

Palm Sunday – March 31 & April 1, 2007
St. Mark's Evangelical Lutheran Church – Watertown, WI

IT'S NOT ABOUT ME! Philippians 2:5-8

Are you drawn to people who are self-promoters? Do you enjoy being around people who think it's all about them and that is the focus of their conversations? Or are you attracted to people who show great interest and concern for others? Do you enjoy being with people who are interested in you and your needs, your concerns and who are ready and willing to listen to you? Most of us would probably admit that people who continue to focus on themselves and talk about their accomplishments and their goals and dreams eventually turn us off. We appreciate people who show an interest and concern in others.

Today we are celebrating Palm Sunday. It's the first day of Holy Week. This is the week when Christians throughout the world focus on the final events in the earthly life of Jesus Christ. We watch our Savior focus not on himself and his needs and wants. We see him focus on us and the entire human race. We marvel at his selflessness. We are amazed at his love and concern for others. As we recall the events on that first Palm Sunday the Apostle Paul has us focus on this thought **IT'S NOT ABOUT ME!** Paul says to us **I) Look At Jesus' Attitude.** He then encourages every one of us **II) Have The Same Attitude.**

LOOK AT JESUS' ATTITUDE

"He's got an attitude." When someone makes that remark, what do they mean? That comment usually has the implication that the person's thoughts are not focused on what's right. It often means that the person is probably thinking more of themselves, of their abilities, their looks and personality, of what they like, think or want than on others and their needs and feelings. It may imply that the person goes around with their nose in the air thinking that they are better than others and more deserving of special treatment and privileges.

The Apostle Paul says to us today, "look at Jesus' attitude." As we examine the attitude that Jesus had the apostle first has us consider who Jesus is. He writes, "Who being in very nature God." (v.8a) Who is Jesus? He is the almighty God. He is the creator and ruler of the universe. This is no ordinary human being. He appears as a human being. He looks like anyone else that you might meet on the street. But he isn't. He is our God. He not only has all power, but he knows all things. He knows the thoughts that we have. He knows the things we do in secret.

Now being God Jesus would have had every right to go around expecting people to kiss his feet, to fall down before him, to give him everything they had. But that is not the attitude that Jesus had. That is not how he viewed and thought of himself. Listen to what Paul writes, "who being in very nature God did not consider equality with God a prize to hang on to." (v. 6) Jesus did not use his power and might to force people to honor and respect him. In fact, during the 33 years he lived on this earth he often did not make complete and full use of his powers. As Paul writes, "he made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man he humbled himself and became obedient to death – even death on a cross!" (vv. 7-8) Jesus' thoughts and attitudes were not directed towards himself. They were focused on us.

Our Lord willingly left the comfort, the security and splendor of heaven to come to this world of sin and corruption. He entered not as a mighty king and conqueror. He came as a servant. Look where the king of the universe was born. He entered the world in a cave, a shelter for animals and his first bed was a feedbox. Look how he enters his capital city, Jerusalem. He does not come riding in on a white stallion or in a chariot surrounded by a huge army. He comes riding in on a beast of burden, a lowly donkey. Where is his army? It's a crowd of people, children and adults placing their cloaks and cutting palm branches on the road as he travels

into the city. The leader of our country and the leaders of other nations do not enter cities in this manner. They come in their limousines and are greeted with brass bands and much pomp. But not King Jesus. He did not consider the fact that he was God a prize that he had to hang on to and showcase before the world. He came as a servant to serve us and to offer his life as a sacrifice and payment for our sins.

What does this mean for you and me today? Our King Jesus fought our enemies and defeated them. He overcame them not by a show of power and might. He did not use his angel armies to duke it out with Satan and his demons. Jesus did it in humbleness and meekness. He allowed himself to be nailed to a Roman cross of torture. He humbly endured the ridicule and rejection of his own people. He kept quiet as they lied about him and mistreated him. He prayed for their forgiveness and pardon as they executed him. He offered the supreme sacrifice of his holy life and innocent death for you and me and the entire human race. He endured the wrath and punishment of God for us. By Jesus humbly accepting his assignment and fulfilling it we have been set free. We are free from the guilt, shame and eternal punishment of our sin and misdeeds. We have been set free to serve our God and each other in this world. In all this Jesus did not object. Even though this was a miscarriage of justice, he accepted and endured it for all of us. This is the attitude that Paul is talking about when he points to Jesus and says to you and me, "Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:" (v. 5)

HAVE THE SAME ATTITUDE

What kind of attitude do you have? How do you view yourself in this life? Are you self-promoter and think it's all about me? Do you think that your purpose in life is to acquire all you can get and have a financially comfortable and healthy life? Do you become angry when things don't turn out in the way that you planned them or the way you want them? Are you upset when things aren't always peaceful and pleasant? As we consider those questions, we need to remember who we are just as Jesus knew who he was. We also need to understand our purpose and mission as we travel through this life on our way to eternity just as our Savior knew why he was here.

Who are we? Paul can't say that we are God. We aren't. Oh, there may be times when we think that we're God. But we are far from being God. We need to recognize that each of us is an imperfect human being. Each of us has a basic corrupt and evil nature. According to that nature we hate God, we love ourselves more than anything else. According to that sinful nature we love to sin and focus on me, me, and me. But as Christians there is another side of each of us. We love the Lord. We know that we are special and important. You and I are so special and precious to our God that he humbled himself and came to this earth to rescue each of us. Jesus rode into Jerusalem that Palm Sunday for the express purpose of saving you and me. After winning for us peace and pardon, the Lord went the next step. He sought us out and found us. He personally brought us into his family, the Holy Christian Church. He did that through the power of his almighty Word. For many of us that occurred on the day we were baptized in the name of the Holy Trinity. The Holy Spirit then came to live in us and give us the gift of faith and trust in Jesus as our Savior and Lord. Who are we? We are children of God. We are saints, forgiven of all our sins and destined for eternity with the Savior in glory.

Now that we know who we are do we go around with noses in the air thinking we are better than others? Absolutely not! In fact the Bible tells us not to think more highly of ourselves than we ought. But just as Jesus understood his mission in this life, so we need to understand why we are here and what we are to be doing. Jesus' mission was to rescue and save all of us by willingly giving himself as the perfect sacrifice. Our mission is to live for him and to love and serve others as he loved and served us.

Trying to figure out our place in the world is not always so easy. A few weeks ago when the children who had come up for the children's devotion were asked, "what do you want to be?" most of them didn't know. They weren't sure just exactly what they wanted to do with the gifts and abilities that God had given to them. Many of them probably don't even recognize at this point in their lives what gifts God has given to them. What Paul encourages us to have is the same attitude that Jesus had. Even though he was God he came to serve others in

all that he did and said. God has gifted every one of us with certain talents and abilities. No two of us have the same gifts. One of our missions in life is recognize the gifts that we have and then work to develop and use them. The purpose of this development and use is not for our own praise and honor but for the praise of God and to help others. As you become the best waiter, nurse, manager, assembler, factory worker, teacher, painter, mother, father or student, computer operator or program writer that you possibly can, you are praising God.

Then as you use your profession and your place in this world to help and serve others, you are demonstrating the same attitude as Jesus demonstrated as he saved us.

Remember it is not about me. I am not the center of this world or universe. It's about the Lord Jesus and our relationship with him. It's about serving others as the Lord served us. It's about telling others of Jesus so that they may have the same peace and joy we have. It's about growing in our faith and commitment to the Savior as we hear and read his Word. It's not about me. It's about Jesus my Savior.

Amen.