

Palm Sunday (Confirmation)

April 1, 2012

Text: Philippians 2:5-11

Theme: "Have the Mind of Jesus"

Jesus was on a journey to Jerusalem and today we celebrate his final entrance into this fabled city. As we all know, it did not end well. The crowds welcomed him with "Hosanna!" "Save Us!" At the same time there was another parade going on in Jerusalem. Pilate was on his way into the city from Caesarea Philippi to spend the Jewish Passover in Jerusalem. He liked to keep the Jews happy because if they were happy and peaceful and paying their taxes, Rome was happy with him. I don't know if the crowds shouted "Hosanna" to Pilate. I suspect not but there may have been some Kyrie Eleisons – Lord have mercy, hoping Pilate would grant them favors.

It is interesting that Jesus and Pilate were entering the city at around the same time from different gates in the city. Pilate couldn't have known how their two paths would intertwine by Thursday night. But Jesus knew. He knew why he was coming to Jerusalem. He had always known why he would be going to Jerusalem. The final sacrifice had to be made. He was the Lamb of God who would take away the sin of the world. The crowds wanted political salvation. Jesus brought spiritual salvation.

I wonder what the disciples were thinking when they entered Jerusalem that last day. It seems that Judas, for one, was still looking for

a political leader and was willing to betray Jesus to force his hand and make him confront the Romans. Peter was still insistent that his Lord would never die at the hands of the Romans. I don't think any of them were imagining what was coming their way. I suppose it is much like us when we begin to follow Jesus. Most of us were Baptized as babies and just sort of grew up into following Jesus. Many of us have had times in lives when we were even zealous like Peter, full of faith and conviction! I hear that in the interviews I have with the confirmands. So far I have never had a confirmand tell me that he wants to be a mediocre Christian and only worship God on Christmas and Easter. They are all full of faith and eager to serve God.

Then life gets in the way. Things get difficult. And we, like Peter on the night of his betrayal, fall away into the shadows of the night. As we once more mark Jesus' final entry into Jerusalem, today is a good day to think about our own journeys with Jesus to the eternal Jerusalem. In the epistle for today, St. Paul encourages the Philippians with,

"Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus...."

The first question is, what mind? You have to read the previous verses to know that. St. Paul says to the Philippians,

"...complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others...."

Wow that is a tall order. Do nothing from rivalry or conceit? Count others more significant than yourself? Be of the same mind? But then St. Paul follows this tall order with an declaratory statement. He is not ordering them to create this kind of mind. He is declaring that they have it. YOU HAVE IT. You have the mind of Christ Jesus. Just use it.

Today the Church Confirms another batch of young Christians. Eric, Sam, Nicole, Haley, Deborah, Christopher and Noah: you have been trained and prepared to accept responsibility for nurturing your faith so that it may grow into the powerful tool that the Lord intended. While you have been on your journey to Jerusalem since you were babies, set on this journey at your Baptisms, today you start walking on your own. Today the Church confirms you and says that you are ready to join in the parade, following Jesus to Jerusalem, which is the Promised Land.

Now, if you remember all the way back to January 6th, we saw the disciples join up with Jesus at the beginning of the season of Epiphany. We heard Jesus call them to follow him to Jerusalem. He promised to make them fishers of men. Today we see them walk into Jerusalem with him one final time. So too do our confirmands begin their adult journey with Jesus today. Some of them will be bold and powerful like Peter. Others may be quiet and humble like John. Some will be a little too busy like Martha and others attentive like Mary but all are on an amazing journey.

Your journey will have high points like the Mount of Transfiguration and low points like Good Friday. There will be times when you are on top of the world and times when you are in despair. Just remember that you have the same mind as Jesus. He did all he did this holy week not only to save you from the powers of Hell but to empower you to live a life that glorifies him. He came into you at your Baptisms and he will enter you again when you receive his body and blood at Holy Communion in just a few minutes.

You will be tempted in the coming years to fall away from Jesus. School, jobs, sports, girlfriends and boyfriends will all make demands on your time. The world and your own sinful flesh will try and convince you that there are better ways than God's way and more important things to do than to spend time with God. But remember this. Jesus has done all the hard work for you, and because he has, you are like minded with him. Feed that mind with his word, his body and his blood and you will be able to accomplish all things through him who gives you strength.