

**The Sixth Sunday in LENT—Palm Sunday**  
April 14, 2019  
Christ the Rock Evangelical Lutheran Church  
Farmington, New Mexico

**Philippians 2:5-11** 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. (NIV 2011)

**How Do You Greet a Humble King?**

Gratitude for those who serve to keep us safe takes different forms. I've seen a stranger buy a police officer's coffee. A veteran wearing a simple baseball hat with his service gets a "thank you for your service" while strolling through the aisles at Wal-Mart. I can admit to getting a little misty-eyed at those viral videos of a service member surprising his family coming home from deployment unexpectedly. Ok, maybe it was a commercial. Still, it has the same impact. But I'm sure it feels much different if you're not just watching the video. You will have a different appreciation if it is your returning soldier, sailor, Marine, or airman.

We all appreciate their dedication and sacrifice. How you react to men and women in uniform depends on your relationship to that person. The same thing true about your reaction to Jesus. Who Jesus is and what He means to you will determine how you treat Jesus. So, how will you greet your humble King?

**3. Imitating Humility?**

This is a time of year when almost everyone realizes Jesus is part of a larger celebration. People are aware of Jesus even if they aren't conscious of his true identity. Even if they can't push aside thoughts of candy and bunnies and vacation days long enough to meditate on Christ's nature and work, there is some awareness. You don't necessarily have to be a Christian to appreciate Jesus. Many people can take to heart lessons from the kind of person Jesus was and the message He left behind. Even if they disregard the Bible's record

of Jesus' life as largely an invention of His disciples and dismiss the claims of divinity, they still have some respect for Jesus. They appreciate the way He lived His life.

Couldn't we all just agree that Jesus is a great role model for ethical living, an extremely moral example for how we should treat other people? That is actually biblical. The Bible does tell us to follow Jesus and encourage us to be more like Him. In fact, Philippians 2:5 tells us: **"Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus."** There is a gentleness and patience and compassion in Jesus and it is recognized by almost everyone, making Jesus someone we should all admire.

But Jesus isn't so universally well-respected across social and political boundaries today because He treated people with dignity. It's because Jesus is such a breath of fresh air compared to the greedy athletes and egomaniac dictators and self-absorbed celebrities who usually make the news today. In contrast to the way we're used to seeing powerful and important people act, we see an extreme example of humility in Jesus: **"Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing."** (Philippians 2:6,7) The humility of Jesus is noteworthy not just because of what He did, but also because of what He gave up.

It would be hard to imagine giving up something that you have every right to have in your possession. We all talk about the need everyone in our country to make sacrifices, for our nation to make difficult financial choices, but would you be willing to give up your tax refund to do your part to pay down the national debt? You wouldn't give up your rights, because you don't even deny yourself opportunities to seize more. Men might not be openly and obviously adulterous. But would you really be able to say no to physical temptations if all options were available to you? Would you even deny yourself minor indulgences for your eyes, giving in to lustful thoughts? Women might not chase after other, younger men like they do on some television shows. But do you even have to think twice about trashing your husband to your friends when he doesn't live up to your expectations, when he doesn't respond to you the way your magazines say he will? We all want to be more like Jesus, to follow His humble way of life, but none of us is really willing to put that humility into action when it means making even the most minor sacrifices, giving up some of our personal rights. So if Jesus is supposed to make a meaningful impact on human lives, He has to be more than a mere role model.

## **2. Appreciate Humility with a Purpose**

When you learn about some of the conditions endured by soldiers and Marines in the battlefield, the cramped quarters and months out at sea for sailors, you can deepen your gratitude and appreciation for their work since you know you wouldn't be able to do what they do. Jesus earns gratitude, since He does what we don't do, we wouldn't do, we can't do. But if Jesus humbled Himself in this way and we can't even follow after Him, what should we do with Jesus?

The Bible gives us some clues by uncovering who Jesus really is: **"being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own**

**advantage.”** (Philippians 2:6) Jesus didn't just wear the mask of God and then change into the costume for a human being. Jesus always was and is truly and completely God. And He never stopped being God. He just didn't treat His divine rights and glories the same way a pirate jealously guards his treasure. Instead of jealously hoarding his divine privileges and prerogatives, Jesus: **“made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.”** (Philippians 2:7) He was and continues to be truly God, but He stripped off His rights and securities that come with that divinity. He did it for a reason. He made Himself a slave for people. He put Himself totally and completely at the disposal of people.

If the government decided to show you what your taxes pay for by assigning you your own personal soldier or sheriff's deputy for the day, you could think of lots for them to do. You could haul out your unfinished to-do list, all the things you know you need to do, but haven't gotten around to doing. You might even kick back with any ice cold beverage and watch as they work. Thankfully, the men and women of the armed forces serve you in a way that accomplishes a higher, nobler purpose. Jesus made Himself like a slave or common criminal when He humbled Himself with ultimate dedication. The Bible tells us: **“And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross!”** (Philippians 2:8) He doesn't serve you to give a spiritual spa treatment, pampering you so you can kick back and take it easy. The change in Jesus' manner of existence served a purpose. He went to the cross for every person who can't humble himself or herself. He suffered the punishment selfish sinners deserve. He obeyed the plan of salvation for sinners who intermittently, occasionally obey God's will.

### **1. Embrace Him as Your Savior**

The cross of Jesus shows that He came to do more than serve as example or role model, more than just humble Himself for people who can't get humility right in their own lives. His cross shows that His service, His humility, His life fulfilled His ultimate purpose. He became a human being, took on the nature of a servant and gave up His life as a sacrifice. He accomplished what He came to do. Here's the result: **“Therefore, God exalted him to the highest place and gave him a name that is above every name.”** (Philippians 2:9) Jesus earned the greatest honor by humbling Himself and dying for a selfish world. His sacrifice means life for all those caught in sin's selfish death trap.

But what does that mean for you? **“That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”** (Philippians 2:10,11) Jesus entered Jerusalem humbly on a donkey nearly 2,000 years ago. He came in so that He could leave the hill outside Jerusalem carried lifeless by His few true friends. He spared Himself no humiliation so that He could claim the highest glory, greater than the honor of anyone who dedicates their life in service to others. He came to this earth and entered Jerusalem in absolute humility so every human soul could claim Him as their King, the world's rescuer. What else can you do except embrace Him as your Savior? His frame of mind, His attitude is alive in everyone who runs to greet Him, embraces Him, and clings to Him as their hope and life and salvation. Amen.