

Humility Leading to Victory

Philippians 2:5-11 (NIV)

⁵ In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: ⁶ 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 nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. ⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming 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 acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

On Palm Sunday, Jesus entered into Jerusalem like a conquering king. But what had he conquered? His enemies still opposed him. He had no military conquests to his name. The people were shouting, “Hosanna!”, a phrase that meant, “Save us!” If Jesus was a king parading his victory to his subjects, wouldn’t they be shouting, “He saved us! We are saved!” No, they were asking to be saved. What had Jesus really conquered? What had Jesus really won?

What could he have conquered? We know that Jesus is God. As God, he didn’t need a sword to conquer people. He could say the word and his enemies would be instantly bound in chains. He could have removed their voices or transported them instantly to some island. He could slay them on the spot. As God, he had the power to make all of Jerusalem and the whole world bow down to him, whether they wanted to or not. Jesus could have been a king who conquered by brute force, by his almighty nature.

Instead, he chose to use his almighty nature in a way I don’t a single person would have thought of, a way that runs contrary to our logic. Paul says in Philippians chapter 2, “[Christ Jesus], being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant.” (verses 6-7) As God, Jesus did not use his almighty power to force us to bow our knees to him or force us to praise him or to serve him. Instead, he limited the use of his almighty power. He humbled himself in order to serve us, in order to save us.

We will hear this truth throughout Jesus’ Passion History today. He humbly served his disciples by washing their feet, a job reserved for the lowliest of servants. He humbly served us by giving us his body and his blood in, with, and under the bread and the wine of the Supper he instituted just for us for the forgiveness of sins. He humbly served us by allowing himself to be betrayed and hauled off like a hardened criminal. He humbly served us by remaining silent, as prophecy said he would, while he was on trial and false accusations were being hurled at him. He humbly served us by allowing himself to be convicted and sentenced to death for telling the truth. He humbly served us by refusing to retaliate as he was struck in the face, spit upon, insulted, and had a crown of thorns beaten on his head. He humbly served us by allowing himself as God to be nailed to a cross, and then gave his life over to death. As Paul explains to us, “And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death— even death on a cross!” (verse 8)

Christ’s humility achieved victory as God explains through the Apostle Paul, “Therefore God exalted [Jesus Christ] to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” (verses 9-11) With humility and through humility, Jesus won the battle he had been waging his whole life, a battle that was already decided before he was ever conceived in the Virgin Mary. With his humility, he crushed Satan’s head, an outcome that God promised would happen. This is why Jesus entered Jerusalem riding on a donkey with the palm processional as the conquering King, as the one who had already answered the plea of the people and had saved them from their sin by a sure victory over the devil that he was about to claim with his humility. Jesus humility achieved victory - victory over sin, death, and the devil for us.

And now God entreats us to have the same humble mindset as Christ Jesus in our relationships with one another. To follow Christ’s humble mindset is to look to the interests of others over your own interests. It means to value others above yourself, your thoughts, your priorities, your wishes. To have the same humble mindset as Christ Jesus means to turn the other cheek when someone hurts you with their words instead of retaliating. To have this same humble mindset means throttling down from getting your own way in order to serve the greater good, to ask what someone else wants instead of demanding what I want. This is God’s will and guidance for our lives.

Jesus our King achieved victory with humility. As you listen to Jesus go through Thursday and Friday of Holy Week, his Passion, specifically listen for his acts of humility which achieve our victory. As you note his humble acts that made him a conquering King, look for the opportunities where we can have the same humble mindset as Christ Jesus in our relationships with one another. Amen.

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Pastor Jonathan Klein

pastorklein@lightofthevalley-wels.org