

O God, fill us with the humility of Christ, so that our minds are set to obey You in all things by denying ourselves as we go about in willing service of others, driving out all pride and self-seeking from our hearts, seeking only Your glory in the cross of Your Son, in His name we pray. Amen.

Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though He was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made Himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

In Christ Jesus, who humbled Himself in order to raise us up, dear fellow redeemed:

Are you proud of your humility? Sounds strange does it not? But actually there are times we sinners are tempted to work hard at achieving a humble appearance. We know this is a quality God seeks to find in us, but if we set out to achieve it by our own doing, we may fool some, but never God. We fail miserably, actually. Yet, Jesus often spoke of the necessity of humbling ourselves. The Lord's Prophets and Apostles call upon us believers to humble ourselves as well.

Jesus tells us this is achieved for us by God's doing when He says in the first beatitude: "Blessed are the poor in spirit!" God blesses us with a humble heart. When we have a right understanding of ourselves as unworthy sinners and God's unconditional forgiving love then we approach our fellow sinners and life in general with a humble heart. Shortly after our text Paul makes this point: "it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure."

So in truth, the desire to be found humble is not within our ability to achieve, but God works such a heart in us by the means He has appointed. Therefore let us rejoice today because of our Lord's work upon us **Jesus' Mindful Humility Is Found in Us, His Obedient Subjects.**

I

When Jesus entered Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, He did not enter as a Conquering King riding upon His warrior steed, but as a King of humility, the Prince of Peace, upon a beast of burden. He was not greeted with victory cheers but rather pleas for rescue, "*Hosanna*" – "*Lord, save us now!*" About thirty-three years before this, the Lord's Christ entered our world in that same humility. He was conceived in the womb of the blessed Virgin. Mary's opening words of her song

reflect this humble advent when she sang: “My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for He has looked on the humble estate of His servant.”

However, Jesus’ humility was not an act, it was real, deep rooted in who He is for you and me. Even though Jesus is God from eternity, He entered our world by taking the form of a servant. Not to live unto Himself but for us poor sinners. “He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.” As servant to God the Father, He obeyed the will of His Father, which took Him all the way to the cross of our salvation.

Jesus’ humility was not just an observable demeanor. It was a state of willing existence. We call it His state of humiliation. It began at the moment of conception in Mary’s womb and continued to the time of His burial in Joseph of Arimathea’s tomb. Jesus is true God, but what He denied Himself was the outward appearance as God, because He did not make full use of His divine attributes. On account of this we hear the Jewish leaders say things about Jesus like: *“He is the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know.”* *“How can He say He has come down from heaven?”* *“He is not 50 years old, yet He has seen Abraham?”* *“What sign or work has He done for us to believe in Him?”*

So from the time of His conception to the time of His burial Jesus lived under the cross, so to speak. While glimpses of His glory were seen when He performed miracles or when He was transfigured, His divine attributes were hidden so that He would be arrested, falsely accused, condemned, beaten and crucified. None of these things would have happened to Him if His divine glory was evident to all. But in obedience to the will of His Father, Jesus needed to suffer and die in our place. So He rode into Jerusalem in great lowliness and His enemies were embolden in their evil plots.

II

Immediately before our text, Paul writes to the Philippian Christians: “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.” But again this is not something within our control. Seeking to appear humble before our neighbors is only motivated by our pride and *“Pride makes us artificial, but humility makes us real.”* (T. Merton) So Paul directs our lives of faith with these words: “Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus.”

The more you grow in your love and appreciation of Christ Jesus as your Savior, understanding what He endured to set you free from your sin and deserved death, the more you realize your utter

unworthiness. Our sinful natures do not appreciate being exposed and would rather pretend that we can pull ourselves up by our own bootstraps and make ourselves like Jesus with the virtue of humility.

It appeals to us to imagine that we can come up with a book that will enable us to finally achieve humility on our own. Perhaps it will be entitled *How to Have a Humble Heart*, maybe with seven, ten or twelve steps that all start with the letter “H” – Hopeful, Helpful, Hospitable, etc. But as popular as a book like that would be, it remains impossible for us to achieve on our own.

As Christians we contemplate the life and death of our humble Lord Jesus especially this week as we remember what our Lord suffered in full obedience to His Father’s will. We gather here not to wallow in a pity party for Jesus. As He said to the crying women on the way to Golgotha: “Do not weep for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children.” We gather here to hear the blessed truths declared to us, which are a result of our Lord’s suffering and death, namely that all our sins are paid for by Jesus’ holy precious blood, that we now have eternal life through His suffering our eternal death, and that we are saved from this broken place of wickedness.

Your Lord has worked in you the heart of a servant, serving not only Him but also your many neighbors. In reviewing your life this past week with your neighbors at home, in your work place, classroom, or as strangers on the road and in the store, you probably can see where Jesus’ humble servant spirit was not expressed so well by you. In truth you can probably recall your complaints, even demands over against your neighbors. We must all repent of such proud interactions and at least daily use the prayer Jesus taught us, especially the fifth petition: “Forgive us our trespasses ...”

Luther writes in His Large Catechism concerning this Petition: *“[T]his should serve God’s purpose of breaking our pride and keeping us humble. God has reserved this right for Himself: if anyone wants to boast of his godliness and despise others, that person is to think about himself and place this prayer before his eyes. He will find that he is no better than others [Rom. 12:3] and that in God’s presence all must tuck their tails and be glad that they can gain forgiveness.”* (LC, III, 90, p. 419)

Jesus’ mindful humility, which He faithfully lived leading to the cross of our salvation, is yours by His gracious working. He does not call upon you to manufacture this humble attitude, He knows you cannot. But His Spirit has been sent to you so that it is gifted to you. Use the means He has instituted to give and sustain this mindful humility in you. Gather together with your fellow baptized believers to hear Him declare you forgiven and righteous in His name. Gather

together with your fellow communicant believers to eat and drink the very body given and blood shed for all your sins. Do this, not just this week, when we have ample opportunities to avail ourselves of these blessed means, but regularly throughout the year.

Are you proud of your humility? Well, yes, you should be, knowing it is all to the credit of your Lord Jesus who has worked this in you and your new man of faith even crediting your account with His perfect humility. He also forgives you of all your false modesty and pretend humility. “You are in Christ Jesus, who became to *you* wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, so that, as it is written, ‘Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.’” Truly blessed are the poor in spirit, for you have this humility in mind and spirit, which is yours in Christ Jesus alone. Amen.