

Let the Same Mind Be in You

“Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus...”

This half-a-verse which introduces our reading from Paul’s Letter to the Philippians this morning gives us an important clue, an *essential* clue, to how we can handle the ups and downs, the heights and depths, the spiritual polarities, to which we are taken by our scriptures and ceremonies on this Palm Sunday, this Sunday of the Passion.

Because this day really does stretch us about as far as any day in church can stretch. It takes us to extremes—the highest of highs, the lowest of lows—the exultation and jubilation of greeting Jesus as Lord and King, the terror and the sorrow of seeing Jesus rejected and crucified.

Today we see Jesus at the very height and the very depth of his earthly ministry: one day hailed and acclaimed as the Messiah and the heir of David’s throne; and only a few days later mocked, humiliated, his life traded away for the life of a violent revolutionary terrorist.

Today we see the people at the extremes of enthusiasm and hatred: one day a crowd of the poor and the marginalized gathering to welcome Jesus, shouting praise so loud it seems like the very stones are about to burst into song; and only a few days later another crowd, a smaller crowd, a gang of political hangers-on of the chief priests and elders, gathering outside the Roman headquarters to collude in the torture and execution of an innocent man.

And today we see *ourselves*: the frightening changeability of our own hearts, the tug-of-war between love and sin that takes place within us, the bewildering sound of our own voices singing “Hosanna!” one moment, and a only few moments later crying, “Crucify, crucify!”

This day shows us the best and the worst, this day takes us to the extremes, this day stretches us in the tension between glory and horror. And that tension would be just about unbearable, I think, if it weren’t for that one little line, that one little half-verse from Paul: *“Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus.”* Paul here is inviting us to see the triumph and the passion of Jesus not just as something that happened to someone else a long time ago and far far away—but to see the triumph and the passion of Jesus as the living presence of God’s love that can dwell in us, too.

Because that is ultimately the meaning of *both* the Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem *and* the Passion of the Cross on Golgotha. Both the glory and the terror are signs of God’s love for us, signs of God’s love taking human form, signs of God’s love living human life in all its best and all its worst, all its joy and all its pain—signs of God’s love holding us so close that God will never let us go, even when we turn away from God and deny God and reject God.

Jesus in his Passion—Jesus rejected by those he came to save, Jesus abandoned by his closest friends, Jesus crying out on the cross that he feels forsaken even by God—Jesus in his Passion shows us that God loves us *so much* that God will stand with us, even in the deepest depths of our sin, even in the worst places of our hearts, even in the most painful moments of our sufferings. In Jesus God embraced all the best and all the worst that human life has to offer, and

in Jesus God made human life *whole*, so that through Jesus the whole of human life can be the dwelling-place God's love.

And because that love of God was alive for us in Jesus, so now that same love can, through Jesus, be alive in us: "*Let the same mind be in you,*" Paul says, "*that was in Christ Jesus.*"

And it is that promise of God's love that makes us, finally, able to handle, able to bear, all the tensions and contrasts of this day—the triumph and the tragedy, the celebration and the sin, the Palms and the Passion. It is that promise of God's love that makes us able to handle, able to bear, all the tensions and contrasts of our own lives. It is because Jesus stands with us in love that we are empowered to stand with Jesus, and to share Jesus' love with each other and with the world.

It is because Jesus stands with us in love that we now can forgive those who would hurt us.

It is because Jesus stands with us in love that we now can show compassion to those who turn to us.

It is because Jesus stands with us in love that we now can rejoice with those who come to share their joy with us.

It is because Jesus stands with us in love that we now can face the reality of our own sin, and accept the promise of God's redemption.

It is because Jesus stands with us in love that we now can be a community of disciples who are not afraid to let ourselves be emptied, so that we might be filled anew with God.

And that's why, for all the emotional tension of this day, in the end this news is *good*. Because the love of Christ *is* in us—as we wave our branches of palm, as we take our parts in the Passion, as we receive in communion the bread of life and the cup of salvation, as we are sent out into the world to be faithful witnesses of Christ our Lord. *Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus*—and let that mind and heart and spirit fill you with Christ's love, on this Palm Sunday, through this Holy Week, toward the Easter that will fill us all with life and joy. Amen.