



March 25, 2018 - Humble Minds

Palm Sunday

Given by Rev. Mattei

Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus (Philippians 2:5)

As a coach to my children's soccer team I have been part of many tournaments where parents standing on the sidelines would shout play instructions to their children or to the referee even when it was blatantly clear they knew nothing of the sport. The worst comments and commanding orders that I heard were the ones where children were shamed, ridiculed and clearly harassed. A simple google search of threats to referees in the news brings up a host of articles replete with shameful and scary anecdotes. In a culture where losing is neither acceptable nor honorable victory needs to be achieved at all costs, even through violence. Losing is feared as despicable and interpreted as a deficiency in character to the point that even simply being part of a tournament warrants a trophy less a child's self-esteem might suffer. In my view, rewarding just about everybody belittles talent and achievement. Acknowledging one's proper level of ability speaks of one's humility and self-knowledge and opens the way for greater learning.

Paul seems to insist on humility manifested in the sameness of a believer's mind. He invites Christians to have the same mind of one another reflecting in turn the same mind of Jesus. In his letter to the Philippians he talks about this 4 times (2:2.5; 3:15; 4:2) or even 6 times if we include the "one mind" of 1:27 and 2:2. Those who live with Jesus in their midst (Matthew 18:20) share in his Spirit, his compassion and love, and joy is complete (Phil 2:2 but also John 15:11; 16:24 ; 17:13).

The old joke about being proud of one's humility is really no joke. To learn how to become humble is our life journey and Jesus is our model: "he humbled himself and became *obedient* to the point of death-- even death on

a cross." (Phil 2:8) Earlier Paul explained that being "in the form of God," Jesus did not regard equality with God as something to be grasped or exploited, as something to be held onto at all costs and used to his own advantage. Rather, he willingly emptied himself of all claims to divine glory and honor to become a human being -- not a human of high status and honor, but a lowly slave serving other human beings.

Such was Jesus' "obedience" to the Father. Not that the Father ordered him this life path unto death, but that Jesus submitted himself to the values of the kingdom for love of all humanity. His love of the justice of God and his passionate dedication to the vision of a new humanity in God prompted him not to seek himself but to trustingly follow wherever love lead him, even at the cost of personal death. This is humility: counting others first. The word humility comes from the Latin root, *humus*, the same root for human being, meaning "of the earth." All too often the Scriptures have identified humans, the humble, with the lowly, the bent-over ones, the ground under our feet, the humiliated.

The love of God for the wounded world prompted God to become one of us and embrace the human experience in its fullness and in so doing he came to pioneer the radical obedience to the Father that makes us truly and fully human. His zeal for the Father prompted him to seek the ways of God and stand for those under the heel of the privileged. He was hated by those whose system of power he came to expose. He was hunted by the Temple police, despised by church leaders, lied about and run out of town because he lived in persistent solidarity with the abused and humiliated. He refused to let the lowly be pushed out of sight, even by his own friends. In so many ways he said: "Let the little ones come to me" (Mark 10:14). He exposed the systemic yoke that attributed the cause of poverty and misery to people's flawed character. Jesus' radical solidarity with the marginalized upset the social, political and economic apple cart. It got him killed.

This Jesus is the one whom God highly exalts and to whom God gives "the name that is above every name" (Phil 2:9). Glory and honor are a consequence of chosen and calculated vulnerability embraced through humility and childlike trust. Does our life together reflect "the same mind that was in Christ Jesus"? Are we looking to the interests of those excluded rather than our own interests? Is the self-emptying of Christ evident in our

life together? Or are we concerned with self-preservation and holding on to a privileged and comfortable community lifestyle that prevents us to embrace those who might be different from us?

Because he loved us so much God showed up in the broken and death dealing places of the world, the places where humanity is mistreated and humiliated. God was not afraid of experiencing a humiliating defeat and dying a criminal's death. Are we willing to let go of our self-importance and embrace humility for love of God? Jesus promised his disciples that if they lived in obedience they would suffer the same punishment he suffered. But they are to trust the power of vulnerability and be of the same mind of Christ. What may seem loss at first will turn out to be gain and what seems death will in fact be life giving.

Lord, give us strength to follow you and embrace the humility of Christ and in the process to discover our truest humanity. Amen