

## MESSAGE FOR PALM SUNDAY, April 4, 2009

Lessons: Zechariah 9: 9-12, Philippians 2: 5-11, Mark 15: 1-47

Key Words: **'humble ... He humbled Himself ... crucify Him ... crucify Him ... crucify Him ... they crucified Him ... they crucified Him ... crucified ... crucified ... Truly this man was the Son of God ... He was dead'**

### Introduction

I'm sure you have noticed the hi-lighted words and phrases from our lessons for this Palm Sunday. They set the theme for our message for today. Let's read them together as the basis of our message:

**'humble ... He humbled Himself ... crucify Him ... crucify Him ... crucify Him ... they crucified Him ... they crucified Him ... crucified ... crucified ... Truly this man was the Son of God ... He was dead'**.

Now imagine with me the president of the United States, President Obama, coming to the Rochester area. You pack up your family. You stop at a fast food to pick up some junk to eat. You drive over to an overpass on Highway 52 to watch the route the President will travel. Excitement builds! You begin to notice traffic is thinning out. A helicopter buzzes overhead. Anticipation grows. Ten minutes later, the road is eerily empty, a police car with lights flashing, sirens screeching races down the highway. The crowds of people on the overpass and along the highway have greatly increased. Then stretching your neck, far off you think you can see... .

Well, what do you think you would see? After all, this is President Obama, the populous president of the United States of America. You've seen motorcades on TV in other cities. You've seen motorcades near Mayo Clinic and St. Mary's Hospital when a dignitary is in Rochester. So, of course the power, the honor, the glory, the prestige of President Obama's office would be seen in the vehicle and motorcade he rides in.

This Palm Sunday we celebrate and commemorate the entrance of Jesus into Jerusalem, God Himself entering His glory. The very Creator of all, the Omnipotent Power of the entire Universe, the Omniscient Seeing Eye of all things, the Great I AM, the One who was, who is and who always will be, begins His triumphant trek into the place of peace = jeru-salem. Well, what do you think you would see? How does He come? Like the President of the United States, like a powerful European Monarch, like a Shiek from an oil dynasty in the Middle East? As you and your family are waiting on that overpass on Highway 52 waiting to see President Obama and his entourage. Would you expect his motorcade to drive by in a fleet of Mini Coopers? How about a fleet of old Plymouth Horizons? Here's a good one President Obama in a rusty S10 Chevy Pickup like Pastors? Of course not! But how did God enter into His glory

on Palm Sunday? On a donkey! How humiliating. Even a populous president wouldn't get that low down. And that is what I want to talk to you about a little bit this Palm Sunday week end.

## **THE HUMILIATING GLORY OF OUR GOD AND BY ASSOCIATION US HIS CHURCH!**

### **I.**

The Prophet Zechariah in our Old Testament lesson prophesies this lowly entry of God into Jerusalem. He says '**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**'. This is the King of glory? Why in the world would Almighty God ride on a donkey? Well, for the same reason He was willing to be conceived as a fetus = a little one in the womb of the Virgin Mary, for the same reason why He was willing to be born in a barn in the no nothing town of Bethlehem, for the same reason why He was willing to be the adopted son of a common carpenter in Nazareth. For the same reason why He was willing to be an itinerant Galilean teacher = simply to be your Savior, simply to be your Righteousness, simply to walk in your shoes, simply to take your place, simply to be your substitute. The Righteous One becomes the Unrighteous One. The Holy One becomes the Unholy One. For one reason = to save you from your unrighteousness, to save you from your un-holiness in the sight of God your Judge.

Our unrighteous, unholy sinful nature, the unrighteous, unholy world we live in, unrighteous, the unholy prince of this world = Satan all consider glory, laud and honor to look like limousines and well armed motorcades and White Houses and Pentagons and monuments and power. Our unrighteous, unholy human nature, the unrighteous, unholy world we are surrounded by, the unrighteous, unholy prince of this planet = Satan think glory, laud and honor is to be in big money, to be in popularity, to be in the right clubs and social circles and coffee clutches, to attend the right school, to be on top, to be the winning team. Our unrighteous, unholy sinful nature, the unrighteous, unholy worldly world, the unrighteous, unholy prince of this world = the Devil, look and lust after glory, laud and honor in bigger is better, top of the heap, whose in control, whose the boss, who can out manipulate whom, who dies with the most toys. Our unrighteous, unholy sinful nature, the unrighteous, unholy earthly earth, the unrighteous, unholy prince of this globe = Lucifer, look for a popular Jesus who attracts more and more people, an eye candy Jesus who makes us happy and satisfied, we yearn for a popular, tolerant Jesus. It makes our life easier among family and friends and community and coworkers. We lust for a moneymaker Jesus who can fill our coffers and balance our budgets. We seek a kingdom building Jesus, so we can receive recognition and influence in our community. But, this is not entering into the glory, laud and honor of God it's an entrance into hell with a one way ticket. This is not a triumphant entrance into the glory, laud and honor of God it's a road to the grave with no resurrection into heaven.

## II.

As **Isaiah 55** tells us **‘God’s ways are not our ways, God’s thoughts are not our thoughts’**, that is our sinful human nature’s ways and thoughts, that is this planet earth’s ways or thoughts, that is the prince of this world, Satan, the Devil, Lucifer’s ways and thoughts. As we heard last Sunday when we saw James and John vying for position in Jesus’ kingdom – Jesus inverts the pyramid. Jesus inverts our entire world view. With our eyes of faith fixed on Jesus we see things totally different than our sinful nature, than this world or than Satan tempts us to see things. We believers, the Holy Christian Church, with Christ as the central Word of the Church, we see God’s and by association as His Church, we see our glory, laud and honor is in our suffering, in our humiliation, in our sacrifice, in our service, in our death to self, to this world and to the lies and temptations of Satan to make us number one. And suffering, being humiliated, sacrifice, dieing to self will always be hard, difficult, painful. This is the hidden, mysterious truth that eyes cannot see, but our faith believes and confesses and practices. The glory of God which saves us from our unrighteous, unholy sinful nature, saves us from this world’s lies, saves us from the Devil’s deception is in the suffering, the humiliation, the sacrifice, the death of God. Just as we read in the highlighted verses and phrases of our lessons. We might think the glory of God is in the splendor of the Rocky Mountains, in the Grand Canyon, in the ocean surf, in the prairie winds, in the architecture and art of this building, in the excitement and fellowship of events in our Christian Life Center, in our position, our wealth, our control. All things we admire and laud and glory and honor. We might even think the glory of God is in His Easter Resurrection, which we anticipate celebrating next Sunday with trumpets and organ and piano and choirs and alleluias and streamers and banners. **But, it’s not!** These are God’s glory of power. But, the glory of God’s power does not save us! The glory of God that saves us is the glory of His grace through His humiliation. It’s in God’s weakness that we receive our strength and it is in our weakness that God’s strength is received. God inverts the pyramid. The glory of God that saves us is in what our sins caused God to willingly suffer for us = your hidden sins, your obvious sins, your silly sins, your serious sins, your small sins, your big sins, in fact your entire sinfulness was put upon Jesus Christ, wiped there, flogged there, spit there, slapped there, crowned with thorns there, nailed there, speared there, crucified there, until God was dead for you. That’s the glory of God’s grace. That’s the glory of God’s love for you. And that is the glory of God’s humiliation, which leads to exaltation, which leads to triumphs of everlasting lives, the resurrection of the bodies, and Easter, and trumpets, and angels and archangels, and all the company of heaven. But, it all begins with the forgiveness of our sins through the humiliation, crucifixion and death of God for us.

### III.

This glory, laud and honor of God hidden in the mystery of the cross, is hidden, masked in your lives as Christians, also. Jesus, God incarnate's glorious and triumphant entry into Jerusalem was lowly, humble, riding on a donkey leading to the cross. That's the same way Jesus' glory and triumph enters your life today, too, through the common, humble water of baptism, through the common, ordinary bread and wine of communion, through the common, humble ordinary printed words of a book, the Bible, through the ordinary loose lips of a sinful fellow human being such as your Pastor who drives a rusty Chevy S10 pickup. These are lowly, humble, simple means of God's grace but they bring to us the triumphant entry into God's Kingdom of glory and God's Kingdom of power. And, God's triumph and glory, laud and honor comes not only to you but comes through you = His Church, also.

God calls you to be a mother, a father, a wife, a husband, a son, a daughter, an employee, or an employer. 'But, Pastor, none of that looks like the glory, laud and honor of God. It looks like normal every day living'. Bingo! Bulls Eye! That's it! Now you've gotten it! The glory of God is found in humility, in service, in every day life. The glory of God is not the biggest, is not the most powerful, it rarely if ever makes the front page or evening news. The glory of God is hidden, masked in the daily grind of life. Getting the children up and ready for school, loving your spouse, washing clothes, changing diapers, going to work, bringing home a pay check, those things and many, many other daily, humble, ordinary routines are the triumphant glory of God in our lives, God's grace for us to see and experience and share with others. You see our love for God is hidden, it's masked in our love for others. Joy is Jesus first, others next, you last on the bottom of the pyramid. That is an entirely inverted world view which your sinful nature, this world and Satan resist.

### Conclusion

Our Lord's suffering and death is His glory of grace. There on the cross, Jesus paid for our sins of unrighteousness, un-holiness of wanting to be the one on the top BUT it is here at the foot of the cross we confess our God's glory. There in all humility God served us our most desperate need, the payment of our sins, release from this world's view, freedom from Satan's lies of power, laud and glory of self. As the Lord Jesus sat on that donkey, God entered His most glorious moment in all the history of the entire universe – as those highlighted words and phrases of our lessons say: humble, He humbled Himself, crucify Him, crucify Him, crucify Him, they crucified Him, they crucified Him, crucified, crucified, Truly this man was the Son of God, He was dead. That's the honor, laud and glory of our God = Jesus and of us, His Church! Our glory is at the bottom of life's pyramid at the foot of the cross. Amen