

Holy Cross, Daggett and St. Mark, Wallace Lutheran Churches, Michigan
March 24, 2013
Isaiah 45:22-25

"Turn to me and be saved, all you ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other. By myself I have sworn, my mouth has uttered in all integrity a word that will not be revoked: Before me every knee will bow; by me every tongue will swear.

They will say of me, 'In the LORD alone are righteousness and strength.' " All who have raged against him will come to him and be put to shame. But in the LORD all the descendants of Israel will be found righteous and will exult.

Today we celebrate Palm Sunday. Maybe when you heard our Old Testament lesson you thought to yourself, "Could this be the scene Isaiah had in mind?" We read, "I am God, and there is no other. By myself I have sworn, my mouth has uttered in all integrity a word that will not be revoked: Before me every knee will bow; by me every tongue will swear. They will say of me, 'In the LORD alone are righteousness and strength.' All who have raged against him will come to him and be put to shame."

Could this prophecy finally and actually be being fulfilled? What an incredible scene it must have been. People were waving palm branches and putting them in the road while others suddenly and unexpectedly put their coats on a donkey and in front of Jesus as he rides on the donkey where they had put their coats on. Can't you just see the people, people who are joyous and enthusiastic, shouting out hosanna and blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord?

Maybe if we were there we would have sung the words of our first hymn, "All hail the pow'r of Jesus' name! Let angels prostrate fall; Bring forth the royal diadem And crown him Lord of all. Bring forth the royal diadem And crown him Lord of all. Hail him, ye heirs of David's line, Whom David Lord did call, The God incarnate, Man divine, And crown him Lord of all. The God incarnate, Man divine, And crown him Lord of all."

"Sinners whose love can ne'er forget The wormwood and the gall, Go, spread your trophies at his feet And crown him Lord of all. Go, spread your trophies at his feet And crown him Lord of all. Let ev'ry kindred, ev'ry tribe On this terrestrial ball To him all majesty ascribe And crown him Lord of all. To him all majesty ascribe And crown him Lord of all." Could this scene, these songs, these actions be what Isaiah was talking about? Better yet, would you like this to be what Isaiah was talking about?

I think if we answer this question honestly and truthfully we would have to say yes. We would love the scene on Palm Sunday to be the fulfillment of what Isaiah wrote about in our lesson for today. We would love to see Jesus riding in and being adored by crowds who bow down to him. We would love to come and throw our trophies down at the feet of our king. We would love for him to rule and reign over us here on earth and put his enemies to shame and humiliate them. Why?

Well, how would you prefer Jesus to act in the following situations? Scientists, politicians and others talk about the occurrence of global warming. They say we humans are producing x amount of greenhouse gas a year and this excess greenhouse gas is slowly and steadily causing the earth's temperature to rise and if you need proof just look at the data from a study which was released earlier this month saying the last 100 years that we've gone from on the verge of an ice age to the warmest temps ever.

These people say we need to do something about this warming. We need to cut our emissions and lessen our carbon footprint in the world. They are of the same mind as Katharine Hayhoe, an atmospheric scientist at Texas Tech University, who says, "We have, through human emissions of carbon dioxide and other heat-trapping gases, indefinitely delayed the onset of the next ice age and are now heading into an unknown future where humans control the thermostat of the planet."

Doesn't thinking we control the earth's thermostat and will decide whether it goes up or down make a mockery of Jesus? How so? It elevates humans above God's power because this thinking ignores how

Jesus suspended the laws of nature and walked on water during the middle of a storm. It ignores how Jesus with one word stilled a storm. It ignores how the world was created by God in six 24 hour days, not from billions of years of evolution, by the power of his almighty word.

Make no mistake. Jesus is in control of the weather, but doesn't a small part of you wish he would shame those who rage against him by claiming humans control the weather? Doesn't a small, tinny, tiny part of you wish Jesus would turn earth's thermostat really really high one year and the next year make it really really cold just to mess with those who think we control the weather and put them to shame? Doesn't that sound like a really great idea?

Maybe climate change doesn't bother you because you trust God is control and you don't want to shame those people who promote it, but what if the raging isn't against God? What if the object of rage is a bit more personal? What if I am the object of rage? What if someone rages against me for being a Christian? What if they take the words I speak out of love and twist them in order to make me look bad? What if they rage and take their anger out on me because they know I won't fight back?

What if they threaten to come after and hurt me or my family? How would I want Jesus to act in these situations? Would I want him to idly sit by or would I want him to act? Would I want him to thunder at these people, "I am God, and there is no other. They will say of me, 'In the LORD alone are righteousness and strength.' All who have raged against him will come to him and be put to shame." Would I want him to make a mockery of these people by shaming and humiliating them?

Is this how we would want Jesus to act? We must admit at times this is exactly how we want Jesus to act. We want him to shame and humiliate those who hurt us and cut us down because we are Christians. We want him to judge our enemies and force them to bow down to him and acknowledge him as king because we think they deserve it for raging against him and his children. But when we think and act this way it doesn't bring about our enemies shame, rather it brings about our shame.

Yes, it is true one day Jesus will come and all people who have ever lived will be forced to bow down to him and acknowledge him as king whether they want to or not, however this scenario won't create Jesus' earthly kingdom, but it will happen on Judgment Day. It won't happen on our timetable with our goal to humiliate our enemies, but it will happen on Jesus' timetable and he will do it to show his glory as king and ruler over the universe.

What do we do when our shameful motives have been exposed? "Turn to me and be saved, all you ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other. By myself I have sworn, my mouth has uttered in all integrity a word that will not be revoked: Before me every knee will bow; by me every tongue will swear. They will say of me, 'In the LORD alone are righteousness and strength.' But in the LORD all the descendants of Israel will be found righteous and will exult."

When the Holy Spirit has crushed our hearts and made us realize Jesus didn't come to be the king we want, but rather the king we need it gets us ready to listen and rejoice over the good news of what Jesus has done for us. We hear his call, "Turn to me and be saved, all you ends of the earth; for I am God, and

there is no other. By myself I have sworn, my mouth has uttered in all integrity a word that will not be revoked: Before me every knee will bow; by me every tongue will swear.”

He calls us with the sweet promise of what Jesus has done for us. He shows us how Jesus rode into Jerusalem not to be crowned a king who wears a golden crown but a king who wears a crown of thorns. He shows how Jesus didn't come into Jerusalem to humiliate and shame his enemies, but to be humiliated and shamed by them in order to die on a cross. He didn't come to force every knee to bow to his will, but he came to bow before and accept the Father's will that he must die for us.

We sang about his mission in our hymn of the day when we sang, “Ride on, ride on in majesty! Hark! All the tribes hosanna cry. O Savior meek, pursue your road, With palms and scattered garments strowed. Ride on, ride on in majesty! In lowly pomp ride on to die. O Christ, your triumphs now begin O'er captive death and conquered sin. Ride on, ride on in majesty! The angel armies of the sky Look down with sad and wond'ring eyes To see th' approaching sacrifice.”

Jesus rode into Jerusalem to allow himself to be shamed so he would win forgiveness for us for every time we selfishly and sinfully wish shame on our enemies because of something they have done to us. He rode into Jerusalem to sacrifice himself for every time we want him to bend to our will or refuse to bend our lives to his will. He rode into Jerusalem so we could swear and confess he is our Lord and our Savior who has rescued us from sin.

Jesus' promise to come back on Judgment Day will be a time when everyone who has ever lived will be forced to bow to him, but by the miracle of faith worked in us by the Holy Spirit we look forward to the day when we will be able to bow down right before him and confess he is our Lord and Savior. We look forward to it because, “They will say of us, 'In the LORD alone are righteousness and strength.' But in the LORD all the descendants of Israel will be found righteous and will exult.”

Jesus promises we will find strength and righteousness in him. Why does he promise us this? We will need it. We need it because we have a sinful nature which doesn't rejoice at the thought of bowing down to him because it hates bowing down to him. We have a sinful nature which wants to humiliate our enemies and make them suffer rather than help them. We have a sinful nature which longs for easy times on earth rather than eternity in heaven. We need his strength to fight against these things.

How does this strength become ours? We bow to him. We bow our heads in prayer and ask him for strength. We bow our heads when listening to his word at church and when we read it at home. We bow when we come to his table for the supper of his forgiveness. We bow our will to his and confess he is our Lord and Savior. Amen.