

Lent6C-Palmarum (3/28/10 – *Behold, the Son of God, Triumphant and Glorified for You*)

In the Name JESUS. [Amen]

Behold the Son of God, Triumphant and Glorified for You! Your Savior comes to you – humble and ***sitting on a donkey's colt*** [JN 12.15]. And yet He is received as a triumphant King and is glorified with waving palm branches and shouts of: ***Hosanna! Blessed is He Who comes in the Name of the Lord!*** [12.13] – even as we have this day. On that first ***Palm Sunday*** – as He enters Jerusalem to begin the week of His Passion – the Lord Jesus Christ comes in humility ... and yet He is exalted and glorified by the multitudes. In just a few days – on that ***Good and Holy Friday*** – the multitudes will humiliate Him and cry out for His crucifixion ... and yet in that very death Christ will be exalted and glorified ... and by His crucifixion He will draw all people to Himself [12.32].

Once again we see the irony and seeming paradox of God's Kingdom that draws near in Jesus. It is as Moses spoke the Word of the Lord by inspiration at the end of his earthly life – what we heard in our *Old Testament Lesson* for this ***Palm*** and ***Passion Sunday***. ***See now that I, even I, am He, and there is no god beside Me; I kill and I make alive; I wound and I heal; and there is none that can deliver out of My hand.*** [DEU 32.39] This is not merely a declaration of God's sovereignty – although He certainly is sovereign ... almighty. God our Creator and Sustainer does – quite literally – have the whole world in His hands. He is in control even if we and the world might sinfully think otherwise. But more than speaking to His sovereign power, God in this passage of Holy Scripture tells us just how it is that He makes alive and heals: by way of wounds and death ... indeed, by the wounds and death of His dear Son – as we heard in the second *Gospel* for this day ... and will hear again on ***Good Friday***. For it is precisely in the wounds of Christ – when He is stricken, smitten, and afflicted **for us** – that we are healed ... as the Prophet Isaiah [ISA 53.4-5] and the Apostle St. Peter

[1PET 2.24] teach. And it is in His horrible death by crucifixion – when the Son of Man is lifted up from the earth [JN 12.32, 34] ... suspended only by His nail-pierced and bleedings hands and feet – that Christ (together with the Father) is glorified ... and we who once were forever dead in our trespasses and sins were reconciled to God the Father and made to live again.

That is the irony and paradox of God's Kingdom ... of our forgiveness and eternal salvation. Humility brings exaltation and glory. Catastrophe brings triumph. Wounds bring healing. Death brings life. But it must only be the humility and wounds and death of the Son of God. *Behold the Son of God, Triumphant and Glorified for You by His Cross!*

We struggle with this – the Passion and Cross of our Lord. Our sinful flesh naturally seeks triumph and glory by a mighty display of ingenuity and power – by the sword ... even if it's the sword of the pen. Doing ... not allowing things – unspeakable things – to be done. That is what the people expected. That is what we expect ... how we think. It is hard to see the Savior on the Cross for two reasons. First, we don't like to think that **we and our sins** are so barbaric. We don't want to be like the Pharisees and scribes and chief priests and Pilate – who shamefully treat the Son of God and put our Savior to death. We don't want to think of ourselves as that fickle multitude, who proclaims Jesus as Messiah and King one moment and then shortly afterward denounces Him and sends Him to the Cross. Second, we can't stand to see the almighty God weak and suffering and dying. That isn't triumph in our minds – but failure. That isn't power according to our thinking – but weakness. That isn't glory – but only dishonor and disgrace.

We are ashamed of the Cross and Passion of our Lord – at least part of us is. We put Him there ... it was **our sins** as well that put Him there ... made it necessary – that is, if God was going to reconcile and restore us and draw us back to Himself. We are ashamed of our Savior's Cross – at least part of

us is. That's why we are sometimes – too often – like those *authorities* who *believed in Him, but for fear of the Pharisees did not confess it, so that they would not be put out of the synagogue; for they – and we right along with them – loved the glory that comes from man more than the glory that comes from God* [JN 12.42-43]. We are too worried about what the world will think of us, when we should be focused on what God thinks. And our proud flesh doesn't like to be associated with the shame and humiliation of a suffering, dying Savior. It just doesn't seem at all like the Kingdom and Power and Glory is really God's – despite what we pray daily.

Behold the Son of God, Triumphant and Glorified for You by His Cross! No matter how contradictory it may seem, it is precisely in the Cross that the Son of God triumphed over sin, death, devil, and hell ... and entered into His glory. That's what Jesus says to those Greeks who came, wishing to see Him. *The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.* [12.23-24] Jesus knew that despite His triumphal entry, His people were going to turn on Him ... deny Him ... abuse Him ... crucify Him ... put Him in the grave. But that was the eternal plan – even the creation shows it forth constantly since the beginning. The grain of wheat must fall into the earth and die – at least momentarily – so that from it springs forth new life and much fruit.

That's exactly what the Son of God, your Savior, intended to do. That's why He came to earth in human flesh ... why He so steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem where He would ultimately be betrayed and murdered. Jesus came to be raised up on the Cross and fall into the earth and die, so that He – the eternal Holy Triune God – might not remain alone, but bear much fruit and bring into heaven a multitude so great it cannot be counted.

And as contrary to our human experience as this might seem, it is

precisely in this humiliation and rejection and death by crucifixion that the Father glorifies His Name in all the earth. *“The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. . . . Now is My soul troubled. And what shall I say? ‘Father, save Me from this hour’? But for this purpose I have come to this hour. Father, glorify Your Name.”* Then a voice came from heaven: *“I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.”* [12.23, 27-28] The Father has been glorified by the perfect life of the Son throughout His earthly ministry – from the moment of His incarnation until now. But Christ will glorify the Father’s Name still more in His perfect suffering and death. Jesus has fulfilled the Law for us perfectly until this point. Now He will perfectly receive the condemnation of the Law – the punishment and righteous wrath of the Father against **our** sin – on the Cross.

Behold the Son of God, Triumphant and Glorified for You by His Cross! Jesus’ triumphal entry into Jerusalem is indeed His **triumphal** entry. He is now at the threshold of reaching the goal of His coming – to humble Himself in the ultimate humiliation and become obedient even unto death. Because of **this** – Christ’s Passion – God the Father will exalt Him and the Father Himself will be glorified. As St. Paul says in that beautiful hymn and confession we heard in the *Epistle*: *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. Therefore God has highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the Name that is above every name, so that at the Name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

In the Name of the FATHER and of the ✠ SON and of the HOLY SPIRIT. [Amen]