

## Submission: Palm Sunday

March 28, 2010

Mark 8:313-38

Today is Palm Sunday. This is a big celebration in church life. We wave our palms, have parades just like there was 2000 years ago when Jesus entered Jerusalem. During his ministry, Jesus didn't spend any time in Jerusalem. He travelled around it, spent time in the north, traveled to the Jordan, but avoided Jerusalem until now. As Jesus gets ready for the events of this coming week, he enters Jerusalem triumphantly. He's travelling on a donkey and not walking, the people have come out to greet him and they are waving their Palm Branches and placing them on the road in front of him so he doesn't get dusty on his entry into the city. Jesus' entire life and ministry has led to this moment - this entry into the Holy City of Jerusalem and what will happen over the next few days. For this triumphant entry will, in a few short days, turn into a manhunt, a trial, public humiliation, beatings, a long trek through the city carrying a cross and finally death at noon on Friday. This is what Jesus has been waiting for.

We too have walked this journey with Jesus since Ash Wednesday. We've been getting spiritually fit during this Bii Fit series and we've studied the spiritual disciplines that Jesus practiced that prepared him for this journey. And so this morning, on Palm Sunday, we come to the discipline of Submission. For while today we wave our Palm Branches, the real celebration won't come until next Sunday. We have a long week ahead of us and we will follow Jesus' example of submission.

Jesus was fully human. He lived and experienced the awesome pleasures of this life for 33 years. He knew what good stuff was. He knew the joy of tasting a fresh piece of fruit, sitting down to a great meal with family and friends, taking a swim in the Sea of Galilee and the sunshine on your face on a fresh spring day. Jesus knew that life sometimes was awesome. And yet, as still a young man, Jesus begins a journey today that will lead ultimately to a long slow painful death on Friday. And why did Jesus do this? Why would he even really suffer like this? Because he knew it was God's will. He knew that something amazing and miraculous would come. Jesus knew that there would be an empty tomb, that there would be salvation and eternal life. But first, he would have to stop getting his own way. He would have to put down his own wants and desires and pray in the Garden, "your will, not my will be done." That's submission.

**Submission means NOT HAVING TO GET OUR OWN WAY.**

That's a really hard lesson isn't it? I know it is for me. I'm a bit of a control freak. (OK, not just a bit but a huge control freak.) I love getting my own way. The world would run better if I got my way, I'm certain. I like all my ducks in a row, I like my to do lists and I like my plans. How many times have I used the pronoun my/mine? But when I have to have my way, it takes up all the time that I never stop and ask what's God's desire. "Frankly, most things in life are not nearly as important as we think they are. Our lives will not come to an end if this or that does not happen." (Foster, p. 111) The act of submission begins by putting down our own baggage and asking God and then following God's path for your life.

But ultimately, following God's path means listening to someone other than yourself. Again, I'm a control freak and this isn't at all easy for me. I like to be right! I'm competitive and if I have to listen to someone else, then that means I'm wrong.

**Submission means THE FREEDOM TO GIVE IN TO EACH OTHER.**

Now this teaching point is a real struggle. Because of course we like to be right and have our own way. How often in our relationships do we dig our heels in and not give in? My mother and I are perfect examples. We talk almost every day on the phone. But when we get into a fight, that phone will sit for days or a week before one of us will give in and call the other. Or maybe you play the silent treatment with your spouse or best friend if you don't get your own way. But the Christian act of submission is about understanding that we don't always have all the knowledge. That God speaks through others and we are called to be open to that. To give in and follow others and ultimately God.

In this morning's scripture, Jesus is halfway through nearing the end of his ministry, it's the exact halfway point in the book of Mark. And from Mark 8 on, Jesus is totally focused on God's plan of salvation in Jerusalem and the cross. And so as Jesus gets ready for the ultimate act of submission, he begins to talk to his disciples about the road that lies ahead. [Read Mark 8:31-38]

***<sup>31</sup>He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again. <sup>32</sup>He spoke plainly about this, and Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him.***

***<sup>33</sup>But when Jesus turned and looked at his disciples, he rebuked Peter. "Get behind me, Satan!" he said. "You do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men."***

***<sup>34</sup>Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. <sup>35</sup>For whoever wants to save his life<sup>[c]</sup> will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it. <sup>36</sup>What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul? <sup>37</sup>Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul? <sup>38</sup>If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his Father's glory with the holy angels."***

In the passage just before this, the disciples finally realized that Jesus was the Messiah. They acknowledged that he truly was the Son of God. And so Jesus thought they were ready to hear what it truly means to be the Messiah. He speaks to them about the cross, about the path he will take this next week and about his submission to God. Jesus is trying to show the disciples that being the Messiah isn't about getting all the glory and riding into town on a donkey. He says that the true meaning of being the Messiah is submission and following God's will.

Mark 8:31 ***<sup>31</sup>He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again.***

This verse sums up the path for Jesus' life and for ours. But Peter isn't having anything of it. He says in vs. 32, "***and Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him.***" Imagine, you just admitted that this guy is the Messiah and then you take him aside and rebuke him. That takes a lot of nerve, or ignorance. But you see, Peter doesn't want to hear the tough things. He doesn't want to know that his Messiah, Jesus, is going to hang on a cross. You see, Peter is bogged down by his humanly images of what the Messiah should be. In that time, the belief was that the Messiah would come and free the Jews. The Messiah would end all suffering and come in on a big white horse, literally, and conquer the Romans. That's what Peter was looking for. But Jesus flips Peter and the peoples' image on its head. Jesus instead shows a path of submission that leads to serving others to offer eternal life.

### **Submission means SERVING OTHERS.**

In Jesus time, Peter & the people were looking for a Messiah who would fight the final battle ... Instead, Jesus offers submission on a cross. They were looking for a Ruler greater than the Romans, Instead Jesus offers a cross as salvation. And they were looking for freedom here on earth, instead Jesus offers submission and service in this life.

It isn't so much different from us today is it. So often we come to church and we're looking for a better life. Instead, Jesus tells us to lose our life for His sake. We come believe that if we follow Jesus, he'll make it all better. Instead, Jesus tells us to take up our cross. We want to wave our Palm Branches and celebrate and so won't come to church on Thursday or Friday and deal with the tough, painful and sacrificial life of Jesus Christ.

But Jesus says to each and every one of us this morning that our lives are about more than filling our needs.

### **Submission is about GOD'S NEEDS NOT OUR OWN.**

Jesus tells us that a life of submission to him will indeed lead to eternal life.

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I can't help reading this passage and thinking about Christ UMC, Rutherford. This small church is a part of our history here at CrossPoint Church. It was a small church that looked at the growing neighborhood around it and identified that it could no longer make disciples in an effective way. And so we took a long journey with Jesus to figure out where we were being called, we used this verse as our guiding light. "***If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.***" We had prayer services using this scripture and

praying that we would have the courage to submit. We memorized this verse and kept it before us, always asking God what His will was for us. Because asking for God's will and not our own is the definition of Submission.

**Submission means asking for GOD'S WILL NOT OUR OWN.**

And together, over a six month process, that little church truly gave its life for Christ. In a little under a year, they closed their doors and gave their life because those people felt God calling them to give their life and their church over to God. And that is exactly what they did. They gave their life and their building to us, CrossPoint Church, believing that together we could serve the world better. I remember those people and I know about the heart of submission. And this submission and sacrifice was too much for some. They couldn't make that journey with us and voted no immediately. And for some, they knew the cost. They took up their cross and gave their life, knowing that they couldn't make the whole journey. I heard things like, "I know this is the best thing, I know this is what God wants, but I don't think I can stay." And we wished them well in their journey. But together, that small church gave its life to live out the gospel message. Jesus says to each of us, "***If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life<sup>[c]</sup> will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it. <sup>36</sup>What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul? <sup>37</sup>Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?***"

And so what are you willing to give on this Palm Sunday? What of your lives are you willing to submit to the will of God? Are you being called to give your 10% and submit yourselves to God's economy? Is your cross to leave your worldly job and step into ministry? Is your life now unfulfilled because you are seeking after worldly treasures and success and not God's will?

**Where are you being called to submit?**

Jesus says that when we lose our life here, we will gain eternal life with Him. What in your life do you need to lose? What is holding you back? What is standing in your way?

***If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.***