

# PALM SUNDAY

## Christ Our Savior Lutheran Church

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### He Made Himself Nothing

#### Philippians 2:5-11

<sup>5</sup> In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:

<sup>6</sup> Who, being in very nature God,  
did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;

<sup>7</sup> rather, he made himself nothing  
by taking the very nature of a servant,  
being made in human likeness.

<sup>8</sup> And being found in appearance as a man,  
he humbled himself  
by becoming obedient to death—  
even death on a cross!

<sup>9</sup> Therefore God exalted him to the highest place  
and gave him the name that is above every name,

<sup>10</sup> that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,  
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

<sup>11</sup> and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord,  
to the glory of God the Father.

“He made himself nothing” (Pp 2:7).

Did you hear that? I know you heard it. I just read it to you in the Second Lesson. Why according to the Men’s Breakfast Bible Study I even read it to you just this October in another Second Lesson. But did you hear it? I mean really hear what it is saying?

“He made himself nothing” (Pp 2:7).

Who made himself nothing? Jesus, of course, but more than that. The Son of God. The Creator of the universe. The Almighty. The One who holds all things in his hands. The One who keeps the stars in their place and the planets in their orbits. He makes kingdoms rise and fall. He commands the angel army of the heavenly host. Jesus Christ. “The only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one being with the Father” (Nicene). He is the same One who feeds you and I and knows when even a sparrow falls to the ground and how many hairs are on your head at any given moment. He is the One who knit you together in your mother’s womb...gives you breath ... has numbered your days ... and is caring for you even now.

“He made himself nothing” (Pp 2:7).

Now, you and I don’t want to be nothing or even next to nothing. We want to make something of ourselves, don’t we? We want to be somebody! Somebody people know. Somebody people look up to. Someone important. In part because we think it will add value to our lives but really because deep down we’re afraid of being nothing. Of being worthless, overlooked and forgotten. We don’t want that. And oh, the lengths we’ll go to prevent it.

But “he made himself nothing” (Pp 2:7).

How? “By taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death— even death on a cross!” (Pp 2:7b-8).

“He made himself nothing” (Pp 2:7).

The meaning of word Paul used here is important. Literally, it’s “he emptied himself.” But to understand what Paul is saying we need to know what emptying does and doesn’t mean in this context. It doesn’t mean that the Son of God left his god-ness along with his power and glory behind in heaven when he took on our humanity. It doesn’t mean that when he was arrested in the Garden, beaten by Roman soldiers, stood before Pontus Pilate, and hung on a

cross – it doesn't mean he was helpless and couldn't do anything about it. He could have. Easily. For he was the same Son of God whose glory had shone for a moment on the Mount of Transfiguration and in his commanding miracles over death and disease and the very laws of nature itself. But when the time came to avoid suffering ... when the time came to save himself, he chose not to. "He emptied himself" of his glory and power.

"He made himself nothing" (Pp 2:7).

And if you really want to get precisely theological about it, you could say he made himself less than nothing. That's what taking on the sins of the world did to him. It made him the guiltiest person who will ever live. To think Jesus ... as the worst idolater, the worst fornicator, the worst abuser, the biggest bigot, murderer, liar, cheat - you name it - because he got all sins put on him. It seems unfair. Except that he wanted it that way. He wanted all sins to be held against him and not against you. He wanted to be forsaken by God on account of them and die under their deserved punishment, all so that you wouldn't have to.

"He made himself nothing" (Pp 2:7).

Why? You, of course. Everything. Everything you will hear and see him do this Holy Week, have this thought in mind: Jesus did all this not just for the world but especially for me. He made himself nothing to make you something. To make you a child of God. Because to God you are worth it! Worth sending his only Son. Worth suffering and dying under the weight of all sin.

Can you believe that? Can you stop trying to be a "somebody" because deep down you think you are nothing special? Will you finally accept the fact that there is nothing greater in this life than to be than the child of God the Jesus of Holy Week has made you to be?

That why "he made himself nothing" (Pp 2:7). That's why he went to the cross. You.

"In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus" (Pp 2:5) the Apostle Paul began the Second Lesson. That we too, having been given everything, would now make ourselves nothing for each other. That our relationships would consist of giving and forgiving, not making demands and keeping track of fair shares. That we'd let another go before us and not push our way to the head of the line. That we'd seek to satisfy the needs and concerns of our sisters and brothers before self-satisfaction. That we'd seek God's glory before our own.

To do so, isn't easy. It never is when you chose to not do something you could ... not to assert something because you are able ... not to claim something you have every right to ... not to get something you had coming to you. It can seem like having to carry a cross or two, but then you'd be in good company with the One who made himself nothing for you.

But because he did, you can too. Because Jesus did, "God has exalted him to the highest place" (Pp 2:9) and you are exalted with him. For in the cross, all that is yours – your sin, your guilt, your shame - is his; and all that is his – his body and blood, his righteousness, his kingdom – is yours, a gift he gives to you again and again "to the glory of God the Father" (Pp 2:11).

All because "he made himself nothing" (Pp 2:9) for you.

Amen.

## **Prayer of the Church**

M: Let us pray for the whole Church of God in Christ Jesus and for all people according to their needs.

Father in heaven, as we enter this most holy week and ponder together the mysteries of your great salvation, we praise you that your Son made himself nothing for us. Make his mindset present in our relationships with one another.

We also humbly ask you to uphold this world in your order. Preserve the Church and the preaching of your Word against all enemies. Bless our homes, that parents and children may serve one another faithfully and grow in instruction and faith until life's end. Give health and wisdom to all who serve in public office, that their authority may be exercised for the benefit of our people.

Today we bring before you the sick, distressed and needy [*especially* \_\_\_\_\_]. Give your abiding comfort in every circumstance, that in Christ we shall not die but live, and declare his praises unto the ends of the earth.

Look with favor on all communicants at your table. Grant that they would come penitently and in one faith to eat your Son's true body and drink his blood for the forgiveness of sins.

Graciously receive our prayers, deliver and preserve us, for to you alone we give all glory, honor and worship, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

## **Lord's Prayer**

**C: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and forever. Amen.**

## **Words of Institution**

M: Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night he was betrayed, took bread; and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

Then he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you; this is my blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me."

## **Closing Prayer**

M: Lord Jesus, in your Passion you made yourself nothing for us. In this Sacrament you made yourself our food. May the gifts of your life, your love, and your salvation, which we have here again received, inspire and empower us to freely give ourselves to one another in service to you. For you are the Lord forevermore. Amen.

*No Benediction*

## **Zechariah 9:9-10**

<sup>9</sup> Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion!  
Shout, Daughter Jerusalem!  
See, your king comes to you,  
righteous and victorious,  
lowly and riding on a donkey,  
on a colt, the foal of a donkey.  
<sup>10</sup> I will take away the chariots from Ephraim  
and the warhorses from Jerusalem,  
and the battle bow will be broken.  
He will proclaim peace to the nations.  
His rule will extend from sea to sea  
and from the River to the ends of the earth.

## **Mark 11:1-10**

11 As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage and Bethany at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of his disciples, <sup>2</sup> saying to them, “Go to the village ahead of you, and just as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here. <sup>3</sup> If anyone asks you, ‘Why are you doing this?’ say, ‘The Lord needs it and will send it back here shortly.’”

<sup>4</sup> They went and found a colt outside in the street, tied at a doorway. As they untied it, <sup>5</sup> some people standing there asked, “What are you doing, untying that colt?” <sup>6</sup> They answered as Jesus had told them to, and the people let them go. <sup>7</sup> When they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks over it, he sat on it. <sup>8</sup> Many people spread their cloaks on the road, while others spread branches they had cut in the fields. <sup>9</sup> Those who went ahead and those who followed shouted,

“Hosanna!”

“Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!”

<sup>10</sup> “Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David!”

“Hosanna in the highest heaven!”