

"A Mind of Your Own"

Text: Philippians 2:5-11

*"When I survey the wondrous cross on which the Prince of Glory died
My richest gain I count but loss and pour contempt on all my pride." Amen*
(TLH 175)

Dear Fellow Christians:

How do you like your movies? I know how I like mine, and it embarrasses me to admit it – to a certain extent to even talk about such things in a Sunday sermon. But it proves a point. I want a movie to be, at the same time, utterly realistic and yet totally detached from reality. In other words, the movie has to be realistic in the sense of plausible (it could happen) but with a happily-ever-after conclusion. I don't get those who go for dark and depressing affairs where in the end the good guys lose and everyone dies. How is that entertaining? We already get a steady dose of that sort of thing in real-life, why spend time on that in our make-believe? I want surprise endings, a twisting plot, and the triumph of good. Like I said, totally detached from reality.

It is all rather silly, isn't it? There is no real "happily-ever-after" in life, is there? Other than spiritually, no one makes it out of life alive. In fact every character of every movie that is set in any time from, say, pre-World War II and before is dead now. They may have survived a close call – or may close calls – but in the end no one cheats death.

Except Jesus.

Today is Palm Sunday, and it serves in part as sort of a classic "preview of coming attractions" in that it gives us a brief glimpse into what's coming, without telling the whole story. What's coming, of course, is our Savior "**on the clouds with power and great glory.**" What that great day will actually be like we can only imagine. Nor can we even begin to comprehend what an eternity in the presence of our Holy and Almighty God could possibly be like. Come quickly, Lord Jesus!

Palm Sunday is just the barest foretaste – a brief glimpse at best of the glory and majesty of the new existence that Jesus himself will one day usher in. Palm Sunday could never reveal too much, because the true, raw power of our God was still masked, still veiled by Jesus' utter humility, and thus could never compare to what lies in store for the faithful when Jesus returns in inexpressible, unmasked power and glory.

Therefore on this Palm Sunday morning we examine both the triumphal entry of our Savior into Jerusalem and the heart or attitude that he there demonstrated. We are also thereby given a most imperfect glimpse of what Jesus' Second Coming will one day be like and, in the process, we will seek to gain some personal guidance that we can carry with us until that great day arrives. This morning we will see what our Lord did, and then seek *a mind of our own*. The text that will form the basis for this encouragement is found in Philippians Chapter 2:

^{ESV} **Philippians 2:5-11** *Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷ but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. ⁸ And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. ⁹ Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

These are the words of God, given by his grace through the Apostle Paul. Fully confident that these are God's words and rightly holding him to his promise to bless us through the study of these words, so we pray: "**Sanctify us by Your truth, O Lord. Your word is truth!**" Amen.

Dear Servants of the Lord Jesus, Palm Sunday is many things – the start of Holy Week, a foretaste of Christ's Second Coming, a glimpse into the power that our Savior will one day openly display, and so on. Yet given all of that, the two words that sums up what we see personified in this event are *selflessness* and *humility*. Think of what was happening there. Despite the jubilant reception of the crowd, Jesus entered Jerusalem to die. He came to give himself up for mankind. He came to let go of *his* rights and privileges, so that we might *gain* rights and privileges. Again, he entered Jerusalem to die, so that we might live.

You and I have heard that phrase so often ("*Jesus died*") that we are in constant danger of ignoring or overlooking not only the divine love but the profound irony and sublime humility that that simple little phrase conveys. As true God, Jesus is the Creator of all life. He is the eternal God – "*begotten of the Father from eternity.*" He was and is sinless, in

every possible way. As such he was in no way subject to that to which our sin subjected us – death. And yet, again, he went to Jerusalem to die. God. To die.

Why or how such a thing could ever represent reality can only be explained in light of a humility on the part of our Savior that itself is beyond human understanding – perfect, holy, magnificent in every way.

Human beings are not capable of fully comprehending such things. We are just too steeped in sinful pride to wrap our minds around perfect humility. Part of the problem is that as prideful creatures we are also shot through with another fatal malady: *greed*. While greed has been around since the Fall into sin, today it is a raging bull in the china shop of our lives.

But those are the times in which we now live, aren't they? We are part of a reaching, clawing, grasping society. Again, human beings have been greedy since the Fall, but it seems to have reached a fevered pitch in our world. You and I will unquestionably get caught up in the same fanaticism if we fail to take recognize the danger.

Even though we are Christians, we are pressed hard by two powerful opposing forces throughout our time of grace on earth. On the one hand the forces of evil (the devil, the world, and our own sinful flesh) press us hard with an insatiable lust for more. Always more. The evil within us lobbies constantly for more, and begs incessantly for the "me first" approach to life. Sin is justified with subtly catchy, logical-sounding slogans like: *"You deserve better than that!" "You can't take care of others if you don't take care of yourself first!" "You better look out for #1, because no one else will"* and the one that exposes a raw nerve: *"Because I'm worth it!"*

That's the old Adam in us. On the other side we have the new man, who hears the Word and will of our God urging us to a loftier, selfless attitude in passages like those immediately preceding our text: ***"Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others."*** (Philippians 2:3-4) Again in 1 Peter we read, ***"Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for 'God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.'"*** (1 Peter 5:5b)

Greed and pride are first cousins – they are engaged in an endless feud with humility and selflessness. What makes this struggle, in part, so difficult is that this isn't a "once and for all" sort of thing. Pride and greed

aren't things that we have or don't have. Ridding ourselves of them is a day-by-day process or struggle. That means that even a Christian who is somewhat humble and somewhat selfless in his or her character will struggle for a lifetime to maintain and practice those Christian virtues. Why? Because Satan wants to see anything but, and he has many weapons at his disposal. Consider how the following sins war against Christ-like humility: rebellion, dissatisfaction, irritability, arrogance, impatience, competitiveness, disregard of rules, superiority, self-reliance, criticism of others, road rage, self-indulgence. You could probably come up with a dozen more.

These are some of the countless symptoms of pride and greed in our lives, and they give us clear indication that not only do we lose more battles than we win, but we also come to realize that the struggle on this earth will never end. All of which should teach us what lost causes we really are and how desperately we need a Savior. And *that*, fellow Christians, is the signal that it is time to turn our eyes from the negative to the positive, from ourselves and our own sinful failures to our Lord Jesus and his flawless perfection.

Our text points us to our Savior with these words: ***"Christ Jesus... who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷ but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. ⁸ And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross."***

Our Savior Jesus was everything that we are supposed to be, and more. He said and did and thought always and only what was good, right, and perfect. The result for you and me is that God the Father has officially declared us to be not guilty of sin – *any* sin, *all* sin. Our sins have been forgiven by the Righteous Judge because the punishment for those sins has been visited upon the only sinless man in the history of the human race – Jesus Christ. By his stripes (that is, because he was punished in our place) you and I are now healed, cleansed, redeemed, forgiven.

This is the very one, the Savior, who exemplified perfection – which means that you and I, now that we know him as Savior, are also his children and want to be just like he is. But just what is so important about humility and selflessness? What really is the big deal here? In fact doesn't it seem to you that more and better things tend to get done in the absence of humility and contentedness? Humble seems so meek and unproductive and contentment sounds like nothing will ever

get better. In fact it seems like pride and greed are more the recipe for success and progress.

That's what the disciples thought, isn't it, as they contemplated and then made preparations to go to Jerusalem. They thought in very logical terms of force and strength and grasping for what they longed to have in this world. So also they dug up a sword and Peter strapped it on because that's just how things get done.

Jesus' perspective was and is radically different. Compare our present grasping, groping fanaticism for always more with the simple words of our text: **"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."** The Holy Spirit in our text then says so simply, **"Have this mind among yourselves ..."** Have this attitude. If the King of kings and Lord of lords practiced such pure and utter humility – and was then crucified for such sinlessness – who are we to strive for anything less or different? The death of Jesus Christ, who is for us humility and selflessness personified, accomplished for you and me what absolutely nothing else in all creation could: forgiveness of sins and reconciliation with God the Father. And he did it with selflessness and humility.

How do you and I develop and maintain such an attitude? It starts and ends with Christ Jesus. Most often when you hear the phrase that forms the title of our sermon this morning – *A Mind of Your Own* – it's a reference to stubbornness. As Christians we want a mind of our own, but we want it to be just like Jesus' attitude and selflessness. Look with eyes and faith and see – really see – just what Jesus was like, just what he did for you. Once you have that picture firmly in your mind – really *getting* what Jesus was truly like and what he accomplished for you, then take a deep breath, offer up a prayer of thanks to your God, and have a talk with yourself. You and I are not such hot stuff. We need to get that. We need to get over ourselves and recognize that apart from Jesus Christ we are less than nothing. *With* Jesus Christ we are God's own beloved children and heirs of eternal life in heaven.

So as we celebrate Palm Sunday and thus begin our commemoration and celebration of Holy Week, let this be our prayer: *Lord Jesus, through your Holy Spirit search out and destroy all sinful greed and pride in my heart. Let me be different – really different – from the world around me. Let all of my thoughts, words, and actions rightly reflect the perfect humility you demonstrated in your suffering and in your death. Teach me to greet each*

new day with fresh, God-given resolve to walk as your humble servant in all things, and let Christ crucified by my great joy and treasure. Amen.

Scripture Readings

^{ESV} **Zechariah 9:9-10** Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey. ¹⁰ I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim and the war horse from Jerusalem; and the battle bow shall be cut off, and he shall speak peace to the nations; his rule shall be from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth.

^{ESV} **Mark 11:1-10** Now when they drew near to Jerusalem, to Bethphage and Bethany, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of his disciples ² and said to them, "Go into the village in front of you, and immediately as you enter it you will find a colt tied, on which no one has ever sat. Untie it and bring it. ³ If anyone says to you, 'Why are you doing this?' say, 'The Lord has need of it and will send it back here immediately.'" ⁴ And they went away and found a colt tied at a door outside in the street, and they untied it. ⁵ And some of those standing there said to them, "What are you doing, untying the colt?" ⁶ And they told them what Jesus had said, and they let them go. ⁷ And they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks on it, and he sat on it. ⁸ And many spread their cloaks on the road, and others spread leafy branches that they had cut from the fields. ⁹ And those who went before and those who followed were shouting, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! ¹⁰ Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David! Hosanna in the highest!"

ST. PAUL EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

2510 E. Divide Ave. Bismarck, ND 58501

Parsonage and Office: (701) 223-4885 Cell: (701) 425-5483

Website: www.bismarcklutheran.org

Michael McEnroe, President Eileen McEnroe, Organist

Michael Roehl, Pastor Suzannah Miller, Organist

Palm Sunday – March 29, 2015

The Opening Prayer by the Pastor

The Opening Hymn – 723 (Brown Hymnal)

"What Wondrous Love Is This"

The Order of Service – Supplement page 12ff. (Brown Hymnal)

The Scripture Lessons: (Printed on the back page of this bulletin)

The Old Testament Lesson: (Zechariah 9:9-10) Long before the event we celebrate today (Palm Sunday) ever took place, it was foretold by the Prophet Zechariah. Now, as also foretold by Zechariah, the King has "established his dominion from sea to sea." Christ's kingdom or dominion has been established in the hearts of believers around the world. Those same children of God eagerly await the Second Coming of our Savior-King.

The Psalm of the Day – Psalm 24 (Supplement page 25)

The New Testament Lesson: (Mark 11:1-10) Our Gospel reading is the account of Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem. In entering the capital Jesus knew full well that the Jews would try to kill him. In reality they were powerless over him. Had Jesus not willingly offered up his life, no human power or authority could ever take it from him. We see then in this account our Savior going to do for us what he came to earth to do. On Calvary he offered his perfect life as payment in full for the sum total of mankind's sin.

The Confession of Faith -

The Apostolic Creed – page 15. (Brown Hymnal)

The Pre-Sermon Hymn – 725 (Brown Hymnal)

"No Tramp of Soldiers' Marching Feet"

The Sermon – Text: Philippians 2:5-11 (Printed on the back page of this bulletin)

"A Mind of Your Own"

The Offertory – (Supplement page 16 insert)

The Post-Sermon Hymn - 783 (Brown Hymnal)

"Jesus, Shepherd of the Sheep"

The Offering – Hymn 792 sung during the collection

The Prayer followed by the Lord's Prayer

The Benediction

The Closing Hymn – 798 (Verses 1 & 4) (Brown Hymnal)

"God, We Praise You"

Silent Prayer

Welcome! - We warmly welcome any visitors who might be with us this morning and invite you to join us every Sunday at this time. St. Paul is a congregation in fellowship with the Church of the Lutheran Confession (CLC) – a conservative Lutheran synod with churches and missions throughout the United States, as well as Canada, India, and Africa. We are glad you are here. Thank you for letting us share the Word of God with you. Please record your visit in our Guest Book, and come again!

Attendance - Sunday (45) Average (49) Wednesday (24)

This Week at St. Paul:

Today	-9:00 a.m.	– Sunday School and Bible Class
	-10:00 a.m.	– Worship Service
	-11:00 a.m.	– Fellowship and coffee time
Wednesday	-6:00 p.m.	– Confirmation Class
Thursday	-7:00 p.m.	– Maundy Thursday Service
Friday	-7:00 p.m.	– Good Friday Service
Next Sunday	-8:00 a.m.	– Men's Easter Breakfast (no SS or BC)
	-10:00 a.m.	– Easter Sunday Worship Service
	-11:00 a.m.	– Fellowship and coffee time

CLC News – Pastor Andrew Schaller has accepted the call to Calvary of Marquette, MI. Pastor Ed Starkey has accepted the call to Resurrection of Corpus Christi, TX. Gethsemane of Spokane has called Teacher Sherman Carstensen.

Confirmation Class – Confirmation Class parents please note the 6pm Wednesday start time for this week.

Holy Week Services – Palm Sunday marks the beginning of Holy Week. Please take note of the various services this week in the schedule above.

Men's Breakfast – Men of the congregation who wish to participate in the preparation of the Annual Men's Breakfast on Easter morning please volunteer to Chairman Mike McEnroe. Breakfast will be served between 8:00-9:15 am, and members are invited to come when convenient.

Holy Week – Having entered again into that special period of the Church Year known as Holy Week (Palm Sunday through Easter Sunday) Christians want to guard against making this week *holy in name only*. Take time out from your busy schedule this week not only to attend services when offered, but for personal meditations, Bible Study, and visits with your Savior – all of which are activities appropriate for those who have gained so much from our Lord's suffering, death, and resurrection.