

For Sunday, March 25, 2018

He Emptied Himself

Palm Sunday

<http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/032518.cfm>

Mark 11:1-10

Philippians 2:6-11

Mark 14:1 – 15:47

Over the past few decades, what has become known as the “[Prosperity Gospel](#)” has gained popularity among televangelists. It claims that following Christ should result in increased financial success for the believer as well as improved health and well-being. For those who follow such a doctrine, religion is a way to win friends and influence people. The word of God becomes a means to reach our goals and fulfill our potential.

While there is no doubt that Jesus wants us to be happy and to live an abundant life, there are many problems with interpreting Christianity as a program for material prosperity or psychological well-being. First and foremost, it is not the example that Jesus left for us. He did not come to earth to fill himself with wealth but to empty himself for us. He did not come to claim places of honor for himself but to take the lowest place. If Jesus’ primary concern was his well-being, he would never have accepted the humiliation of the cross, and we would never have been forgiven of our sins.

In today’s second reading, St. Paul tells us that we should follow the example of Christ. If Jesus is humble and puts our needs before his own, then we must put the prosperity and well-being of others before our own. As we contemplate his death for our sins, we must ask ourselves whether we are too concerned with living a prosperous and comfortable life to pick up our own cross and follow Jesus. And as we hold palm branches in our hands, symbolic of the coming of our Savior, we must reflect on whether we have welcomed him in the needy, in the poor, and in the sorrowful we meet every day.

Each of us has a need to be loved. We each want to be loved for the person we are, not for what we have. God is no different from us in that respect. He does not want us to love Him because He gives us things. He wants to be loved because He is our Creator and our Father. He wants to be loved because He is love itself. This is the mystery of the cross. That God has nothing greater to give us than His very self. And He wants to offer us nothing less than His life.

On Palm Sunday, we commemorate Jesus’ triumphal entry into Jerusalem. He comes as a king to take the throne of David. But he is no earthly king. He does not enter on a muscular steed, but on a lowly donkey. It is not a well-equipped army that escorts him through the gates of the royal city but a band of peasants. And he does not enter the city to take it by force but to surrender himself to a sentence of death. Jesus is not at all what we would expect from someone who claims to be the Son of God and Savior of the World. If we are



to be his followers, then we cannot live only for our own comfort and well-being but for his glory. But if we do take up our cross and follow him, we will know a joy and a peace which no one can ever take from us. And we will have treasures in heaven more glorious than any we could ever hope for or imagine in this life.

Douglas Sousa, S.T.L.

PRAYER

Heavenly Father,
Almighty ever-living God,
who as an example of humility for the human race to follow
caused our Savior to take flesh and submit to the Cross,
graciously grant that we may heed his lesson of patient suffering
and so merit a share in his Resurrection.
Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.

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