

“Look at Me”

God's Word doesn't mess around. Zechariah prophesied that it would happen and it did. The prophet who began preaching around the year 520 BC said to the people of God, who had returned to Jerusalem after being held captive in Babylon, "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he." I'm sure these words were ones the weary Israelites needed to hear. They had just recently made their way back to their city of Jerusalem, thanks to Cyrus the Great, but what they found was not so great. The temple rebuilding project had stalled; taxes were high and from the outside it looked like the once significant city of Jerusalem might never regain its place in the world. But then Zechariah speaking for God delivered these words of hope in the coming Messiah. "Your king is coming," he said, "righteous and having salvation is he." He will be humble and mounted on a donkey."

Well, fast forward a few hundred years and that's exactly what happened just as it was foretold. We all know the story well don't we? Jesus makes his triumphant entry into Jerusalem riding on a donkey. The people who were gathered to celebrate the Passover were shouting, palms were waiving, some even spread their clothes on the road. Jesus was praised as the one "who comes in the name of the Lord!"

But as we know now, they missed the point. Jesus was the fulfillment of the prophecy of a king but not the kind of king they were looking for or expecting that day. They were expecting someone who would rid them of the Roman oppression. They were expecting a triumphant leader who would take charge and make things happen.

But what they got was a humble servant who rode into town with one more thing to offer and that was his life. Today as we head into Holy Week and ponder the last days of our Lord on earth the word I would like us to focus on this Palm Sunday is humble.

Humble- it means of course, not proud- not thinking of yourself as better than other people. This is such a wonderful word to describe the Christ we know isn't it because he was perfect in every way. He didn't come into Jerusalem with an attitude of "look at me." He didn't enter the city gates with a list of all the miracles he performed or a log of all the people he had healed or pages filled with the great sermons he had preached or the lessons he had taught. He came into town a humble man. This is who our Lord is. Paul writing to the Philippians says this about Jesus "though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant who humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death. Our Lord was the essence of humble wasn't he? He willingly chose this way. But what about you and me? For most of us, it's a different story because most of us don't do humble very well do we?

One of the reasons we don't do humble very well I think, is that in our society, "humble" is considered downright boring. The ones who work behind the scenes quietly serving others- they aren't the people we usually hear about are they? Those of you with *Twitter* or *Instagram* accounts, I'll bet you don't get many alerts in response to someone being humble do you? A young pop star shouting obscenities to the crowd during her concert at the PNC arena, which is what happened the other night- that kind of thing will get attention on social media but a quote or video of an average person in suburbia helping out a needy family at a local charity event? Nothing- unless of course there's a scandal involved. And it's not just social media. Just look at the news headlines every day. The stories on the "humble people" if there are any at all are generally not the headlines. Even in our own families, the humble uncle or humble sister is usually

overshadowed by the arrogant aunt or the pompous cousin no one wants to be around. But it's not just celebrities or pop stars or our friends or family members or the media who don't do humble very well. It is all of us.

We all want attention. We all have this internal desire to be noticed, don't we? And as a father of a newborn, I can tell you that this desire starts early. In fact, I read a story the other day that said according to research, babies as young as seven months use fake crying to get attention. But it's not just the babies. No matter what stage we are in life, it's as if we are all saying "look at me." Look at my car; look at my house; look at my accomplishments. We can even do this as Christians can't we? Look at how much I love Jesus or look at how well I know my Bible or how much I go to church. All of this isn't to say that being recognized for who we are and what we have accomplished is a bad thing. But most of us at times can take it too far can't we?

And while this is not an excuse, it is how most of us were taught to act. It is how we are encouraged to live in this competitive world. If we have an opinion about something, we are to prove we are right. If we are involved in something successful, we are to claim credit. If we can do something not many people can do, we make sure it comes up in a conversation.

The bottom line is, because of our sinfulness, most of us are not so humble all the time are we? Remember the definition- being humble is not being proud. Being humble is not thinking of yourself as better than others. The ugly truth is in one way or another we are all extremely self-centered. So much of the time, we have this view of life that it's all about us- What we can get; how we can win; what it is that we can prove about ourselves.

And into this kind of world, among this sort of people, people like you and me, comes our humble Lord.

Our humble Christ entered Jerusalem on Palm Sunday as one who came to give his life to the world. He didn't come to see what he could get from the people. He didn't come to show his superiority to everyone else or to prove himself to anyone. He didn't come to say, "hey look at me." Jesus came looking at the people of Jerusalem and he came looking to us here today with one thing in mind and that was to give his life for what we all lack. It wasn't pretty and it wasn't grand- humble never is. A donkey, betrayal, trumped up charges, a circus of a trial, and finally a death sentence on a crude cross outside of town.

Jesus came to Jerusalem to sacrifice himself for us so we can boldly say to our Father in heaven- look at me. Now through our faith, our Father in heaven sees us as we really are and that it as forgiven sinners as perfect and humble as his son who rode into town that day so long ago.

So I ask you today to really think about what this Palm Sunday means and what it is we are celebrating because the answer is our forgiveness. The humble son of God who looked like nothing more than a average guy from Nazareth with nothing much to offer is actually our great God who defends and protects the world even when that world turns on him and kills him. How's that for humble?

And for you and me and all with faith in Christ, that means forgiveness. And with forgiveness we too- can and should be- a little more humble shouldn't we?

Paul's words to the Philippians in our Epistle start with this phrase, "have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus. I would like us all to pray that this mind among ourselves in Christ Jesus be a humble mind. A humble mind that is bold and willing to put others in front of ourselves. A humble mind that isn't so proud and isn't one with all the answers. A humble mind that serves others and doesn't say, "look at me," but one that expects nothing in return. That is, after all, the way of Palm Sunday. In Jesus' name. **Amen.**

