

March 25, 2018  
Sermon for Palm Sunday  
St Peter Lutheran Church  
Bowie, TX  
Larry Knobloch, Pastor  
Philippians 2:5–11

*J.J.- Jesu Juva—Help me, Jesus*

Philippians 2:5–11 (ESV)

<sup>5</sup> Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, <sup>6</sup> who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, <sup>7</sup> but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. <sup>8</sup> And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. <sup>9</sup> Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, <sup>10</sup> so 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 confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Grace, Mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

Amen.

People often describe themselves as optimists or pessimists.

The optimist sees a glass half full, the pessimist half empty. Either way, the goal is to have a full glass, right?

An empty glass is just something to look at, while a full glass means you have something to drink!

A full glass gives you hope and anticipation; an empty glass means the happiness is gone.

We Christians are often mocked for what we celebrate in this week ahead. First, many will say that Jesus' Passion, riding into Jerusalem on this Palm Sunday only to be killed on Friday, demonstrates that we Christians love wallowing in pessimism and gloom. All that celebrating about Jesus' dignity being thrown away, even of His life itself, expresses some kind of deep-seated need to beat ourselves up, always to look on the dark side.

They'd say we Christians must feel too guilt-ridden ever to allow ourselves a full glass of life.

Then, by the climax of Holy Week, Easter morning, we'll be mocked for foolish optimism—for believing a myth that some ancient figurehead of ours, Jesus Christ, actually rose from the dead.

You Christians, get a life, we're told.

Deal with the realities of this world as they are.

Address the problems going on around us rather than wasting your time dreaming of some pie in the sky, foolish, glass-half-full, whistling-in-the-dark optimism.

Well a blessed Holy Week to you!—a week when it's not about glass half full or glass half empty; it's about Jesus emptying Himself in order to make us full. That's what St. Paul in our epistle teaches us really happens in these holy days.

Jesus emptied Himself for you that you may be full.

You know, of course, why people charge us with being pathological pessimists.

It's because we so often start by talking about sin:

You're commanded to empty yourself following Jesus' example, but when you yourself try, you just come up, well, . . . empty.

Paul tells us to: "Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus" (v 5).

That's a mind that is the example of perfect love. A love like Jesus had and has for all of creation, for all of mankind, for you!

If you have *αγαπε*, unconditional love like Jesus, you are willing to give all, even for those that don't deserve it. A mind that is humble, coming into Jerusalem on a borrowed donkey.

A mind of a faithful Servant to others. Perfect obedience that allowed Jesus to be arrested and tried, tortured, and killed, according to the Father's will. Always following the Father's will because it works for the salvation of those He loves.

Love of the sacrificial, perfect Lamb of God, shown in giving His own blood for your salvation.

That's how God's love is for us. That's why He sent Jesus, His Son to die for our sins. Jesus is the Love that empties Himself to serve others. To serve you!

And the thing is, as a child of God...you're commanded to empty yourself like that too. But we always come up empty when we try.

Instead, we're quite full of ourselves, acting out our own selfishness. We always look out for #1. If we do help out our neighbor, how often do we make sure that our name is known? Why is Carnegie Hall called Carnegie Hall? As well as so many other monuments and building dedications, etc. There is nothing wrong in and of itself. And I'm not talking about a memorial building or fund given in someone's name, but do we really need our names plastered on things to show our good deeds?

<sup>2</sup> *"Thus, when you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. <sup>3</sup> But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, <sup>4</sup> so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you."* Matthew 6:2-4 (ESV)

We want to be noticed, we want to be thanked and even rewarded! How about how the world sees those who serve as less "successful," and we won't settle for that. We can't have anyone think we are foolish because we give of our time and talents to others without any recognition.

I'm not simply being pessimistic or looking on the dark side. It's reality; it's just the way our, yours and mine, how our sinful nature works.

When we try to empty ourselves, we almost always come up empty. However...Jesus' emptying Himself not only didn't come up empty, but also led to His being exalted to the full.

During His time on earth, Jesus didn't always and fully use all His divine powers. We call this His state of humiliation (vv 6–8).

That began when He emptied Himself, leaving behind the perfection of heaven, to become one of us, a tiny baby inside Mary.

It meant putting Himself in our place—the place of sinful mankind, under the Law. The same Law of God that we fail at, Jesus submitted Himself to it, fully, as a human being. No special powers. He denied Himself the use of His supernatural abilities.

Ultimately it meant not using His divine powers to defend Himself against sinful creatures, human beings—doing those things we'll see again this week: His arrest, trials, beatings, death—even death on a cross . . . allowing Himself to be killed.

But Jesus emptying Himself didn't leave Him empty;

God highly exalted Him (vv 9–11)!

*<sup>9</sup> Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, <sup>10</sup> so 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 confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

It's one thing for us to try and trumpet our name to the world, to exalt ourselves, but quite another when God does it!

At the name of Jesus, true God and true Man, indeed every knee should bow and every tongue confess!

While on earth, Jesus didn't exalt Himself; "*who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped,<sup>7</sup> but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.*"

And now Jesus does forevermore always and fully use all His divine attributes. We call this His state of exaltation.

That's not just half full. Full! And it's not foolish optimism; it's true! In Christ Jesus, then, we who are empty are also fully exalted.

Jesus is not just an example of perfectly emptying Himself for us to follow; what He did counts for us, because He did it for us, for all mankind, because we couldn't do it on our own.

And we still can't empty ourselves of our selfishness perfectly as we ought.

But Jesus took the place of us sinful mankind under the Law to fulfill the Law for us. He humbled Himself even to death on that cross to take our death. Now we don't have to pay for our sins. For lifting our own name up, for only helping others when there is something for us to gain. For every selfish act that we ever did. They are all forgiven!

And that means each of us now shares fully in Jesus' exaltation!  
We for all eternity wear His name!

When we kneel before Him, it will not be bowing in shame but in faith and joy.

With the angels, our tongues will forever sing His praise!

Knowing that God will exalt us fully with Christ even fills us with love that can humble itself in service to others—with a mind like Christ's.

By emptying Himself, Jesus fills you.

He gave His life so that you would not die, but live.

He gave his blood to cover you with His righteousness.

He came down from heaven in the form of a man to live a perfect life for you.

His atoning death took your death from you.

And all this He did willingly and without complaint.

He sacrificed Himself for you.

He emptied Himself so that you would be full for eternity.

*“Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord,!” John*

*12:13b (ESV)*

Hosanna in the highest!

Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding keep our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Amen.

S.D.G.—Soli Deo Gloria