

Palm Sunday Sermon

Rev. Kevin Hilgendorf April 5, 2020

Recently on New Jersey News "teachers parade in student's neighborhood's to lift up their spirits." Just hearing this lifted up my spirit as well. Palm/Passion Sunday also has a procession in the neighborhoods of Jerusalem where Jesus' entrance lifted up the spirits and hopes of the people. Disciples and followers and on lookers shout praises, Hosanna (means save us) to the son of David, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the Highest! The King Jesus comes humbly riding on a donkey. Humble means gentle, nonviolent, and enduring injury with patience and without resentment. Jesus comes taking the form of a slave, powerless (not a power over), but love, compassion, mercy, and companionship.

I experienced that last Palm/Passion Sunday at Apostles Lutheran Church, Turnersville, New Jersey. I departed Barnegat an extra hour early to take a short cut through the Pine Barrens. This was my first attempt. I missed a turn, looked for the road again. Relieved when I recognized a name of a road on my directions. Felt confident I was back on track only to realize the houses disappeared, the macadam changed to sand, and I was surrounded by pine trees. Calling friends with no responses. Time was ticking away. Felt I might make it on time. Asked for directions and one driver suggested the long way to Apostles. I took the advice and left messages at Apostles I was on my way. My panic set in and I thought I am going to be late for church. I arrived 15 minutes late. I was greeted with smiles and words of assurances that all was fine. The council president was updating the call process to the congregation. My embarrassment melted away with the congregation's understanding, compassion and companionship.

St. Paul's letter to the Philippians has an early hymn of Jesus, which summarizes the events that are detailed in Matthew's Gospel. St. Paul encourages the believers "Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others better than yourselves. Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus. Rather than refusing the cup of his passion and death, Jesus humbled himself, becoming obedient to death, even death on the cross." Christ humbles himself in order to win our hearts from a position of great weakness, but immense and unbreakable love.

Where have you encountered leadership through humility? Sewing groups making protective masks, Grace's members working on video services for the web site, members calling others on the phone, nurses, doctors, medical responders treating Covid-19 patients, a parade of teachers in students' neighborhoods, a congregation welcoming a tardy Pastor.

A familiar hymn comes to mind...I love to tell the story of unseen things above of Jesus and his glory of Jesus and his love. I love to tell the story because I know it's true, it satisfies my longings as nothing else would do. Christ Jesus humbles himself in order to win our hearts with immense and unbreakable love. At His glorious name all creation shall bow.

Now the peace which passes all understanding keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus!