessing, to do His work. The work He had given His Son to do was to become the Servant of all, to take their sins upon Himself, to suffer in their place, and to endure the anguish of their eternal death. That is how Jesus glorified the Father's name. And that is how He redeemed the whole world from its sin.

He suffered for all the ways the Lord's name has been abused by false teaching and sinful living. He suffered for your hesitation to confess His name, for your choosing the world over Him, for your sinful stubbornness, selfishness, and pride. His name was trampled and cursed, so you would have a clean conscience and a good reputation before God. He was condemned as a guilty sinner, so you would be regarded as an innocent saint.

Jesus humbly did all these things in obedience to His Father and in perfect love for you. Because of His holy work, Paul writes that "*God has highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the name that is above every name.*" The name of Jesus which seemed destined to be forgotten on Good Friday has been preached throughout the world generation after generation since then. His name is **The Name That Is Above Every Name.**

The most important people of a year, a decade, or a century are eventually forgotten. The names of very few people are remembered fifty or a hundred years after their death. But the name of Jesus endures because of what He did for you and me and all sinners. In fact, His name describes His work for us. The name Jesus means "*Yahweh is salvation*" – "*The LORD saves.*" No greater thing has ever been done or ever will be done for the world. God became a man to save us.

After Jesus ascended into heaven and the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples at Pentecost, they now boldly proclaimed the name of Jesus. Peter who had denied knowing Jesus the night of His death, now stood before the very religious leaders who had sentenced Jesus to die. He said to them, "*This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved*" (Act. 4:11-12).

Only Jesus can give forgiveness, life, and salvation. And He has given and still gives these things to you. He is glad to have His name associated with you. You are called a "Christian" – a

“Christ-ian” –a follower of Christ. God put His name on you and claimed you as His own when you were baptized *“in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit”* (Mat. 28:19).

Being joined to His name by faith is to be joined to all the good things He is and does. By faith in your Savior, you share in His holiness, His honor, and His glory. You don’t have to “make a name for yourself,” because you have a far better identity in Jesus. There is no name above His. And even though His name continues to be disrespected and despised in the world today, this does not change what He accomplished for sinners. He won the victory over sin, death, and the devil, and He reigns victorious even now at the right hand of the Father.

His name is not honored in the world like it should be, but on the last day all creatures will glorify the name of our Lord. Paul writes that *“at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”* Unbelievers will acknowledge Him then, though they will not rejoice at His coming because they will be condemned. But the whole company of believers will joyfully welcome Him just like that Palm Sunday crowd. And we will cry out with one voice, *“Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!”*

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost; as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, forevermore. Amen.

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