

Pastor Graham Pfeffer Sermon for 24th March 2024 Palm/Passion Sunday

Text- Philippians 2:5-11

⁵ In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: ⁶ Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; ⁷ rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. ⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross!

At the beginning of this Palm Sunday service, we sang the song, Hosanna, to lift up Jesus' name with hearts full of praise and sing glory to the king of kings. As we sang, we became part of the crowd who lined the streets when Jesus' rode into Jerusalem on a colt the foal of a donkey.

We became part of the crowd waving branches and throwing their cloaks on the road in front of Jesus, singing Hosanna blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. The Hebrew word for Hosanna means saves us. We welcome Jesus as our king, because we know that he has come to save us.

We know that salvation comes from Jesus death and resurrection, but for those people who lined the streets and welcomed Jesus to shouts of Hosanna, they had other thoughts of how Jesus was to save them. They wanted to be saved from Roman oppression and for Jerusalem to be restored to Israel.

When that didn't happen, it wasn't long before the music faded, and the palm leaves lay where they fell. As we heard in the passion gospel reading Jesus was arrested. When Pilate asked what shall I do with the one you call the king of the Jews, instead of the joyous singing of Hosanna, save us, the mood had changed to angry shouts of crucify him.

In Philippians 2:6-11, Paul includes what is likely an early Christian hymn. In this hymn we hear that when Jesus came to save, he made himself nothing.

What does that even mean, to make yourself nothing. Have you ever said about anything, it's worth nothing. What makes you say that? Most likely you are stating you see nothing of any value or worth in what you are referring too.

It might be an old car that has a blown engine and everything else is worn out, so it's not worth fixing. It's worth nothing only scrap. But even as scrap it's worth something. Hence the saying someone's trash is another man's treasure.

Now we might say it's worth nothing in regard to objects that have no value to us, but Jesus became nothing. How do we understand that? Have you ever felt that you meant nothing to anybody. Being viewed as "nothing" to family, or friends, or community is something that can cause you to feel empty and lonely, and not needed. To think you are worth nothing is a major symptom of depression and suicide.

As humans, each of us craves to be seen and noticed. God has made us with worth. He made us to be in his image. Our children grow up with the desire for their parents to recognise their achievements and be proud of them. It is a natural human trait to feel needed and to have purpose.

Yet Paul writes Jesus became nothing. But what did he empty himself of? In verse 6, we read, *⁶ Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; ⁷ rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant.*

Jesus emptied himself of equality with God. Which means that Christ has always existed with God. That's why we believe in a triune God. Which means we believe Jesus as God emptied himself of his immortality and took on human flesh.

Now he is going to die. Now he is going to feel all the pain and suffering that you endure in life. Jesus left that highest position of being equal to God worthy of respect and obedience and glory and honour.

Jesus became a servant in the appearance of a man who humbled himself and became obedient. What did he become obedient to? To death, even death on a cross. Can we even begin to truly comprehend what Christ did for us when he left his heavenly throne to dwell on earth with us and become one of us. Christ became nothing for you. He emptied himself of his divinity at the point of death for you. What is that worth to you?

How could we comprehend that Jesus would see you and me worthy enough to put aside his immortality and be willing to die such a horrendous death for us. God with steadfast love looked at the world he had made, and despite all the sin and darkness, didn't look at us with the view that we were of no value or worth.

Rather, while we were lost and condemned, God saw us worthy enough to be rescued from our sinful self, the world, and the power of the devil. Can we truly imagine the physical pain Jesus endured for us? Can we truly know what it felt like for Jesus to feel that his heavenly father had forsaken him? Jesus emptied himself. Christ became nothing, that we may have eternal life!

Yet this reading isn't just telling us how Christ emptied himself, there is also instruction for your relationships with one another. In your relationships, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus. So, what does that mindset look like?

Well, the mindset of Christ is a willingness to become nothing and take on the nature of a servant. Jesus was willing to empty himself of equality with God, and become obedient unto death, even death on a cross.

Does that sound a bit extreme to you? You may be willing to serve and give of yourselves to help and serve others, but to become obedient to death, now that's a big mindset change isn't it. That takes a bit of getting our head around.

Perhaps that is why we can't truly comprehend what Christ has done for us. Would you give your life to someone who you didn't think was worthy enough to give your life for?

Can we comprehend that thought never crossed Jesus' mind? When Jesus hung upon the cross, do you think he looked out and saw people and thought to himself, you are not worth dying for. Of course, he didn't.

How do we know that? Because God so loved the world that he sent his one and only Son to save the world. When Jesus hung on the cross, he said to God the Father. Father forgive them for they do not know what they are doing.

That is the mindset we are called to have. The mindset that knows there is not one person who has no value or is not worthy enough in God's eyes to be saved. We are called to imitate Christ's example, by daily humbling ourselves, serving our neighbour, and giving up our own interests for the sake of the gospel.

As we give of ourselves to serve others, may all the glory be given to the One who gave his all. May the Holy Spirit help us become "nothing", so that in heaven and on earth and under the earth, every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Amen