



DAILY FAITH PRACTICES

Palm Sunday/Sunday of the Passion (A,B,C) – Philippians 2:5-11

Focus: *Humility in All Circumstances*

word of life

“And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross.” Philippians 2:7b-8 (NRSV)

Read Philippians 2:5-11

Palm Sunday celebrates the triumphal entry into Jerusalem by Jesus. All four gospels include this celebrative event in the life of Jesus. The crowds shout “Hosanna” and wave palms as they see Jesus draw near. He does not enter Jerusalem riding in a chariot or on a horse, but on a simple donkey.

1. *Describe how you envision the final entry into Jerusalem by Jesus.*
2. *What significance is the donkey?*

The early Christian hymn found in Philippians 2:5-11 captures both the triumph and the humility of Jesus. It describes how Jesus viewed God, himself and others. The beauty of this passage can serve as inspiration and guidance for daily life as we live out our faith.

“Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 2:5 NRSV) Is that not a worthy goal for all Christians? Is that not our daily prayer?

3. *How would you describe the mind of Christ Jesus?*
4. *What is it like when you have the same mind as Christ Jesus?*

Jesus comes as God but does not call in special favors when the going gets tough. He does not exploit God’s powers at his disposal. Jesus walks and lives among us as one of us. He experiences the best and worst of humanity.

Jesus empties himself. He humbles himself. He chooses a path of the servant rather than celebrity. This process of being emptied is not for the short-term, but results in his death on a cross.

These verses have many implications for the way we live *our lives*. If we are going to have the mind of Christ Jesus, we must empty and humble ourselves. If we are going to live as Christ, we must be willing to die.

5. *What would it mean for us to be emptied like Jesus?*
6. *How do you describe the essence of Jesus – human or God?*

This memorable hymn from Philippians does not end with the death of Jesus, but culminates with a celebration of God’s action in resurrection. God exalts Jesus, so that all will give Jesus glory. His name will be above all others. On Palm Sunday, at least for a while, Jesus experiences praise and glory.

Whether the crowd shouts “Hosanna in the highest” or “Crucify him”, Jesus responds with humility. He is a servant of God, willing to be obedient to death – even death on a cross.

7. *What might we learn from the attitude of Jesus?*
8. *Why do you think this passage was selected to be read on Palm Sunday?*

word among us

Sixty-eight year-old Sam loved parades, especially the annual St. Patrick's Day Parade which started at the alley beside his house. Friends and family would gather on his lawn for a picnic and to watch the parade. They gathered rain or shine; cold or hot. It was a wonderful tradition.

But there was an aspect of the tradition that some of his new guests were unaware. When the parade concluded, Sam disappeared from the party to begin his annual ritual of picking up the garbage left on the parade route. He had been helping his community by doing this for at least fifty years. He didn't think anyone noticed, but that was ok. Sam was simply being a good neighbor.

Last year Sam was quite surprised when he was asked to be the Grand Marshal of the parade. What a thrill! But when it was over, Sam quietly put on his walking shoes to begin his traditional clean-up walk. To his surprise, he was joined by his family and friends who honored him by walking with him.

1. *Give an example of actions by a humble person.*
2. *What usually happens when a humble person is recognized publicly for his or her actions?*

Jesus was humble in all circumstance—whether on the parade route of Palm Sunday or at his crucifixion. He focused his attention on being obedient to God.

faith practice in daily life

Serve all people following the example of Jesus

In baptism, we are brought into the family of God, marked with the cross of Christ and sealed with the Holy Spirit forever. We are publicly claimed and proclaimed to be God's children. That is the kind of good news which has the potential of puffing us up.

It is tempting to become complacent, feeling quite assured of God's love.

3. *What (if anything) about baptism do you find humbling?*
4. *In what circumstances is it challenging to remain humble?*

Jesus "emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness." (Philippians 2:8 NRSV) This passage is lived out during Holy Week as we witness his humble attitude responding to the events of the week. His consistent attitude of humility is staggering.

Some want to jump from Palm Sunday parade to the resurrection of Easter. The denial of Peter, betrayal of Judas, scorn of the soldiers, and pain of death are too much.

5. *How do you respond to those who want to hear only the happy stories of Holy Week?*
6. *What are your favorite hymns sung during Holy Week?*
7. *What part of the Holy Week services is particularly significant for you?*

Prayer

O Christ, keep our hearts, hands, and feet humble and ready to serve. Amen

last word

In the morning,
as you put your shoes on,
offer a prayer to serve others wherever you walk.