

March 16, 2008
Palm/Passion Sunday

“Christ is King”

Philippians 2:5-11

Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Read during service was the entire Passion narrative from Matthew’s Gospel. You may read it in its entirety by opening the link to the bulletin or in your own Bible by reading Matthew chapters 26 and 27.

Sermon

Palm Sunday. What a grand entrance it was. The crowd shouting “Hosanna,” the palm branches waving. Robes and palm branches being laid on the ground so that the colt Jesus rode wouldn’t have to trod in the dirt. It was a king’s entrance. It wasn’t a parade like we have at Mardi Gras where there are all sorts of things to look at. This was all focused on Jesus. And when they yelled “Hosanna,” they were calling Him their Lord, for Hosanna means, “Lord, save us.”

Today we tried to recreate that day for ourselves by the way we began our service with the procession of the cross. We too said “Hosanna—Lord save us.” We recognize Jesus as our King. That is the “what.” What is Jesus? He is our King. He is our Lord. We belong to Him.

The long Gospel reading that followed is the “why.” You see, today is also called “Passion Sunday.” The passion of Christ, His horrible suffering and death, that was all to pay for the blood price for our sin. In that act, Christ purchased us, made us His. We belong to Him. He is our Lord.

Martin Luther puts it very well in his Large Catechism when he writes about the second article of the Apostles Creed—the part that talks about Jesus. “*If anyone asks, ‘What do you believe in the second article about Jesus Christ?’ answer as briefly as possible, ‘I believe that Jesus Christ, true Son of God, has become my Lord.’ What is it ‘to become a lord’? It means that he has redeemed and released me from sin, from the devil, from death, and from all misfortune. Before this I had no lord or king, but was captive under the power of the devil. I was condemned to death and entangled in sin and blindness.*”

It’s an incredible and bizarre story, that God would scrunch Himself down into becoming a man, and then subject Himself to all kinds of torture and then a painful, humiliating death on a cross, just so He could save the creation that turned against Him. But it’s true. We believe it. We believe it because He has given us His Spirit so that we can believe it.

But at the same time—we want to be king, don’t we. It’s good to be king. It’s good to be the one in charge. The idea of having a king over us is especially strange to we who live in the United States. We don’t have kings. We are free. We get to choose who our leaders are and if we

get tired of them, we vote 'em out. And that's great and wonderful when we are talking about our relationship to our government. God has truly given us a wonderful country to live in.

But know this; that isn't how it works with God. There is no freedom to run away and do your own thing with God. You don't get to be the one in charge. It may look that way, but there are only two ways to be; either you belong to sin, to death and to the devil, or you belong to God. And sometimes we may even look at our lives and wonder which one of these is our ruler. I mean, we certainly see sin in our lives and we may even see death in our sicknesses and frail bodies. And sometimes we may even get downright nasty and swear we see some of the devil in us. What can you say at times like that?

"Hosanna! Lord, save us!" Jesus has called you to be His. He is our king. That's why we always, always, always look to Him to help us. We know He has paid for our sins. We know we belong to Him and He is always there taking care of us and washing our sins away. We have been baptized into His name. We know what He has done for us and we gladly say, "His blood be on us and on our children!" We say this because we know His blood has saved us and made us his subjects, his children. No matter what our lives may look like, Christ's blood has made us His and we don't belong to sin, death or the devil.

We know Christ is king. We know it now, and some day everybody who lives, ever lived and ever will live will know it when He is revealed in His glory on the last day seated at the right hand of power and coming on the clouds of heaven. *"God has highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."*

You know Christ is king. You have been called by His Holy Spirit to be His subject, His child forever. When you are tempted to try to be king yourself, know that is only temptation toward slavery to sin and cry out in prayer "Hosanna! Lord save me!" And know that He can, that He already has. That He suffered and died for your sins to purchase you back from death and the devil. Know that because He is your king, Jesus Christ marches triumphantly into our hearts and says, "Sin, Death, Devil, you can't have this one. This one is mine. This one is forgiven. This one belongs to me."

Our King has done it.