

**BGCW3/28/10Palm Sunday Worship Theme: Unbridled Praise**, Philippians 2:5-11, Luke 19:28-40

As a kid, I loved parades, especially the Memorial Day parades where my dad marched as a World War II veteran, and my uncle Roy marched as a World War I veteran. My dad had carried an enormous burden in the war to earn this right. He had survived the invasions of North Africa, Sicily and Omaha Beach on D-day. I felt so proud to see my family members as they marched by to the cheers of hundreds of thankful watchers.

Marching in a parade looked so easy to do, and I could not wait for chance to be in one. Then in 7<sup>th</sup> grade I had my chance. I joined the Hampton High School marching band and was talked into playing and carrying a sousaphone by the band director, Mr. Rearick. It was then that I discovered marching in a parade involved lots of practice to learn how to stay in step, to keep the rows straight, and the space between the rows even. All this precision of marching was to occur while we accurately read and played the music, and kept in time with the rest of the band while I carried this thirty pound monster on my left shoulder. As a bonus in my ten years of high school and college marching bands, more often than not, we marched in the rain, the snow, and the wind in wool uniforms. So much for the easy part of parades, but most of the time it was fun.

I wonder about what thoughts were on the minds of the people who came across the first Palm Sunday parade in which Jesus rode into Jerusalem. He was the whole parade riding on a never before ridden colt. As he rode along, people kept spreading their cloaks on the road before him praising God joyfully with a loud voice for all the deeds of power that they had seen, saying, "Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven, and glory in the highest heaven!" I wonder if those who

observed and shouted unbridled praise thought that what Jesus was doing was easy to carry out, and was simply for fun.

Through the gospel reading we of modern times know that this simple parade by Jesus took some very careful preparation. Not all went well either, for some of the Pharisees tried to rain on Jesus' parade by trying to persuade him to stop it. And... most all, Jesus carried an enormous burden on his shoulders, something much heavier than a single sousaphone or even three invasions in WW II as he rode into Jerusalem that day. What he carried was not yet visible to those around him, but it was real to him. He was carrying the unfathomable burden of humanity's sins; the foreknowledge of an ugly arrest, the betrayal of his fear-filled disciples, the obscenity of a farcical trial put on by cowards, the torturous thirty lashings of a whip, and the scandal of a pain-filled bloody crucifixion where he had to carry the cross bar of his own death. On top of all this, as Jesus rode the colt that day, he was preparing to go to war to fight the ultimate battle of Harmageddon against satan, sin and eternal death for you and me. Jesus was carrying an unimaginable burden that day for those present and for you and me. As the crowd shouted unbridled praise that day, I wonder if Jesus smiled at them. If he did, it would have to have been a smile of amazing grace as he carried the heaviest burden ever conceived to save you and me.

When Jesus rode the colt into Jerusalem that day it was both an act of humility and an invitation. He was inviting those present that day and those of us present today to do three things. Become as humble and selfless a servant of God as he was; to join him in taking up our cross for the Kingdom of God; and to invite others to join in the parade that ultimately

leads to an everlasting victory over satan, sin and eternal death. Jesus did not want mere spectators on that day nor today, he wanted people then and wants us today to join him in this parade of all parades.

How shall we join in his parade? How shall we prepare? The Apostle Paul gives us guidance in the Epistle lesson from Philippians 2: 5-11. "Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death--even death on a cross."

"Jesus' humility is a model for Christian thinking and action. Humility is often misinterpreted in our culture, leaving people with the notion that meekness equals weakness. Yet, in this context, humility differs radically from both self-deprecation and false modesty. Either putting oneself down or playing a charade that one is really not so gifted as others mocks the intent of" Jesus' life, his ride into Jerusalem and his death on the cross. "To be as humble as Jesus was humble does not invite us to think ill of ourselves or engage in some self-degrading practice."

"The model of humility is Christ, whose self-emptying was in fact a fulfilling of his true vocation," to not only be the King of Israel in a spiritual sense, but to be the Savior of the world. "He attended to the needs of an enslaved humanity"-enslaved to sin and death. "He humbled himself by resisting the temptation to follow an easier calling which would have denied his authentic self. There is no hint of self-deprecation. In fact, the implication of Christ's self-giving does not forbid taking an interest in one's own affairs. He did take time to prepare for the parade. Christ's self-giving simply

condemns a selfish preoccupation that ignores or prevents interest in the life of others.” [Texts for Preaching Year B, Pgs. 246-247.](#)

An example of this is found in the life of “Christian Herter who was running hard for reelection as governor of Massachusetts a number of years ago, and one day he arrived late at a barbeque. He'd had no breakfast or lunch, and he was famished. As he moved down the serving line, he held out his plate and received only one piece of chicken. The Governor said to the server, ‘Excuse me, do you mind if I get another piece of chicken? I'm very hungry. I had to skip breakfast and lunch this morning.’ ‘Sorry, I'm supposed to give one piece to each person,’ the woman replied. ‘But I'm starved,’ he repeated, and again she said, ‘Only one to a customer.’ ‘Herter decided it was time to use the weight of his office and said, ‘Madam, do you know who I am? I am the Governor of this very state.’ ‘Do you know who I am?’ she answered. ‘I'm the lady in charge of giving only one piece of chicken to each person. Move along.’” Selfish preoccupation will get you every time. [Ripe Life: Sermons on the Fruit of the Spirit](#) by C. Thomas Hilton.

Jesus' example of humility and servitude is to encourage us to reach outside our lives to help meet the needs of others, and this not easily patterned among us. Thomas Jefferson succeeded on one occasion. “One morning Jefferson woke up in a modest Washington rooming house, dressed, and then departed in order to attend his inauguration as the third president of the United States. When he returned, duly sworn in, he found no space left for him at the dinner table. Quietly accepting the democratic principle of first come, first served, the president of the United States went up to his room without dinner.” [“Emphasis” March/ April 2003, pg. 57.](#)

“Taking the nature of a servant in this manner has never been a popular

choice, especially as a career move. Few people know this better than The Shine King, James Cole of Chicago. 'People don't want to shine shoes no more. You don't find that many kids who want to shine shoes. They don't believe in it. They look at it as something small,' says Mr. Cole. Professor Henry Binford of Northwestern University offers another explanation.

'Shining somebody else's shoes is a kind of very personal act of service that reflects subordination going back a long way. It's not like selling something to someone over the counter. It is playing the role of the servant.' Despite the historical stigma, Mr. Cole's son, Jameson, plans to take over the family business. He enjoys the role of being a servant. 'A lot of people look down on it, but it isn't what you do, it's how you do it.' Taking the nature of a humble servant is never popular and rarely profitable, but it is what Jesus asks of us (John W. Fountain, New York Times, June 3, 2001)." "Emphasis" March/ April 2003 pg. 57.

In his ride into Jerusalem, Jesus was also obedient as well as humble. "Christ Jesus truly humbles himself because the as the divine Son, he willingly accepts the call of his Father to stand powerless for us in his obedience to" suffering and death. In his obedience, Jesus fulfills the words of the Prophet Isaiah in chapter 50: 5-8. "The Lord GOD has opened my ear, and I was not rebellious, I did not turn backward. I gave my back to those who struck me, and my cheeks to those who pulled out the beard; I did not hide my face from insult and spitting. The Lord GOD helps me; therefore I have not been disgraced; therefore I have set my face like flint, and I know that I shall not be put to shame; he who vindicates me is near.... It is the Lord GOD who helps me; who will declare me guilty?"

"Jesus' model of being human," humble and obedient to God "is not an easy model to emulate and inculcate in others. It requires living out of the

same kind of quiet courage to be oneself that enabled Jesus to ride the colt into Jerusalem knowing what lay in store for him.” “A dramatic illustration is offered. The Los Angeles River is routed through concrete channels. These man-made riverbeds are usually dry, except when the river floods. A young boy was riding his bicycle in the concrete channel when it suddenly filled with water. Helicopters dangling ladders and fire fighters throwing lines attempted to reach him but couldn't. It became apparent that the boy couldn't be saved until someone took the risk of jumping into the rushing torrent to rescue him.” John C. Carr

Presbyterian Professor Roberta Hestenes identifies that boy's situation with our reality and need. “In the currents of this world that sweep us along, that claim us, call to us, clutch at us, and leave us beyond our depth, God in Jesus entered the raging waters of our struggles, in order to redeem us, to bring us up and out of the floods.’ We are invited to accept the hand God reaches out to us in Jesus. Beyond that we are invited to become part of the saving work God is still doing in the world. The church, as the Body of Christ, must reach out to and rescue others as the obedient servants of God despite the cost.” Alex Gondola.

As a further example to us, on the cross and with his last breath, Jesus humbly reached out his hand to God crying with a loud voice, said, “Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.” (Luke 23:46) For the price he paid for us, “Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

Come let us join that crowd on the first Palm Sunday in shouting

unbridled praise to God as we confess that “Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” Let us seek the mind of Christ and with all humility follow him in his parade into Jerusalem and to the cross. It will not be simple or easy to take this costly action. But it is what Jesus our Lord mounted humbly on a colt wants us to do. He carries the burden for us so nothing or anyone stands in our way. “Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!”

Please turn to the Gospel lesson in Luke 19:28-40. Jesus has warned his disciples of what is to come when he enters Jerusalem, but it does not yet register with them. Instead of being afraid at this point, they honor Jesus as God's Messiah King coming to set up the Kingdom of God in the Holy City.

28 After he had said this, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem.

29 When he had come near Bethphage and Bethany, at the place called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of the disciples, 30 saying, "Go into the village ahead of you, and as you enter it you will find tied there a colt that has never been ridden. Untie it and bring it here. 31 If anyone asks you, 'Why are you untying it?' just say this, 'The Lord needs it.'" 32 So those who were sent departed and found it as he had told them. 33 As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, "Why are you untying the colt?" 34 They said, "The Lord needs it." 35 Then they brought it to Jesus; and after throwing their cloaks on the colt, they set Jesus on it. 36 As he rode along, people kept spreading their cloaks on the road. 37 As he was now approaching the path down from the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to praise God joyfully with a loud voice for all the deeds of power that they had seen, 38 saying,

"Blessed is the king  
who comes in the name of the Lord!  
Peace in heaven,  
and glory in the highest heaven!"

39 Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, order your disciples to stop." 40 He answered, "I tell you, if these were silent, the stones would shout out." The Word of the Lord.

Please turn in your Bibles to the Epistle Lesson in Philippians 2:5-11. In this passage, the Apostle Paul encourages us to think like Jesus, to appreciate what he has done for us and to confess him as Lord of our lives.

5 Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus,  
6 who, though he was in the form of God,  
did not regard equality with God  
as something to be exploited,  
7 but emptied himself,  
taking the form of a slave,  
being born in human likeness.  
And being found in human form,  
8 he humbled himself  
and became obedient to the point of death--  
even death on a cross.  
9 Therefore God also highly exalted him  
and gave him the name  
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10 so that at the name of Jesus  
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11 and every tongue should confess  
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First Presbyterian Church  
Cheyenne, Wyoming  
March 28, 2010 Palm Sunday  
Rev. Bob Garrard

Worship Theme: Unbridled Praise  
Philippians 2:5-11, Luke 19:28-40

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