

## **REFLECTION**

### **Having the mind of Christ**

Notice the joy that is seen in the reading<sup>1</sup>. Jerusalem receives her long-expected Messiah, what an excitement! Our long-promised Messiah has now arrived, Hallelujah, but the same people who here praise Jesus will soon attack Jesus. What a contradiction. Faithfulness and faithlessness are never too far from each other. Soon, the tragedy and the rejection of Jesus. Even as we wave our palm branches, the long shadow of Good Friday is on the horizon.

The people may be wondering, who is this man? A man on a donkey riding into town? This was not an amazing sight. It was the people around him and their clear adoration of him that got the attention of the authorities, which set the events of the rest of the week in motion.

In the days to come, we will remember events more dramatic and less celebratory. We will follow Jesus to the upper room, and out to the garden of Gethsemane. We will hear him pray and feel his disappointment when his friends can't stay awake and wait for him even for an hour. In fact, we will be disappointed at his arrest and trial and crucifixion. We will wonder how anybody could think of betraying him.

Maybe for a minute, we'll realize that we would have been just like the people around Jesus, as helpless sometimes to stop the earthly powers, as sleepy as the men and as silent as the women who followed him from Galilee into Jerusalem, the same friends and followers who started the week cheering him.

Maybe just maybe, we will step outside of our own stories and wonder how it felt for Jesus.

In Philippians,<sup>2</sup> Paul points to this same Jesus as the very model for how our lives together should be led.

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<sup>1</sup> Mark 11:1-11.

<sup>2</sup> Philippians 2:5-11.

“Christ did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited.”

Philippians 2:6

God chose to go through suffering, which is unheard of in Greco-Jewish culture; hence, they still wonder and question the "messiahship" of Jesus.

Imagine if Christ had used his equality to exploit; what would that look like? Perhaps this is what Satan tempted Christ to do - to exploit his equality. Maybe this is what Satan did

<sup>13</sup> You said to yourself,  
“I will ascend to heaven;  
I will raise my throne  
above the stars of God;  
I will sit on the mount of assembly  
on the heights of Zaphon;  
<sup>14</sup> I will ascend to the tops of the clouds;  
I will make myself like the Most High.” (Isaiah 14:13-14)

This is what Satan exploited and, hence, has become an antagonist to Christianity.

For Christ, he humbles himself even to the point of death. Paul points to a Christ willing to empty himself and walk with us by pointing to a Christ willing to die for the sake of obedience. By this, Paul wants us to realize what it means to be a community of faith. This is the mind of Christ: to walk in obedience and humility as Christ did on the path to the cross. To have a mind that serves others and is willing to serve as Jesus did for us. We come to the end of Lent, to the beginning of the Holy Week, and we gather to worship God, who loved us enough to be one of us: to live and die as one of us. What an unconditional love, extraordinary love, a love that does not count the cost of loving.

One of the central claims of the Christian tradition has been that God is love. Such a claim is not based on any abstract or sentimental notions about love; instead, it is connected to the history of God's love expressed through God's activities of creation, redemption, and sustenance. That history finds its expression in the doctrine of the Trinity- the relationship between God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Jesus' entry into Jerusalem among

palm branches strangely prepares us to fight our tendency toward the delusion of superficial love; instead, we are given a love that withstands the horror of crucifixion.

Palm Sunday shows us how often we misinterpret God's love and our love for God. The true measure of our love must comprise the capacity to extend ourselves in tangible acts of compassion towards the afflicted, forcing us to come out of ourselves.

In Jesus, the world recognizes how different its kind of love is from God's kind of love, and in this recognition- in Jesus- we are transformed into people whose minds and spirits are tuned to showing this kind of unconditional love to others.

The church, as a church, is not called to be "like God" if that means having power over the world. Rather, the church is called to be like Jesus Christ, who gave up power and privilege to be in the midst of the suffering world. The mind of Christ has always been seeing all being saved, seeing humanity choosing a peaceful resolution of conflict. The mind of Christ for you today is that he wishes to see you in the place he has promised for all God's people when this world is over, as promised in our Holy Bible.

By Rev Samuel Annan.