

The Uncomplaining Lamb
Philippians 2:12-18, Palm Sunday
March 28, 2010

Beloved of the Lord.....On Palm Sunday one week before the resurrection of Christ, the King of kings and Lord of lords rode into Jerusalem upon a lowly donkey. Having heard that Jesus was coming, a very great multitude welcomed Him because it was the Feast of the Passover. A census taken at the time of Nero states there were 2,700,000 Jews present at the Passover. As the disciples out of love for Jesus put their garments upon the donkey as a saddle, so "a very great multitude spread their garments in the way; others cut down branches from the trees, and strawed *them* in the way." They cried "Hosanna to the Son of David: Blessed *is* he that cometh in the name of the Lord." The children especially sang His praises, for they followed Jesus all the way to the Temple where Jesus said, "have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?" Sadly in our Gospel reading we see many of the adults worshipped Jesus only for the sake of His miracles. Even worse, though Jesus was here highly honored, in only three or four days almost the whole city turned against Him. This is really one of our lessons today, namely: the human heart can turn on a dime. It is possible to fall from faith. Thus the Lord in His goodness reminds us that though we have no strength to uphold our own faith, God will help us both to will and to do His good pleasure. The psalmist said, "My flesh and my heart faileth: *but* God *is* the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever." Our King, the uncomplaining Lamb, rode into Jerusalem upon a donkey, but He left carrying our cross.

I. Work out your own salvation. Therefore "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." This verse has always been a difficult one for Christians. Is God here saying we should work our way into heaven by good works? Of course such a teaching would contradict all of Scripture, for we are saved by grace alone, not by works, "lest any man should boast." Likewise, "by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified." Our salvation is secure only through Christ. Having fulfilled all God's commandments for us as a Man, Jesus rode into Jerusalem that He might in our place as a Man, humbly submit to the will of His Father. The Lamb of God came only to suffer the most shameful death of the cross. By His blood, our shameful sins would be covered and we might be clothed in raiment of white. In Isaiah 44:22 Christ therefore says, "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee."

While our salvation is indeed secure through Christ, we must always be conscious that faith can be lost through willful disobedience or yielding to temptation. "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." Why should we fear and tremble? We do not fear and tremble in the spirit, for Christ is the Rock of our salvation, but we do fear and tremble in the consciousness that sin is ever present with us. The old man is within. It is hard work to stay in the faith! If we do not diligently battle the old man within by daily repentance of sin and faith in Christ, we may fall and wholly yield to sin like David the adulterer or Peter the denier. As Jerusalem first welcomed, but then crucified their King, we see the deadly wickedness of our own fickle nature. We should never be so proud as to say with Peter, "Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee." Peter said this because he did not fear and tremble at the weakness of his own flesh. NOTE: Peter did not say "By your strength Lord I will persevere" but he simply said "I will persevere". In like manner we could not last one day in the true faith by our own power, but it is God in His infinite strength and mercy who upholds us. "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." Thus a Christian on the one hand always knows their own weakness. Yes, the constant presence of the old man within causes us to fear and tremble. We know what he can do. Yet because of Jesus our King we need not despair, for we have God's own Spirit within who is stronger than the old man, stronger than sin, death, and the power of the devil! As Jesus humbly rode into Jerusalem upon a donkey, so Jesus humbly comes to us in His Gospel Word and Sacraments. These are His means of bringing divine forgiveness from the heart of God, to comfort and strengthen your own heart dear Christian. Though you are weak, He is strong. You have God's promise. He will never break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax. The sheep are precious to the jealous Shepherd who says, "I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any *man* pluck them out of my hand."

II. God helps us both to will and to do. Our faith then is preserved and strengthened by the Means of Grace, the Gospel of His grace, the baptism of our remission. His body and blood is our forgiveness and strength. God works in us both to will and to do His good pleasure. When we picture the children placing before Jesus the green palm branches as a sign of love, we see here a picture of the GREEN and fruitful Christian life. Psalm 52:8 says, "But I *am* like a green olive tree in the house of God: I trust in the mercy of God for ever and ever." Psalm 128 says, "Thy wife *shall be* as a fruitful vine by the sides of thine house: thy children like olive plants round about thy table." Green is the color of life

and fruitfulness. Next Sunday at the front of our church we will see the brilliant and deep green leaves of the lilies. Like all other green plants, such get their strength from both the root and the sun. Who is the root that upholds you dear Christian? Who is the Sun of your Righteousness? Romans 11 says, “if the root *be* holy, so *are* the branches.” Jesus said, “I am the vine, ye *are* the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.”

Just as the Holy Spirit produces justifying faith, so the Spirit through faith produces holiness of life. “Ye have your fruit unto holiness.” While we can do nothing without Him: in, by, and through Him we can do all things. While our justification takes place outside of us, with sanctification there is a moral change within so that we now have the will, power, and strength to “do His good pleasure.” Thus the Bible says, “Be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God.” “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.” Shine the light of Christ into this world by doing good and not evil. Bear witness by your good works to Christ who is the fount and source of all goodness, “that ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world.” If you are not busy doing good works, what are you doing?

III. The complaining man, and the uncomplaining Lamb. Nevertheless understand a good work is nothing more than obedience to God’s commandments by faith and “faith worketh by love.” We don’t have the right to invent something good we can do for God, but out of love we simply do all things God commands. Hence “do all things without murmurings and disputing.” To murmur is to complain. To dispute is to argue senselessly. When we murmur we complain about our lot in life it is at God’s expense. Like the Israelites who complained about manna, we complain about the food we eat or don’t eat, the clothes we wear or cannot wear, our house, our bills, our health, our friends, neighbor and family, spouse and children. In short we complain about everything under the sun, though the Bible says, “Godliness with contentment is great gain.” If we are to be ashamed and repent of our grumbling spirit, we ought to think of Christ, the uncomplaining Lamb who humbly rode into Jerusalem. Did He complain about what He was about to endure for our sake?

Jesus never complained about anything but silently suffered all. He was sinless and blameless, harmless and holy, yet he was treated like dirt and abused at the

hands of sinners. He rode into Jerusalem on a donkey, but left carrying a cross. In trial after trial, Jesus suffered greatly for our sins. They mocked Him, struck Him, beat Him, whipped Him, spit upon Him, put upon Him a purple robe, a crown of thorns, and a reed in His hand. “Hail, King of the Jews.” If ever there was a Man who had the right of just complaint, it was Jesus. Yet the Bible says, “He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.” When “reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed *himself* to him that judgeth righteously.” Why didn’t Jesus complain? Why didn’t Jesus call down the wrath of God from heaven? Jesus didn’t complain because He humbly accepted His Father’s will, that we who daily complain by thought, word, and deed, might be counted as if we never complained and only did God’s will.

How then dear Christian, knowing His mercy, ...knowing He has by His blood truly removed ever sin and transgression from you, as far as the east is from the west...how then shall we live for Him who died for all? Will we murmur, will we complain when He says “Do all things without murmur or disputing?” Will we be at war with our neighbor when He says “live peaceably with all men.” Won’t we now seek to be those blameless and harmless sons of God, knowing He was blameless and harmless for our sake? “For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved!” And “He that believeth on Him is not condemned!” O how we love those words!

Let us therefore boldly throughout our life hold forth this “Word of Life”, namely Christ who is our life! May we as the little children happily and joyfully lay down our palm branches before Him by our good works, our obedience to God’s commands. And if it be His will, that we be offered upon the altar of sacrifice for the sake of His glorious name, as Paul was, shall we not with Christ say “Father, into Thy hands I commit my spirit” and “Lay not this sin to their charge”. Will we complain if they hasten us to our heavenly home? For there we will stand having persevered by His strength, and He will grant us that crown of everlasting life! There we will sing His praises in triumph far louder than we have ever sung before. “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain!” The uncomplaining Lamb, went uncomplaining forth. Amen.