

Matthew 21:1-11; Zech. 9:9-13; The Humble Servant I. Humility Foretold II. Humility Expressed III. Humility Followed

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, humility is one of those sought-after characteristics within the church- because they describe both men and women- as both elders and godly wives are exhorted to be humble- having a gentle and quiet spirit. But what does it mean that Christ was humble and lowly? Well our text today focusses on this aspect of His ministry- in v. 5 which is a fulfillment of Zechariah 9:9. In many ways, the entrance of Christ into the holy city of Zion marked the beginning of the end. The Triumphal Entry functioned like D-Day in WW2. The beginning of the end- and the start of the final conflict which would only be won after blood would be shed. Today we see that Jesus Christ humbly enters Jerusalem as the perfect servant to secure our salvation. If as Zechariah 9 says- righteousness and salvation are carried by this king- how does He come?

I. Humility Foretold

We start by considering how the humility of Jesus Christ was foretold. As I said before, the entrance of Jesus Christ into the city of Zion was a moment rich in fulfillment. However, it was not entirely triumphant. The King came on a colt of a donkey- the beast of a burden. Not the white horse of military triumph and victory- but the symbol of lowliness. Both Matthew and John insert this passage from Zech. 9- words which this arrival fulfilled. Your king comes to you humble. Now in the NT text- here in Mt.- the word used here is "Prais" which means mild, gentle in Spirit and meek. Even humble, lowly and sometimes afflicted! But in the OT- the word used in Zech. 9 is "Ane"- meaning humble and lowly. Often this word describes those who are poor- financially afflicted while others take advantage of them. As Psalm 18:27 says- you save a humble people, but he haughty eyes you bring down. So we know that the Lord defends the poor and the afflicted. But the concept of humble and weak can also describe the poor of heart- or those who do not trust in their own strength. Two OT examples will suffice to prove this concept. First we can think of Gideon in Judges 6. After the angel met with him, Gideon responded

that he was from the weakest tribe- he being the least of his own household. Now this is the kind of leader that our God delights to use! A humble, lowly man who is nothing in his own eyes. And to prove this point- children- you remember what God did in the next chapter. When Gideon goes out to battle the Midianites- God does not take 32K or even 10K- but God only allows Gideon to use 300 men to battle against the Midianites. These men armed with a trumpet and a torch rout the enemy army- proving that the battle belongs to the Lord- and not to the strong and the mighty among men. Humility is opposed to the selfish and mighty in their own eyes! Or consider the man of faith- Moses. In Number 12:3 we find that Moses the man is very meek, more than all the people who were on the face of the earth. How is this meekness evident? Well, instead of boasting in his position or insisting on his own way, Moses was known for low regard of himself. When challenged he did not retaliate, but rather cried out to the Lord and prayed for those who were afflicted. And even when God had threatened to end the people of Israel and make Moses into a great nation- Moses cried out, please forgive the sins of this people. If not, strike my name out of the book of life. I know they are stiff necked, but please save and forgive for the sake of Your name! He intercedes for them and seeks their salvation! Such is the role of the humble- such is the attitude of the lowly! Being humble and lowly is the opposite of being proud and boastful. Those who are lowly consider others more important than themselves- and choose to be servant of all. As the suffering servant of Is. 53 illustrates- the anointed one would have no form or majesty that we should look on him, rather he would be despised and rejected- even silent before his accusers. So if this is the kind of servant that God chose to use in the OT- we come to see the need for Jesus to fulfill this call for humility.

II. Humility Expressed

The lowliness of Christ can be clearly testified throughout His life. We will only consider a few key points- starting at His birth we know that He took on the form of a servant, making himself nothing as Phil. 2 says. He was born in a small village to poor parents. Willing to embrace and bless the smallest of

children and converse with the outcasts of society. Even taking off His outer garment in order to put on the towel of a servant- to wash his disciples feet in Mark 9. Proving to them and to us- the first must be last- the greatest making themselves the least. Jesus truly was the servant of all. Leaving His Father's side above in order to take on our fallen flesh. And coming to our reading from Mt. 21- how does Jesus enter the holy city? Not with armies and banners- but in many ways He came alone! His entrance proves what He said- He did not come looking for power or earthly thrones- but to suffer and drink from His Father's cup. The crowds that now praise Him will soon cry for His blood. One of the hardest things to do is to give up your rights- but that is exactly what Jesus did. Laying aside his glory and honor- to be praised by the lips of these fickle men who would soon turn on him! But think of it- how does Jesus win the victory over sin and death if not by His humility- if not for His willingness to serve? His lowly posture was not so that others could walk over him, but so that He could take the slap and in turning the other cheek- to bless! He was actively doing something- His humility comes from His strength! He set His sights on Jerusalem- not as a triumphant King but as a suffering servant! Submitting to the cross to purchase our life! The crowds sang- Hosanna- Lord Save! Salvation comes from the Lord! And as we read in Zech. 9- He comes bringing salvation and righteousness with Him. This is what Christ was doing as he came! How can He save but by His humble service! When suffering He did not flee- when beaten He did not shout or curse. Showing great restraint and compassion- even praying for those who persecuted Him He came lowly- willing to lay down his life and give up His Spirit. Jesus did not look to his glory or interests- but continually put ours first! As Mt. 11:29 says- He is meek and lowly in heart! Truly his coming was one long humiliation! Therefore learn from Him and take on His yoke, for only then will you find rest for your souls! His work is marvelous in our eyes! What love- what sacrifice- what humility! The King of creation willing to take our place- coming to be a servant! Blessed is He who comes in the Name of the Lord! Lord thank you that you have saved!

III. Humility Followed

The way of the world is pyramid- everyone is clamoring for the highest spot. We all seek to crawl to the pinnacle in order to be something- that our lives might mean something- that others might remember us! Man is driven by his pride! Well- the way of Christ and the way of the Christian is the exact opposite. We go out of our way to let others go first- considering their needs before our own- as more significant than ourselves as Phil. 2:3 says. In following Christ, the practice the inverted pyramid- the pinnacle of humility is Christ who became the lowest of servants. The greatest are not found at the top- but at the bottom! As Mt. 10 says- whoever would be great among you must be servant of all! Truly Christ must be the greatest because He was the servant of all! Greatness in God's sight is attained as we make little of ourselves- considering ourselves small in our own sight! There is no room for arrogance in those who follow the perfect servant. No room to boast in themselves if we are to boast in the Lord! God does not need us for anything- He can cause the rocks to cry out in praise! But He has chosen to use us- weak and fragile creatures as we are! As Jesus taught, greatness is achieved by way of humility- the crown only after the cross. If you lay down your life, you will keep! If you give yourselves away, you will find your life! This dramatic reversal of small and great is so hard for our minds to accept. Do you mean that I have to stop thinking of myself- stop trying to get first in this life- and start putting others and their needs before my own? Yes- that is what true love does! Perfect love lays down its life- as Jesus did! So let us all seek to be more like Christ in His lowliness. Putting on humility and meekness as Col. 3 says. For as Jesus said in Mt. 5- Blessed are the meek- they will inherit the earth! Meekness is not crippling- it is enabling! It encourages growth in others and is the fruit of the Spirit. Gentleness!

To conclude, meekness and humility are a few of the character traits that perfectly describe the earthly ministry of Jesus Christ! He came to be a servant of all, humble and lowly. But now He has been exalted over all! Truly we can see that the first became last- as the Son came down and became man. And now the last has become first- as the suffering and lowly servant has been exalted to the Father's right hand. Today we see that Jesus Christ humbly enters Jerusalem as the perfect servant to secure our salvation.

So let us all raise our voices to sing the Son of deliverance- Hosanna- blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord- Lord save us!