

Holy Cross, Daggett and St. Mark, Wallace Lutheran Churches, Michigan

Palm Sunday

March 29, 2015

Philippians 2:5-11

Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, 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.

What makes a name great? What makes it one which we can never forget? Students of history are able to rattle off unforgettable names rather quickly. These names include: Alexander the Great, Hannibal, Julius Caesar, Atilla the Hun, Genghis Khan and George Washington. What do all of these names have in common? They all are names of great military leaders who conquered large amounts of land or changed the course of history.

I think most Americans know who George Washington is. What makes him so famous? He is one of the founding fathers. He led our first army into battle and helped us win our independence. He was our first president. Our nation's capital, Washington D.C., is named for him. His picture is on the one dollar bill and the quarter. His face has been etched into mountain side in South Dakota and there is a huge monument to him in Washington D.C. He is famous for his leadership.

I think Washington and the other names I mentioned illustrate an interesting point about people we admire and remember. We tend to love and remember war heroes. Why do we love and remember war heroes? I think it is because of what they represent. They are people everyone can rally behind. Their victories show our nation is bigger and stronger than other nations. We view their accomplishments as something we have done and we elevate their names to hero level which we don't forget.

Our lesson today is about a famous name. In fact this name is a name which has been elevated above any name in this world. What is this name? It is the name of Jesus. We hear, **"Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, 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."**

The Apostle Paul tells us Jesus' name has been exalted above every name in this world. Not only has been it elevated above every name in this world, but it has also been elevated above every name in the heavens above and the depths below. There is literally no name in all of creation which is higher or more important than Jesus' name and one day everyone who has ever lived will have to confess this name. It won't matter whether they love him or hate him. They will be forced to confess Jesus' name is above all.

How does this reality sound to you? Do you like this vision of Jesus and the fact he is above all? It sure sounds appealing, doesn't it? All the people who talk poorly about Jesus will get what is coming to them. All the people who mock Jesus and laugh at him will learn he can't be mocked and will be forced to bow down to him. All the terrorists who force Christians to their knees in order to cut off their heads will be forced to acknowledge that Jesus and not Allah is God.

Yes, war hero Jesus sounds awesome. He sounds great. Yes, I love this vision of him. He is kicking butt and refusing to take prisoners. This is a Jesus people will rally behind. This is a Jesus people will want to follow. This is a Jesus people will remember and love. It is a vision we long to see because this is a name which is worthy to be above every name. **"Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, 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." There is a certain appeal to this idea, isn't there? Part of us longs to see

this, right? It would be pretty awesome to see everyone bending down to worship Jesus. It would be pretty neat to see Jesus triumph over his enemies. Victorious Jesus is a name which everyone would have to elevate above all other names.

It is true. God has exalted Jesus' name above all other names in creation, but what is the reason he did this? Did he elevate Jesus' name above all other names because he was a conquering hero like Alexander the Great, Hannibal or Genghis Kahn? Did he elevate Jesus' name because he kicked butt and smacked his enemies around and forced them to acknowledge his greatness? What was the reason God elevated Jesus' name above all other names?

The Apostle Paul tells us earlier in our lesson. **“Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death-- even death on a cross!”**

Paul tells us Jesus' name is above all names because of something he did. His name isn't above all names because he is a conquering hero like Alexander the Great or Genghis Kahn. His name isn't above all names because he came to earth and smacked a few people around and forced them to kneel down before him. He tells us Jesus' name is above all names because his name is savior of the world. No other name in all of creation is able to save us. Only the name of Jesus saves us.

Jesus did not consider the name of savior something he could get by force. Paul puts it this way, **“Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped.”** The thought behind the word “grasped” is interesting. It can be translated by saying take by force rather than grasped. Think about the fact that Jesus did not think the title savior could be earned by force. He couldn't earn this title by winning a war on a battlefield and actively killing his enemies.

He wouldn't earn this title by being the head of an army which would march into the center of hell and plant its victorious flag there. He didn't earn this title by forcing everyone in this world to acknowledge him as Lord whether they loved him or not. No, he earned the title of savior through humble service and obedience to his father's will. **“Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped...”**

“but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death-- even death on a cross!” Today, we celebrate Palm Sunday. Palm Sunday is the beginning of Holy Week where we will see the final culmination of Jesus being fully obedient to God's will. Jesus had already been obedient to God's will during his earthly lifetime.

He humbled himself by laying aside his heavenly power and glory in order to take on the nature of a servant. He willingly submitted to the rulers and authorities of this world. He willingly paid taxes and listened to what they asked him to do. He didn't lead an armed rebellion against the government. He

advocated that his followers listen to and obey the government. He kept each and every single law which his father asked him to observe. He had done all of this before Holy Week.

Holy Week was his ultimate opportunity to show his humble obedience to his Father's will. **"And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death-- even death on a cross!"** He willingly submitted to his Father's will when his Father's will declared that he needed to die on a cross. He didn't deserve this kind of death. He didn't deserve to die at all, but his Father said he needed to die and so he died.

Why did he willingly obey his Father's will? He did it to be given the name which is above every name in this world. He did it to be named savior. The name of Jesus Christ is above every name on this earth because he is savior of this earth. Think of any military commander who is famous and great because of the force he uses. How long does his greatness last? How long do those who support him benefit from his effort? They benefit until someone bigger and stronger comes along.

Yet, how long is the benefit we receive from Jesus? The benefit we receive from Jesus is eternal. It gives us something more than earthly peace and security. It allows us to bend our knees before him with worship and gratitude when this happens on the last day: **"Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, 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." We won't bow down before him out of fear. We won't bow down before him because his hands will force us to bow down before him. We won't bow down and plead with him not to send us to hell. We will bow down before him because he has the name which is above all names on earth: savior. This name brings him more glory and honor than any military victory ever could.

Part of us might long to see Jesus crush his enemies. Part of us would rejoice to see terrorists who kill Christians destroyed by Jesus. Part of us might say, "Yeah, you get them Jesus. You get your enemies and force them to submit to you." Yet, is this a loving attitude to have? Would this kind of victory actually bring Jesus glory? No, it isn't a loving attitude and it won't bring Jesus glory. This angry attitude drives people away from Jesus and to curse his name rather than elevate him as savior.

How can we honor Jesus and show his name is really above every other name in this world? We can honor him by showing others he is our savior. We do this by creating a need for a savior in people's hearts by pointing out their sins to them, but then we need to meet this need with Jesus since only he can save anyone. Showing this kind of love to others brings him honor. It shows his name is above every name on earth.

Military leaders inspire people to love and remember them long after they are gone. They have some of the greatest names in all of human history. Yet, as great as some of these men were, they still fall short of the name which is above all names: Jesus. I pray we are able to take time this holy week to meditate on why the name of Jesus is above every name in all of creation. He is given the name which is above every name because he is our savior. Amen.