

## THE HUMBLE ATTITUDE OF CHRIST THE KING

Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the Name of the Lord! Hosanna!

Our text for Palm Sunday is the Epistle Lesson. From Philippians chapter 2, we listen again to verse 5

*Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus.*

Dear Friends in Christ,

Has anybody ever said to you, “You need to change your attitude!”? Have you ever told a teenager or a co-worker or a brother or sister to get an attitude change? Just how do you go about changing your attitude? You can change a lightbulb in less than a minute. You can change your clothes in a minute or two. You can change the oil in your car in a half an hour or so. But how do you change an attitude? If you order someone to have a change of attitude, is that all it takes? No. Something more has to happen. Something has to motivate that change. Whether it’s a fear of punishment or expectation of a reward or a desire to please, something has to take place to make a person want to change his or her attitude. It doesn’t just happen on its own.

In the Epistle Lesson for Palm Sunday, the Apostle Paul tells us to have a change of attitude. He says, “*your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus.*” Now, you can’t just say - “Oh, ok, I’ll have Christ’s attitude.” It doesn’t just happen, and the Apostle Paul knew that. Instead, he leads us toward a change by showing us exactly what Jesus’ attitude was, The Humble Attitude of Christ the King.

Today’s text tells us that Jesus is “*in very nature God.*” He is the divine second person of the Trinity, of equal power and might and wisdom and glory as God the Father and God the Holy Spirit. Through Jesus the entire universe was called into existence. He has legions of powerful angels at his beck and call. He has all the praise and worship and adoration of the saints and angels in heaven. He has all the incredible power, total wisdom, total glory of the one, eternal God. But what did Jesus do? Jesus *did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant.* Jesus left behind all the power and glory of heaven to enter our existence as a human. Jesus didn’t just lower himself a little bit. He made himself nothing. He emptied himself of all of his glory.

You can see this clearly in the way that Jesus entered into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. He could have ridden in on the wings of angels. He could have come in a thunderstorm with the fire of the Lord behind him- or on a war horse. But instead, Jesus rode in on a lowly donkey, a simple beast of burden, nothing special. The question is, “why?” Why didn’t Jesus display his awesome power? After all, the people were calling him the ‘Son of David.’ That’s a title which designates the Messiah, the Savior promised for centuries. And with the word, ‘hosanna’ they were asking Jesus to save them. “Hosanna! Save us now! Hosanna! deliver us now!” What was it about his attitude that kept Jesus from turning the Palm Sunday procession into a display of power? That would have unnerved the religious leaders who were “out to get him.” That would have shaken the Roman rulers who were just barely keeping the populace under control.

That’s just not what Jesus came to earth to do. Although he is God, Jesus was *made in human likeness.* It is absolutely amazing that God would become a human – a creature who gets hungry and thirsty and tired and feels pain and sadness. It is absolutely amazing, to imagine that God, who causes everything on the earth to grow – that he would get hungry and wait in line for food, just like everyone else. He allowed himself to be tempted in every way, just as we are, yet, he was without sin. And even that wasn’t enough. He lowered himself even further. Even though he is God, in charge of life and death, he became *obedient to death.* Jesus, who is life itself, the opposite of death, allowed death to take his soul. Why?

In 2 Corinthians 8 we read, <sup>9</sup> *For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.* (NIV). It was only Jesus' grace - his undeserved love for us sinners - which wanted to see us become rich in spiritual blessings - that made him give up everything he had for us. Jesus became poor - he set aside the use of his might and power, he went to the cross - because he wanted you to inherit eternal life. The humble attitude of Christ the King was on display when Jesus willingly gave up everything, including his own sinless life, so that you and I could live with him in heaven. The humble attitude of Christ the King expressed a deep concern - not for himself - but for all of us. The humble attitude of Christ the King was an expression of his great love for you.

<sup>5</sup> *Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus . . .* Your attitude should mirror the humble, self-sacrificing, loving attitude of Christ the King. How's that supposed to happen? The devil has implanted in our sinful nature a very strong self-centered attitude. It's deeply ingrained within us to "look out for number 1" to do things that are in 'my' best interest, not the interests of others. This self-centered, "me first" attitude is not only evident in the lives of believers, it's the number one "problem starter" in your relations with your spouse, your children, your parents and your God.

In how many homes would harmony be restored if husbands and wives looked to their spouse's best interests instead of selfishly seeking what was best for themselves? How much of the friction between parents and children would be eliminated if the "head-strong," "I know I'm right" attitudes were replaced with a humble, obedient mind set? How much better would your life be if you allowed God's will and God's word to guide your life instead of the "lifestyle" you've chosen and the things you insist on doing?

People become disgruntled at work and at home because, "I'm not getting what I want." "I'm not getting what I need." "I'm not getting what I deserve." "I'm not making as much as I should." "I'm getting the raw end of the deal." A self-centered, "me first" attitude not only makes everyone around you unhappy, a self-centered, "me first" attitude has little or no desire to reach out to others with the saving message of sins forgiven. This isn't the attitude that God wants. This isn't the attitude for which God has created us. It's not what Jesus has died to make us. It is an attitude that could lead to destruction.

Jesus sees our self-centered attitude. He sees the messes that we make because of the selfishness that is present in our lives. He sees the trouble we experience every day, because of the sinful world in which we live. Yet, here's the amazing part of this story. Even though we are self-centered, self-absorbed, self-loving creatures who are usually looking out for number 1, this conquering Christ Jesus, riding on a lowly donkey, is still willing to suffer and die for us, so that we might experience an abundance of life here and now and eternal life in the world yet to come.

He responds to our self-centered, "me first" attitude by humbling himself and selflessly making himself the sacrifice by which our sins are atoned for and through which we have forgiveness. He does it all, because he loves you that much. <sup>5</sup> *Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus . . .* Your attitude should mirror the humble, self-sacrificing, loving attitude of Christ the King. How's that supposed to happen?

As I said earlier, you can't just order someone to have a change of attitude. Something more has to happen. Something has to motivate that change. It doesn't just happen on its own.

2 Corinthians 5:14-15 (NIV)

<sup>14</sup> *For Christ's love compels us, (That's the motivating, compelling force - Christ's love.) because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. <sup>15</sup> And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves (No longer be self-centered) but for him who died for them and was raised again.*

On Palm Sunday, we catch a glimpse of our Savior's humility. The Lord of All rode a lowly beast of burden into Jerusalem in order to give himself over to mocking and beating and torture and death. The wonder of it all

is how God worked all things together for good. Jesus didn't deserve to be crucified. He deserved to be glorified. Oh, there was a small showing of his glory on that first Palm Sunday. People were cheering for him, placing their cloaks on the road before him. This was just a glimpse of the glory that was yet to come. Just look what happened in the end.

*<sup>9</sup> Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, <sup>10</sup> that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, <sup>11</sup> and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

Jesus deserved exaltation, a return to power and might and glory, after his work of salvation was complete. He is now using his power to rule over all things in heaven and on earth for your good, for the good of the church. But the attitude of Christ the King remains humble and loving. Even as we speak, Jesus is being exalted by all the saints and angels in heaven. Even the Devil, and his evil angels, and all the unbelievers in hell are being forced to acknowledge right now what they didn't want to believe – that Jesus Christ is Lord. Today, Christians all over the world are singing “Hosanna to the Son of David,” celebrating Palm Sunday in many different ways. All this is just a sample, a glimpse of the great exaltation that will take place someday when our Lord returns in glory. Someday every knee will bow to Jesus, in heaven and on earth and under the earth rather than just the few people on that first Palm Sunday.

In the meantime, *Your attitude . . . **can** . . . be the same as that of Christ Jesus.* Holy Week is a good time to start moving in that direction. Holy Week tells you vividly and dramatically just how much God really loves you. It is that love which compels you to have a change in attitude. And God can use that change in attitude for your good, for his glory and for the advancement of his kingdom. Amen.