

SERMON FOR PALM SUNDAY, APRIL 10 2022

Palm Sunday C 2022 “The Love of Power, or the Power of Love”

Text: Deuteronomy 32:36-39; Philippians 2:5-11; Luke 22-23

Dear fellow redeemed of, by, and for Christ, in today’s Old Testament lesson, we heard God say through Moses: **For the Lord will vindicate his people and have compassion on his servants, when he sees that their power is gone and there is none remaining, bond or free.**

Did you catch that phrase, “**When He sees that their power is gone?**” Take a moment and consider that. It’s said that when we give up, God carries us, but we, by nature, hate to be powerless.

We rebel and try to assert our power in any way we can. And so life is a power play at work, at home, in groups of friends, and sadly, at times even in church.

Children try to assert their power through shouting or throwing tantrums. Adults have been known to throw tantrums too, but for the most part they resort to grownup ways of showing their displeasure. The give others, “the silent treatment” or spread malicious gossip about them, or just ignore them if they fail to see or do things our way.

In many ways, we manipulate others to get what we want. Because we want to be in control at least in some small way. I may not be the top dog, but at least there’s *someone* under me.

Someone I can control and tell what to do. We want to have some degree of power.

Yet our text says that God will not have compassion until *He sees that our power is gone.*

But pastor, you’ll say, I don’t want to be at the bottom of the pecking order! I can’t say as I blame you; neither do I. Why not? Well, don’t think too hard about that; the answer is easy: sin.

Sin does not want to serve but to be served. Sin that wants to exert power over others. Sin that wants to be in control.

Besides, no matter how lowly your station in life, no matter how tired and weak, you will *never* be at the very bottom of the pecking order. That spot is reserved for one person: **Jesus.**

“Though he was in the form of God, [He] 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.”

We heard that story again today; the glorious Son of God, creator of the universe, the subject of angelic devotion, became nothing, descending all the way to the very bottom of the pecking order - **for you**. To serve you and to save you.

In truth, though we hate to admit it, we are powerless. We cannot save ourselves. Before God's grace came upon us, we were dead in our trespasses and sins.

Like Israel in slavery to Egypt, we are in bondage to sin. We've fallen, and we can't get up!

And so, our Lord came. Just as He rescued His powerless people from their bondage to the Egyptians, so He came to rescue us from our bondage to sin and death.

While the power God exhibited against Egypt was awesome, His power on the cross was greater. For the cross shows us not the power of man, but the power and extent of God's love.

And so, for you, He is arrested and doesn't resist.

For you He is punched, mocked and abused, yet doesn't fight back.

For you, He is humiliated.

For you, He is hung on a cross like a criminal.

For you, He lays down His life. To serve you and to save you.

Truly, there is no other God like this. Who comes to serve those, who hate serving their neighbors'.

Who is shamed, to take our shame away. Who takes our sin and death, and give us forgiveness and life.

There is no other God like this. And our God comes and saves still today - washing, absolving, feeding.

He still comes to those who, led by the Holy Spirit, admit they are powerless to give us what we do not have and cannot achieve: forgiveness, life, and salvation.

He comes to break the grip of death on you and end the reign of sin in your life. He comes to raise you up, no matter how far down you are on the worlds pecking order.

All this He has done for you. And His service didn't begin when He rode into Jerusalem on a donkey, but when He rode into this world in the womb of the Virgin.

And it didn't end when He rose from the dead and ascended into heaven - no, it won't end until you rise and ascend with Him. For He did not come to earth to return alone; He came for you. He took your place here, that you may live His Kingdom there.

Paul tells us that until then: **Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus.** What mind has now been given to you which is yours in Christ Jesus?

The mind to know that true power is exercised not in control and manipulation but in loving service. His mindset that serve others not because they deserve your help or because you have to, but because God allows you to serve others in his stead.

Because no matter how far down you go, you will never be at the bottom. That spot is still reserved for one person: **Jesus.**

Whatever you were when Jesus found you, in Christ Jesus you are made new. When the Spirit humbles you, He will exalt you, so that you can be used for Godly purposes.

The good news is that the same power of Christ that laid down His life for you, only to take it up again, is now at work in you.

That not your sin but His love, not your sin, but His forgiveness, not your sin, but His life, would control, lead, and guide you. At work, at home, in groups of friends, in church.

The church calls this Holy Week not just because of the holy things that happened, or because of the Holy One they happened to but because this is the week *that makes you holy.*

Holy, because your sins are forgiven. Holy, because you have been raised to a new life. Holy, because you are hidden in Christ through Baptism. Holy, because the Body and Blood of the Holy One are here given to you.

And so today we enter this Holy Week. We begin it with Hosanna! Lord, save us! We will end it with He is Risen, Alleluia!

So, this Holy Week, may we ***have this mind among ourselves.*** As the Spirit leads, let us cease our love of power, and seek to demonstrate the power of His love. **Amen.**