Our Humble, Submissive, Servant-King

Palm Sunday

I have been on a bit of a detour as I have been working to finish preaching through the book of 1 Corinthians.

My aim for the detour started in 1 Corinthians 15 when the apostle Paul began talking about our resurrection bodies. Which led me to consider our spiritual resurrection that comes from being born again and being baptized by the Holy Spirit. This baptism and resurrection is the beginning or our eternal lives in Christ. And this eternal life in Christ is meant to be an ongoing process of sanctification and discipleship. The word discipleship comes from the root word of discipline and discipline is absolutely necessary for our growth and God’s desire for our contribution to the body of Christ which is also defined as the church. As members of the church we are to be involved in God’s plan to save sinners. As Paul told the Corinthians:

**56 For sin is the sting that results in death, and the law gives sin its power. 57 But thank God! He gives us victory over sin and death through our Lord Jesus Christ.**

**58 So, my dear brothers and sisters, be strong and immovable. Always work enthusiastically for the Lord, for you know that nothing you do for the Lord is ever useless.**

**1 Corinthians 15:56-58 NLT**

Practicing the spiritual disciplines takes work, and it is a work that bears much fruit. This fruit is not about law, because we know that “No one has ever been made righteous through the law.” The goal of our hard work and discipline is love. As Peter wrote:

**13 So prepare your minds for action and exercise self-control. Put all your hope in the gracious salvation that will come to you when Jesus Christ is revealed to the world. 14 So you must live as God’s obedient children. Don’t slip back into your old ways of living to satisfy your own desires. You didn’t know any better then. 15 But now you must be holy in everything you do, just as God who chose you is holy. 16 For the Scriptures say, “You must be holy because I am holy.”**

**17 And remember that the heavenly Father to whom you pray has no favorites. He will judge or reward you according to what you do. So you must live in reverent fear of him during your time here as “temporary residents.” 18 For you know that God paid a ransom to save you from the empty life you inherited from your ancestors. And it was not paid with mere gold or silver, which lose their value. 19 It was the precious blood of Christ, the sinless, spotless Lamb of God. 20 God chose him as your ransom long before the world began, but now in these last days he has been revealed for your sake.**

**21 Through Christ you have come to trust in God. And you have placed your faith and hope in God because he raised Christ from the dead and gave him great glory.**

**22 You were cleansed from your sins when you obeyed the truth, so now you must show sincere love to each other as brothers and sisters. Love each other deeply with all your heart.**

**“Long before the world began, God chose Jesus as our ransom.” And He has been revealed to us for our sake so that we could discipline ourselves to show sincere, deep love for one another.**

**1 Peter 1:13-22 NLT**

Today, is historically, the day that the church celebrates “Palm Sunday.” Which I believe is an awesome demonstration of at least two spiritual disciplines. Those two disciplines are submission and service.

On the day we regard as Palm Sunday, Jesus our King, gave us a great example of submission and service. Unlike typical earthly kings and lords, Jesus the King of Kings and Lord of Lords demonstrated humility, submission, and his heart to serve.

Earthly Kings and Lords are known by there propensity to rule and lord over their subjects. Jesus once had this exchange with His disciples:

**20 Then the mother of James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to Jesus with her sons. She knelt respectfully to ask a favor. 21 “What is your request?” he asked.**

**She replied, “In your Kingdom, please let my two sons sit in places of honor next to you, one on your right and the other on your left.”**

**Matthew 20:20-21 NLT**

Notice here that the mother of James and John was hoping that they would get seats of power. She wanted them to be part of the ruling class, so to speak. But Jesus described a job description that was completely different from what they were expecting. Continuing in Matthew…

**22 But Jesus answered by saying to them, “You don’t know what you are asking! Are you able to drink from the bitter cup of suffering I am about to drink?”**

**“Oh yes,” they replied, “we are able!”**

**23 Jesus told them, “You will indeed drink from my bitter cup. But I have no right to say who will sit on my right or my left. My Father has prepared those places for the ones he has chosen.”**

**24 When the ten other disciples heard what James and John had asked, they were indignant. 25 But Jesus called them together and said, “You know that the rulers in this world lord it over their people, and officials flaunt their authority over those under them. 26 But among you it will be different. Whoever wants to be a leader among you must be your servant, 27 and whoever wants to be first among you must become your slave. 28 For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve others and to give his life as a ransom for many.”**

**Matthew 20:22-28 NLT**

Jesus, our King, came to this earth to serve and to give up His life for His subjects. I believe this is important context as we consider the events of Palm Sunday.

**21 Now when they drew near to Jerusalem and came to Bethphage, to the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, 2 saying to them, “Go into the village in front of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her. Untie them and bring them to me. 3 If anyone says anything to you, you shall say, ‘The Lord needs them,’ and he will send them at once.” 4 This took place to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet, saying,**

**5 “Say to the daughter of Zion,**

**‘Behold, your king is coming to you,**

**humble, and mounted on a donkey,**

**on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.’”**

**6 The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them. 7 They brought the donkey and the colt and put on them their cloaks, and he sat on them. 8 Most of the crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. 9 And the crowds that went before him and that followed him were shouting, “Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!” 10 And when he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred up, saying, “Who is this?” 11 And the crowds said, “This is the prophet Jesus, from Nazareth of Galilee.”**

**Matthew 21:1-11 NLT**

Jesus didn’t ride into town on a war horse. He rode in on the foal of a donkey. And technically it didn’t even belong to Him, it was borrowed.

Try to imagine having all the power to bring judgment upon the world and destroy everything wicked and instead being humble enough and self-controlled enough to die at the hands of the very people you came to save.

This plan had been in place since before the foundation of the world and this day marked Jesus’ official submission to God the Father’s plan. As Jesus described:

**16 “For this is how God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. 17 God sent his Son into the world not to judge the world, but to save the world through him.**

**18 “There is no judgment against anyone who believes in him. But anyone who does not believe in him has already been judged for not believing in God’s one and only Son.**

**John 3:16-18 NLT**

People who have not put their faith in God’s Savior are already under God’s judgement. Jesus wasn’t coming to play in our sandbox to bring judgment, it was here already. Instead Jesus was coming into our world to serve it and save it.

I say this as a reminder of our mission on earth. If Jesus, the only person who had a right to judge the world of it’s wickedness, came to serve it, what right do we have to judge it? To make it clear, I will answer the question. We have no right to judge it. Instead, we are to submit to God’s plan and serve it. The ultimate goal of our spiritual disciplines is to bring the saving grace and love of Jesus, to those who are under God’s judgement and lost in their sins. The prophet Isaiah foretold of Jesus’ mission when he wrote:

**Who has believed our message?**

**To whom has the Lord revealed his powerful arm?**

**2 My servant grew up in the Lord’s presence like a tender green shoot,**

**like a root in dry ground.**

**There was nothing beautiful or majestic about his appearance,**

**nothing to attract us to him.**

**3 He was despised and rejected—**

**a man of sorrows, acquainted with deepest grief.**

**We turned our backs on him and looked the other way.**

**He was despised, and we did not care.**

**4 Yet it was our weaknesses he carried;**

**it was our sorrows[a] that weighed him down.**

**And we thought his troubles were a punishment from God,**

**a punishment for his own sins!**

**5 But he was pierced for our rebellion,**

**crushed for our sins.**

**He was beaten so we could be whole.**

**He was whipped so we could be healed.**

**6 All of us, like sheep, have strayed away.**

**We have left God’s paths to follow our own.**

**Yet the Lord laid on him**

**the sins of us all.**

**7 He was oppressed and treated harshly,**

**yet he never said a word.**

**He was led like a lamb to the slaughter.**

**And as a sheep is silent before the shearers,**

**he did not open his mouth.**

**8 Unjustly condemned,**

**he was led away.[b]**

**No one cared that he died without descendants,**

**that his life was cut short in midstream.**

**But he was struck down**

**for the rebellion of my people.**

**9 He had done no wrong**

**and had never deceived anyone.**

**But he was buried like a criminal;**

**he was put in a rich man’s grave.**

**10 But it was the Lord’s good plan to crush him**

**and cause him grief.**

**Yet when his life is made an offering for sin,**

**he will have many descendants.**

**He will enjoy a long life,**

**and the Lord’s good plan will prosper in his hands.**

**11 When he sees all that is accomplished by his anguish,**

**he will be satisfied.**

**And because of his experience,**

**my righteous servant will make it possible**

**for many to be counted righteous,**

**for he will bear all their sins.**

**12 I will give him the honors of a victorious soldier,**

**because he exposed himself to death.**

**He was counted among the rebels.**

**He bore the sins of many and interceded for rebels.**

**Isaiah 53:1-12 NLT**

This was Jesus’ job description as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Submission unto death to save the very people who rebelled against Him. As Christians (AKA little Christ’s) our lot in life is similar. Like James and John and every Christian who has been seated with Christ in the heavenlies we are here to drink of the same cup.

God’s glory was demonstrated through the sacrificial death of the King. As John’s account in John 19 says:

**28 Jesus knew that his mission was now finished, and to fulfill Scripture he said, “I am thirsty.” 29 A jar of sour wine was sitting there, so they soaked a sponge in it, put it on a hyssop branch, and held it up to his lips. 30 When Jesus had tasted it, he said, “It is finished!” Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.**

**John 19:28-30 NLT**

I share all of this with you to help you understand your mission as Christians. It is a sacrificial mission a mission that brings God glory as we submit our lives to Him and His plan to save sinners. If you want to be part of the ruling class your mission statement is going to be very different from the popular rulers of our day. There will be a day that Jesus comes back to finalize God’s judgement on those who stand condemned. But until that day, we are to be ambassadors of God’s plan to save.

Ask yourself today.

How will you submit to God’s plan and lay down your life to bring salvation to people who may even hate you?

Don’t forget the mission statement that Jesus gave His disciples when He said:

**“You know that the rulers in this world lord it over their people, and officials flaunt their authority over those under them. 26 But among you it will be different. Whoever wants to be a leader among you must be your servant, 27 and whoever wants to be first among you must become your slave. 28 For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve others and to give his life as a ransom for many.”**

**Matthew 20:25-28 NLT**

What is the goal of your sanctification?

Is it a desire to be holy so that others will elevate you to an earthly throne?

Or is it a desire to be elevated as a living sacrifice to point others to our humble, submissive, servant King?

The lost are not going to get saved by us riding into town on a war horse. If Jesus didn’t do it neither should we. Instead, we should get on our borrowed foals and demonstrate the humility of a servant who has been saved by the righteousness of Jesus and not our own.