

# St. Paul: On The Same page

04.06.14 for Palm Sunday

## Day One: Isaiah 50:4-9a

*But the Lord God helps me;  
therefore I have not been disgraced;  
therefore I have set my face like a  
flint, and I know that I shall not be  
put to shame. He who vindicates me  
is near. Who will contend with me?  
Let us stand up together. Who is  
my adversary? Let him come near to  
me.<sup>9</sup> Behold, the Lord God helps  
me; who will declare me guilty?*

In our society it is no longer acceptable to make jokes about people because of their religion or their ethnicity. The one exception to the rule seems to be our Christian faith. Many believers complain that it is only Christians who can be freely satirized or mocked for their faith.

Why are we surprised? Even in the Old Testament it is a common theme that those who bring the word of God, those who speak the truth or dare to continue to be faithful to the one God will be mocked.

“I offered my back to those who beat me, my cheeks to those who pulled out my

beard. I did not hide my face from mocking and spitting.”

Those words of Isaiah apply both to the prophet himself, to the other prophets like Jeremiah and Ezekiel, and especially to Jesus. And Jesus told his disciples, “If the head of the house has been called Beelzebub, how much more the members of his household.” (Matt.10:25) So believers today should take it as a matter of course, it should be what we expect, that the world would make fun of Jesus.

And yet, Jesus set his face toward Jerusalem and his suffering and death, as Isaiah said, “I have set my face like flint, and I know that I shall not be put to shame.”

We too will not be shamed by our love for Jesus, because we know that Jesus was victorious over death. “Behold, the Lord God helps me; who will declare me guilty?” Isaiah wrote. And Paul echoed centuries later, “If God is for us, who can be against us?”

**Prayer:** *Father Almighty, I have been afraid of the mockery of others. Teach me confidence, knowing that my victory is already won. Amen.*

## Day Two: Philippians 2:5-11

*Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, <sup>6</sup>who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, <sup>7</sup>but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. <sup>8</sup>And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.*

It seems ironic that this passage from Paul's letters should be read on Palm Sunday when we are also reading about Jesus' glorious parade into Jerusalem. Paul says that Jesus was humbled and became nothing. He emptied himself and took the position of a servant, a slave. And yet in our gospel lesson we will see him praised by the crowds of people lining the roads waving branches and cloaks and cheering.

And yet, cheers can so quickly turn to jeers. A politician is elected with a big majority, and a single wrong statement or a single negative news item can cause his support to plummet. We can work hard and be respected through a long career, and yet a single failure may wipe it out.

Those reversals in fortune are random. They come along unexpectedly, and we dread the event. But Jesus' reversal in fortune was carefully planned. It was deliberately chosen. Our sins were not just placed upon Jesus, he took them himself. He picked them up, lifted them off our back where they were crushing us to the ground, and he placed them onto his own shoulders.

"He humbled himself," Paul says. We were so beaten down, our sins were so heavy, we didn't even have the strength to shift them to Jesus. But Jesus took them out of our hands. All these filthy things, he dirtied himself by grabbing hold of them and piling them onto himself.

And while the crowds were cheering Jesus, this is what was on his mind. This is the goal toward which he was riding. "Have this mind among yourselves," Paul says. We know that we are humbled by the world, but we are exalted with Jesus.

**Prayer:** *Dear Jesus, you took my shame so that I may share your glory. Lord, help me to bear your name joyfully here on earth and to wear it exultantly in heaven. Amen.*

### Day Three: John 12:12-19

*The next day the large crowd that had come to the feast heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem. <sup>13</sup> So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, crying out, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!" <sup>14</sup> And Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, just as it is written, <sup>15</sup> "Fear not, daughter of Zion; behold, your king is coming, sitting on a donkey's colt!"*

What do we yell when we are cheering for someone?

Yay! That's a common one. It seems to derive from "yea" or "yes." So we are shouting our affirmation or approval.

Then there's "hurrah" or "hurray" or even "huzzah." Nobody seems to know what those mean.

A more recent cheer is "you go, girl!" But nobody seems to know where she is going.

We might make lots of strange sounds when we're cheering, but one thing we certainly don't shout is this: "Save us!"

Why would the people of Jesus' day have shouted

"Hosanna," which means "save us?"

People today may not cry out to be saved by their favorite sports figure or actor or politician. And yet, we often do seem to look to such celebrities for meaning and significance. We rejoice if we are able to get a signature from a singer we admire. Our friends envy us that we had the chance to shake the hand of a famous person.

But we cry out to Jesus "save us" because we admit that we are dependent. We can't hide it. There's no use pretending. We NEED a Savior. Our lives really are empty of meaning unless God gives them significance. And Jesus does more than shake our hand. He takes our hand and leads us.

He does more than sign an autograph. He writes our name in the Book of Life.

**Prayer:** *Lord Jesus, I have praised teams and parties. I have worn the "colors" of those that I thought would be winners. I have looked for the cheers and approval of others. But it is only your approval I need. Save me, Lord, by your mercy and love. Amen.*

## Day Four:

*Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name,<sup>10</sup> so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,<sup>11</sup> and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (our epistle lesson continued)*

There is a category of music we call “praise music.” In our hymnals there is normally a section of hymns labelled “praise.” And we are all able to recognize this type of music because it says good things about Jesus. It gives honorable names and titles to Jesus. It tells about the great things Jesus has done.

Most people enjoy praise music because it is happy music. They share in the joy that they are expressing about their Savior.

But Paul goes further in his definition of praise. He not only says that Jesus’ name will be exalted, but he also says that we will be humbled.

Not in the same sense in which Jesus was humbled a few verses before. He does not call for us to be emptied. But rather, he describes believers in Jesus being filled

with Jesus. Bowing our knee means that we acknowledge that we are not the rulers of our lives. We admit that we are the servants and Jesus is the master.

Paul says that Jesus’ exaltation requires that “every tongue confess” the identity of Jesus, acknowledging that he is the “Lord,” that is, that he is the one who is entitled to rule over us.

Praise is fun. We love to praise those whom we admire.

But the praise that Jesus deserves is far beyond admiration. Recognizing what Jesus has done, we see that he has given to us our lives. We were dead and he gave us his life. We were filthy with sin and he gave us his righteousness. We were impoverished, and he gave us his wealth.

“Praise the Lord,” is a phrase you may say easily. But the apostle calls you to confess him as well, that Jesus’ name may be lifted up in all the world.

**Prayer:** *Dear Savior, I have praised you. Now teach me to honor you by my life and my words. Amen.*