

The Sixth Sunday in Lent
April 2, 2023

“Let your mind be like the humble mind of Jesus who saved you!”
(Philippians 2:5-11)
By Rev. Ed Weber

Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, our text for this 6th Sunday in Lent is from our Epistle reading Philippians 2:5-11.

“5 Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; 7 rather, He made himself of no reputation, by taking the very nature of a servant, and coming in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death— even the death on a cross! 9 Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, 10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, 11 and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

Here ends our text.

There were 4 teams left vying for the national championship in college basketball, and now there are 2. A team can take some consolation that it made it to the sweet 16 round or the elite eight or the final four, but there can only be one champion. And through the eliminations, it's refreshing to see in college basketball that there is a willingness to show good sportsmanship at the end of the game and shake hands with the opposing team. The losing team that is humbled, congratulates the winners.

That's not always the case in professional sports. There is a lot of self-glorification, self-promotion that happens and bitterness between teams. Some like to excuse it by calling it a rivalry. Have you always been a good sport when you lose at something, cards, dominoes, golf, shuffleboard? It's hard to acknowledge that

someone is better than you at a given activity in a given moment and do it with grace. Is it hard to keep from gloating at victory too?

Yet, our text goes far beyond sportsmanship, doesn't it. It speaks of our minds, our attitudes in all our interactions with others. And the bar is set high by Jesus Himself. He set a high bar of lowliness and humbleness. Let's hear the text again.

**“5 Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus,
Who, being in very nature God,
did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own
advantage; 7 rather, He made himself of no reputation,
by taking the very nature of a servant,
and coming in the likeness of men.
8 And being found in appearance as a man,
He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death—
even the death on a cross!**

What is the highest example of humbleness, ever? God Himself! God humbled Himself. He didn't have to. Jesus, being true God, could have gloried in Himself because He is perfect, because He is all powerful, because He knows all things... The list goes on and on... Jesus has the ultimate bragging rights because He created all things out of nothing. He always existed. He is the Alpha and Omega. And as a true Man, Jesus had every right to boast of Himself and demand that all people give Him glory.

He could have shown to the devil that He is the true Son of God and turned a rock into bread. He didn't have to subject Himself to the devil's temptations in the first place. The demons feared Jesus with good reason. They knew who He was and what He could do to them. Jesus could have exercised His almighty power on His own behalf at any time and become the Bread King that the people wanted Him to be.

He didn't have to allow Himself to be arrested by the Sanhedrin, mocked, spit upon, subjected to cruelties and ultimately the death of a criminal. He was God. So why in the world didn't He crush His enemies and reign over right then and there? Why? Because His kingdom is not of this world. And to establish His Kingdom of Grace for all people, He had to crush the sin that manifests itself in self-glorying, self-righteousness, self-promotion and self-interest. He had to crush the sin that in which Adam and Eve fell into – that they could be like God and know all things, and not die.

How did Jesus do this? By becoming a true man and taking upon Himself all our sins. How did Jesus do this? By serving us with His life! He allowed Himself to be unfairly accused, unfairly beaten, unfairly condemned, like a sheep to the slaughter...He opened not His mouth.

**“Surely He has borne our griefs And carried our sorrows;
Yet we esteemed Him stricken,
Smitten by God, and afflicted.
5 But He was wounded for our transgressions,
He was bruised for our iniquities;
The chastisement for our peace was upon Him,
And by His stripes we are healed.” (Isaiah 53:4-5)**

The reason why God in the flesh, Jesus Christ, humbled Himself, rode into Jerusalem on a donkey and died on the accursed tree is clear. Because He loved us and the only way to bring us peace and healing was to take our place and be afflicted.

That is the mind of Jesus. He thought not of Himself, only of others, only of you and me. When He did miracles of healing, of raising the dead, it was to help others in need. And most of all, to help all of us believe in Him that He is the true Messiah, and believing, have life in His name.

Jesus' kingdom is built on His sacrificial love, that He considered others first. He considered you first and removed all your sin. He considered you first when He left you a parting gift which we receive today and often, His very body and blood for your remission of sins. Every time we receive His body and blood we remember His death, His humble, servant heart that paid for your sins with His precious blood. And He gives it to you personally that you would receive the peace He won for you on the cross...and be healed in your soul.

He forgives you all the times you thought of yourself before others, neglected the interests of others and demanded your way, your glory, your self-righteousness. Jesus paid for all our sins. And because He emptied Himself completely, God the Father exalted Him. So that ...

**“at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
11 and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.”**

Jesus is exalted for His most humble work on the cross for all people. Every knee must bow. As a believer ... in humble adoration – on earth now and in heaven one day with all the saints... or as an unbeliever under the earth, that is in hell, everlasting torment.

God in His mercy will exalt you also, believer in Christ and raise you up to eternal life and give to you a glorified body. For as part of the body of Christ, you have an eternal inheritance. All that was unfairly done to you in this life, all the persecutions for your faith, all the injustices that you endured will end. Your time of humiliation will also end and you will be exalted on the last day. For Jesus Christ has won this victory for you. He humbled Himself for you that He may be exalted and also exalt you!

What does Paul say in chapter 1 of Philippians?

“21 For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. 22 If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labor for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know! 23 I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; 24 but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body.”

Our eternal gain is assured. Our life of persecution will end and glory will begin.

And Paul also says in chapter 1,

“6 being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.”

We live with this confidence that whenever God decides to bring us into eternal glory, that is a most glorious day. If it be by the hand of deranged person who entered a Christian elementary school and opened fire on defenseless children with an assault rifle, then for those children, for the pastor's 9 year old daughter, as hard as it is to accept such persecution, then those believing children are in the very presence of Jesus even now. Oh, how important it is to baptize our children to make sure that they have the gift of eternal life through washing and the Word!

And so God calls upon us to have the mind of Christ, a humble selfless, serving, loving mind to all people. Loving the very people that hate you and mistreat you. Fearing the sin that could overpower you if you allow vengeance and self-glorying to reign in your hearts. So Paul continues in chapter 2.

“continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, 13 for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose.

14 Do everything without grumbling or arguing, 15 so that you may become blameless and pure, “children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation.”

God has a good purpose for you as He acts in your life to keep you strong in the salvation that He has won for you and then shine His love to this warped and crooked world.

“Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky 16 as you hold firmly to the word of life. And then I will be able to boast on the day of Christ that I did not run or labor in vain.”

The mind of Jesus. His mind in your heart through the power of the Holy Spirit and God’s kingdom of love will shine to each other in faith and to a lost and unbelieving world! And that’s being the ultimate good sport! Amen.

Amen.

The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your heart and minds through Christ Jesus.” Amen. (Philippians 4:7)