

Palm Sunday – Year C
March 28, 2010
Faith Lutheran, Radcliff, KY
Philippians 2:5-11
Pastor Paul Horn

IN JESUS WE HAVE A HUMBLE SAVIOR,
I. WHOSE HUMILITY WON THE VICTORY
II. AND WHOSE EXALTATION PROVED THE VICTORY

⁵ Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: ⁶ Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, ⁷ but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. ⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death— even death on a cross! ⁹ Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

How would you prove that you were the best at something? If you want to be the best of all the nation's college basketball teams, you need to knock off all of the teams in your bracket. If you want to be the valedictorian or salutatorian of your school, your grades must surpass those of your peers. If you want to prove that you are the best actress or best screen writer, you must have that golden Oscar displayed on your mantel. If you want to prove that you're the best soldier, you must have the Silver Star, the Purple Heart, or Distinguished Service Cross on your dress blues.

But could you win all the awards mentioned above and be truly humble in the process? It would be difficult, wouldn't it? The world around us pushes for self-promotion. *How will anyone know how good you are if you don't tell them?* Humility is something that seems to be promoted from the pulpit, but "in the real world" it doesn't seem to fit. But we don't see that in our Savior Jesus. He has all power, all knowledge, all authority and yet remains truly humble. This morning we will learn from our lesson in Paul's letter to the Philippians that **In Jesus We Have a Humble Savior**, and that's good, because **his humility won the victory**. In the second part of the sermon we will see that **his exaltation proved the victory**.

I. Whose Humility Won the Victory

When we talk about our Savior's humility we use the theological word humiliation. You might immediately think of something you did or said that might cause you to blush. But we are not talking about something Jesus did that was embarrassing. Paul explains in vs6-8, "**⁶ Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, ⁷ but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. ⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death— even death on a cross!**" With Jesus' humiliation, we mean that he chose not to make full use of all of his divine powers. Jesus, as the God-Man, fully possessed all power, all knowledge, all authority, but he chose not to make use of all of it. To help illustrate, we will

wade through the Apostles' Creed. Picture Jesus' humiliation as steps that go down to the basement. *He was conceived by Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried.* Jesus had to voluntarily give something up for all of this to happen to him. As King of kings he possessed all the comforts of heaven. He did not have to think about pain, hunger, thirst, sleeplessness, or even death. But when God took on human flesh, he acquired everything his creatures experience, even temptation. But what he did in his state of humiliation was done with willing servitude. He humbled himself to win the victory for others; the victory over their sins, and to win heaven for them.

Contrast Jesus' humble attitude with that of his disciples. This Thursday evening we will see them in the upper room, and they're having what I like to call the Cassius Clay argument, "I'm the greatest! No, I'm the greatest. No, I'm the greatest!" But then Jesus asks them, "What are you arguing about?" Embarrassed, the room grows quiet. They know that he knows. (Luke 22:24ff)

Have you ever had those moments, if Jesus would suddenly appear next to you and ask, "What were you talking about there, just now?" It would make you blush. You would be ashamed because you know it's true of you. Sometimes you do not have the attitude of Christ Jesus, one of servitude, but rather, self-service. It happens in the church, at home, at work, in your community. Too often husbands don't think of themselves as servant-leaders but rather just the leader! Wives and women do not often think of themselves as servant-helpers. With your friends and coworkers too often you think of how they can serve you. But maybe you're not like that. Maybe you serve others with a willing and cheerful heart. But maybe when you serve, it's with grumbling and complaining. When you serve you complain that others don't? "How come no one else signs up to help? How come the same people do all the work around here?" Not just at the church, but at home and in the workplace. Not only are we guilty of a poor attitude, but we're guilty of judging other's motives, which is only something God can do. We're digging ourselves into a deeper hole. And oftentimes when we complain, it may happen between two people, when no one's looking. But the all-seeing God sees that our attitude is not same as that of Christ Jesus as he demands. He sees that your attitude stinks.

We might not like to hear that harsh reality. But we must hear that God condemns those sins and that we are guilty of those sins. Otherwise we wouldn't see a need for a Savior, and that, my friends, is a very dangerous place to be spiritually. This is also the reason why we confess the creed nearly every Sunday; to proclaim what Jesus did for us. To proclaim that these steps of humiliation Jesus did to save us, with no complaint, no argument. He just went and did it. It's his servant's attitude that saved us.

From the last six weeks in our Wednesday evening Lenten services, we have been listening to the prophet Isaiah describe the Suffering Servant of the Lord. We saw Jesus as the lamb, who quietly walked to the slaughter, with no complaint, no objection. We saw Jesus as the Suffering Shepherd, who laid down his life to save the sheep of his flock, which are you and me. We saw Jesus as the Innocent Victim. Jesus was certainly not guilty of the crimes he was accused of and convicted for. But the innocent victim dies for the guilty perpetrators such as you and me. We saw Jesus as the Submissive Servant. The King of kings comes and takes the form of a slave to submit to his Father's will. We saw Jesus as the Man of Sorrows. The man fully took on our

sufferings, hardships, pains, all on himself in order to take them away. We saw Jesus as the Servant King. Jesus rides into Jerusalem today not as the warrior king, but as the servant king, to die for his people. Jesus did all of this as our Substitute, in our place, on our behalf, for our benefit.

What's our response? Your attitude will be the same as that of Christ's. We will be servants. We will be service minded people. I saw this in our church the last two weeks. When four college students from New Ulm, MN came to assist us with outreach, folks in the congregation stepped up to offer transportation, meals, helped hang doorhangers, and went on visits with the students. Last week, people stepped up for John Wright's funeral reception. No one was asked to do anything. People just did it to serve their brothers and sisters in Christ. That's the kind of Christ like attitude that you will have. We will not complain about others not working. We will not speak with biting remarks to those who haven't, forcing them or "guilting" them into service. We will work with joy and serve with humility, at church, in the home, at work, as Paul says, "Not just when the boss is looking." And when you serve, we will do it as to the Lord, not to men. Your attitude will be the same as that of Christ Jesus because his humility won the victory.

But the story doesn't end with Jesus setting aside use of his divine powers. As we climbed down the steps of Jesus' humiliation, we begin the ascent with his exaltation.

II. Whose exaltation proved the victory

If Christ's humiliation was him setting aside his divine powers for a time, what would his exaltation be? He takes them back up again and makes full use of divine powers. We use the creed once again as our picture. Christ's exaltation begins with his descent into hell. You might be thinking, "Why would his ascent begin with his descent into hell?" You have to remember that Jesus suffered an eternity in hell on the cross. That was finished. After he died and was buried, in spirit he went to hell to proclaim his victory, to tell Satan and his minions that he was the loser and he was the winner! Then he stepped up again, "*On the third day he rose again from the dead, he ascended into heaven, is seated at right of God the Father Almighty, from there he will come to judge the quick and the dead.*" Paul says in vs9-11, "**Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name,¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.**" What does this mean for you and me? For didn't Jesus already die for sins? Wasn't the mission complete? Paul says in 1Corinthians, "If Christ has not been raised you are still in your sins, your faith is futile." It's useless! Jesus needed to rise again to prove that he is who he said he was; the Son of God, who retains all power over all things, even his own grave. For us who believe in Jesus also have that assurance that we too will rise from death. Because he is our living Savior, we know that when he ascended into heaven, he became invisible in order that, as he told his disciples, "**I will be with you always, to the very end of the age.**" Jesus' presence is always with you, which is very comforting. Because our living Savior is seated at God the Father's right hand, he holds the position of all power. I don't know what your opinion is on the way this country is headed or that you may think the world is going in a downward spiral, know this: Jesus is in control. He rules the rulers of all nations with authority and he directs their affairs for your sake. Christ's exaltation proves his victory.

How do you prove you're the best? You make sure that you're the one climbing the ladder to snip the net off the rim at the end of the tournament. You make sure you're the one who has the checkered flag on the victory lap. With baseball beginning next month, make sure that come October, your record is better than everyone else your division as you head into the playoffs. But there will always be another basketball net to cut down, another checkered flag to be flown, another trophy to hoist in the air, but not with Jesus. He's once and done. The battle is won. Game over. There is nothing more that needs to be done for your forgiveness, for the eternity that you will spend with your King.... well, he still has one thing left to do. To come again and bring you there.

As you walk with Jesus this week to the Upper Room, stroll through the Garden of Gethsemane, stumble through the streets of Jerusalem and climb up Golgotha, let us remember and thank God that Jesus' humility won the victory. As we walk through that beautiful garden and gaze wide-eyed into the empty tomb, let us remember and thank God that Jesus' exaltation proved his victory. To God alone be the glory! Amen!