

Palm Sunday

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Date: 29 March 2026

Preacher: Seminarian Matthew Stuart

[0 : 00] In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen. In the epistle this morning, Paul writes to the Philippians, Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant and coming in the likeness of men.

And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death, even death of the cross.

Made himself of no reputation means he emptied himself. He who shared the Father's glory from all eternity willingly laid that glory aside and took on the nature of a slave in complete humility.

When the ancient world thought about divine power, it thought about people like Alexander the Great and Caesar Augustus.

Alexander conquered most of the known world by the time he was 33, and his subjects called him a god. Augustus brought peace to the empire.

[1 : 29] They called him a god too. The gods took what they wanted, and power was the measure of divinity. But Jesus came into the world as truly God and truly man, in all ways equal with the Father.

But he didn't consider that equality something to take advantage of. He didn't use it the way that Alexander or Augustus would have, or the way Adam did in the garden, grasping at the chance to be like God.

Instead, he emptied himself, took on the nature of a slave, and was born in the likeness of men. The world has always vied for power, but Christ willingly surrendered his inhumility.

In Jesus Christ, we see what it truly means to be God. God isn't the one who grasps. He's the one who gives. And he gave himself all the way to the cross.

The collect appointed for today is so fitting. God, of thy tender love towards mankind, has sent thy Son, our Savior Jesus Christ, to take upon him our flesh, and to suffer death upon the cross, that all mankind should follow the example of his great mercy.

[2 : 59] The incarnation itself was already an act of humility. God didn't begin humbling himself on Good Friday. He began at Bethlehem when the eternal Son of God was born of the Virgin Mary with no place to lay his head and became a humble carpenter.

From the very beginning, he was already emptying himself for us. And he didn't stop. Verse 8.

And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death, even death of the cross. Even death of the cross.

Crucifixion wasn't just painful. It was shameful. It was humiliating in the most extreme manner.

Rome reserved it for slaves and criminals.

And under Jewish law, anyone hung on a tree was cursed and considered eternally damned. And Paul says that the one who existed in the form of God submitted to that willingly out of obedience to the Father.

[4 : 14] Jesus didn't stumble into the cross. He chose this path because this is what our salvation required.

His decision to take upon human nature and go all the way to the cross wasn't a decision to stop being God.

It was a revelation of what it actually means to be God. When we look at Christ crucified, we are seeing God.

We're not seeing God in a moment of weakness. We're seeing who God has always been. We are seeing that God defeats death by taking our death upon himself and swallowing it up so that death now loses its power.

In verse 9, therefore, God also has highly exalted him and given him the name which is above every name. Because Christ descended to the lowest point, the Father raised him to the highest. [5 : 22] The exaltation comes precisely because of the humiliation, not in spite of it. Verses 10 and 11, that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow of those in heaven and of those on earth and of those under the earth.

And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God, the Father. So we see here that Paul is quoting Isaiah 45.

Here, a passage where God says that every knee will bow to him and to him alone. The title Lord that Paul uses in our epistle text, it's the same title that the Old Testament uses for God himself. Today is Palm Sunday. The crowds in Jerusalem waved palms and shouted Hosanna because they thought a conquering king was arriving.

They were right, but not in the way that they expected. They wanted another Alexander, another Augustus, someone who would seize power and drive out Rome.

[6 : 44] But the king who rode in on a donkey had a completely different conquest in mind. His throne would be a cross.

His victory would look exactly like defeat. But through that apparent defeat, he would reconcile the world to the Father.

The collect asks God to grant that we may both follow the example of his patience and also be made partakers of his resurrection.

We'll be praying this collect every day this week until Good Friday. We don't watch Christ's passion from a safe distance. And our baptism, we were united to him in his death and resurrection.

That union is renewed every time we come to the altar to receive his body and blood. And the pattern of his life shapes our life.

[7 : 50] May this be our meditation throughout this holy week as we come before the almighty Lord who demonstrates true authority by practicing the utmost humility that resulted in his love demonstrated by his own cross for each and every one of us.

Amen. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.