

Philippians 2:8-9 Follow Jesus with All Our Hearts! March 25, 2018 Confirmation /Palm Sunday

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God's grace and peace have come to us through our Lord and Servant Jesus Christ. Amen.

Paul describes the picture of our humble Jesus, later honored by God, in Philippians 2:8-9

Through Your Word, help us to praise and follow Jesus with all our hearts. Your Word is truth! Amen.

Dear Followers of Christ on this Palm Sunday,

"Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord!" (Matthew 21:9) That's what the crowd shouted as Jesus rode into Jerusalem on the first Palm Sunday. We sang these words in the hymn: *"Hosanna! Loud Hosanna!"* Even Jewish youth knew the words of Psalm 118 since they were spoken annually on the way to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover. On the first Palm Sunday Jews spoke these words to Jesus, but they didn't all mean it. We know, because later in the week some of the same crowd shouted, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" How could people change so quickly? God's Word states, *"These people ... honor Me with their lips, but their hearts are far from Me." (Isaiah 29:13)*

How can we avoid saying empty words to God to His judgment? For us, it is a matter of the heart! False pride and spiritual laziness are constantly trying to keep us from honoring Christ or showing love to others as we should. We must daily pray to God for help and continue to read and hear His Word, so we can:

Follow Jesus with All Our Hearts!

First, live humbly before God! Paul wrote earlier, *"Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus" (v. 5)* What was Jesus attitude? *"Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself." (v.8)* The God-man, Jesus Christ, humbly road into Jerusalem as 1,000's of people praised Him as a King. Yet, His humility showed in His obedience to go to His death. If a doctor told you that if you continue the way you are going, you won't live for a month, would you change the way you live to avoid death?

Jesus knew that Jewish leaders had already plotted to kill Him. He was not getting out of Jerusalem alive. Many of the people cheering didn't accept who He truly was. Yet, He humbly put His life in danger to obey God's will. He knew that God's ways are not like our ways. In war, armies win victories by using powerful weapons to harm the enemy until they surrender. Jesus went alone and unarmed right into the hands of His enemies. They thought that God must have been on their side to arrest Jesus so easily. Jesus could have called His angels or used His power to blow them all away. But, He humbled Himself and obediently followed God's will to a most shameful death, a death on a cross reserved for a rebellious slave.

Even though He was the Son of God and man in one person, He *"made Himself nothing, taking on the very nature of a [slave]." (v.7)* By this, He accomplished what we never could do. There is a song called "One Solitary Life." It goes, "All the armies that have ever marched, all the navies that have ever set sail, all the rulers who have ever ruled, all the kings that have ever reigned on this earth all put together, have not affected the life of man on earth like this one solitary life." Jesus' death paid for all sins that condemn us. He conquered the power death by His innocent death so that death cannot defeat us when we die.

We need humble hearts like Jesus as we follow Him by faith. Humility means not being selfish. Paul wrote earlier in this chapter, *"Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves." (v.3)* The crowd that welcomed Jesus on Palm Sunday was mostly selfish and vain. Some wanted earthly provisions. They followed Jesus like a bunch of seagulls waiting for bread. Another group just wanted to see more of Jesus' miracles for curiosity. The third group was His reluctant disciples. They fearfully told Jesus to avoid Jerusalem so He wouldn't die.

What part of the crowd are we on this Palm Sunday? Do we follow Jesus selfishly hoping to get special blessings in life? The Bible doesn't promise it. Instead it says that we may lose in life if we are faithful to God. If we follow Jesus with all our heart, do we expect a life of ease, like having no problems? Jesus didn't promise that either. Or, are we better than His disciples so we can commit our lives to Jesus and say: "You lead the way and we'll follow no matter where You lead us?" Can we put God's kingdom first for the sake of our Lord? Are we willing to submit to God's will no matter what? Before He entered Jerusalem, Jesus prayed that His Father's will be done. We all have our "Jerusalem's" like the disciples. We should pray: "Lord, lead us to humbly follow Your plan in life for we know it will be for our good!"

Second, God will bless our faith as we serve Him. Paul wrote that after Jesus' humble death and burial, "*God exalted Him to the highest place and gave Him the name that is above every name.*" (v.9) What a dramatic change! Jesus entered Jerusalem to the praise of 1,000's. Then He went the depths of humility as the Jews demanded His suffering and death. Then God gave Him the highest honor after raising Him from death. Now God's Word associates Jesus' name with eternal victory and blessing for us.

The Bible tells us that Jesus ascended and that He now rules over heaven and earth. Jesus is fully using His power and knowledge as the God-man. Does His glory mean that He sits on a throne, ordering everyone around to serve Him? That is not what the Bible pictures. Jesus is in the glory of heaven for one purpose: to serve His Father as our prophet, priest, and king! Before ascending to heaven, Jesus commanded His followers to make disciples by baptizing and teaching all nations. And He promised, "*I am with you always to the end of the age.*" (Matthew 28:20) As a prophet, He has given authority to us through His Word and He backs it up by being present with us. What power we have from Jesus when we speak His Word! As a priest, Jesus was the ultimate sacrifice on earth. In heaven, *Romans 8* states, "*Christ Jesus, who died [and] who was raised to life, is at the right hand of God and is interceding for us.*" (v. 34) In the glory heaven He serves by pleading for our salvation before the Father. Also, King Jesus from His heavenly throne is defending us so that God will accomplish good in our lives despite dangers. Paul stated, "*The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to His heavenly kingdom.*" (2 Timothy 4:18)

So, we know that by God's grace as the Holy Spirit keeps us in the true faith and we follow Christ in life and in death, God's promise of glory awaits us. Paul wrote, "*I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.*" (Romans 8:18) And in the book of *Revelation 1* it states, "*He has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father.*" (v. 6) So, what are we going to do in heaven? Are we going to strut around showing off our new perfect bodies? As we reign with Jesus, does that mean we get to tell the angels what to do? In Matthew 20, we read that the mother of James and John asked Jesus a favor: to have her boys sit on the right and left hand of Jesus in glory. Jesus told her that those positions were set by the Father not by Him. But more importantly Jesus said, "*Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant.*" (Matthew 20:26) This tells us that even greatness in heaven is not determined by high positions or what honor we hold, but in how each of us will use our talents perfectly in a perfect world to serve Jesus and others to the glory of God.

Even now, God will bless us and others as we live by faith in Jesus. On this Palm Sunday, we say: "Hosanna" which means "*Lord save us.*" We pray: "Jesus, give us undivided hearts to trust in You and to follow where You lead us in life. You prepared eternal life for us by Your humble death. You are always with us. Help us to humbly live a life of love for You. Help us to serve You now and forever!" Amen.