

Jesus, King of Glory (Palm Sunday 1992)

Kenneth Korby

Philippians 2:5–11

Jesus, King of Glory

Invocation

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. My dearly beloved brothers and sisters of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Riding Toward the Cross Full Tilt

It is conspicuous from the church's year and from what we know and from the whole story today in the gospel that Jesus is riding toward the cross, full tilt, the die has been cast. He has prayed to know the mind of the Lord, and he knows what that is. He will go through a terrible struggle again on Thursday night in Gethsemane, and those who have been around him know what they want to do with him; the religious leaders and the political leaders, so far as they are privy to what's going on, have pretty much made up their mind. The religious leaders: definitely he must die. And now we've got to kill Lazarus, too, because the whole world is running after him, because of what he says and what he did with Lazarus.

Jesus is fully aware that this is what is in front of him. This morning I want to talk about this King of glory with that awareness.

Learning to Think with the Mind of Christ

But the point is not for us merely to be spectators about Jesus. The point is that what Jesus did for us, and the way he did it for us, becomes the way we need to learn to think and live. And that is exactly what Saint Paul says: "Let this mind be among you that you have in Christ Jesus."

And you certainly must understand that we need to think with a new mind if we're going to think that the cross is glory, and that the suffering is the grace of God, and that heaven is the

way of that damnation in hell, and that peace is the way of that conflict. Who would think like that? It would be easy to understand why some people say, “That’s a moron who thinks that way. He’s a fool. He doesn’t know how the real world goes.” And yet the King of Glory is saying, “This is the real world. I am that real world. I, even I, I alone am God. I kill and I make alive. I make ill and I heal, and nobody can rip you out of my hand.”

So we do need to learn to think with a new mind. If you were going to say that in a different word in Greek, that would be to repent. Repentance is not a little episodic sorrow we feel from time to time when we have sinned against God.

Repentance is a way of life. It’s not a religious ceremony at the end of the week or the beginning of a week. It is learning to think differently.

How Jesus Thought About His Suffering

So we will consider this then the King of glory thinking, thinking about his own suffering and death, thinking about God His Father, and thinking about you and what he does for you—is to go into glory. The hour has come for the glory; that is the hour of the crucifixion. And with that crucifixion, the death that kills and buries death. The sorrow that bears our sorrow to death. The shame that takes our shame and covers it with himself.

Who can think that way? Jesus does. He thought of himself not as hanging on to his prerogatives as the Son of God: “That belongs to me. Don’t you step on my territory. I got knuckle sandwiches for the people who do.”

He laid aside, emptied himself of those powers. That’s how he thought about it, and he took on the form of a—the only time the Greek word for slave is used of Jesus in the New Testament—took on the form of a slave, a servant. But this one is the word slave, not deacon, but *doulos*, slave. And then, being found in fashion as a man—he didn’t sit on the throne; he wasn’t a CEO of a company or the bishop of a congregation—being in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to death.

That’s how he thought about it.

Now, if death is frightening to you and repugnant to me, and if the loss of life is a grief that makes us just sad, then what do you think it was to him who had no sin? There was no reason. Death, the obscenity of sinners being executed, didn’t belong to him. It belongs to us by right.

And yet we niggle about it as if God couldn't be trusted. But he didn't—he didn't quibble, became obedient unto death.

Well, it wouldn't be so bad dying a hero's death. It isn't that you'd like to live to be one hundred and seventy years old and have no teeth, have to eat oatmeal, have no eyesight, have no ears, have somebody clean—you have somebody change your bed, bathe you. That is living? Who wants that? It'd be much better to die at thirty-seven, a hero that saved the country, saved the business, saved the church.

But he didn't die a hero's death. That little joke in the poem: "even death on the cross."

That's what you did to the cursed people if you were a Jew. They were cursed. They were damned. Cursed is the one who hangs on the tree. And for the Romans, the politicians dogs get killed on the cross.

He chose it. The human being who was debased and rejected and degraded beyond all. And not because he was carrying his own faults, having gone around and cheated people and lied to people and stolen from people. He didn't do that. He preached the truth, gave, and offered himself to them. That's how he thought about it.

A Grain of Wheat

He thought about himself as a grain of seed. Grain of seed must fall into the ground and die. If it does not die, it's alone. But if it dies, it brings forth much fruit. And in his day he saw that fruit and he was glad.

Now is the hour for glory, because these Greeks had said, "We want to see Jesus." And Andrew and Peter knew what—Andrew and James knew what to do. They went and told Jesus, and Jesus is full of glory. He's also troubled. What shall I do with this hour? "Now shall I say, Save me from this hour?" And he bursts out, "No, it's for this hour that I was born, that I have come here."

So this is how he sees it. A kernel of wheat. But he doesn't have eyes only for the Greeks on the feast of the Passover in Jerusalem. His eyes for you. This is what it's for. My death and burial in the ground is for you. You are the one is growing out of my suffering.

That's how Jesus thinks about this.

How God Thought About It: “For This”

Well, how does God think about it? Well, for this, for this, not in spite of this, but for this. Not after he had put in his sweat, then he got his glory. But for this, for the sweat, the suffering, the death. For this God exalted him and gave him a name that is above every name.

Now this is the man Jesus. We’re not talking merely about the Son of God, Son of God. He already had that; that couldn’t be given to him. What is given to him is given to him as this man, and he’s the man for you, the man for us all, so that in him God has taken us. In the suffering and the death of Jesus taken us and raised us up to be his own.

And meanwhile we think we’ve got to protect our own little turf. We’re not going to believe that or can’t believe that that won’t work. And we think with a different mind. We think what you do is save yourself. Then what’s left over, you give the leftovers to God or to somebody else. If you’ve got any leftovers and in a busy world of entertainment and boredom, you don’t really have much time left or energy or anything else.

Nevertheless, God exalted him, and when God exalted him, he had you in mind. Not only did Jesus think of you the kernel growing on the wheat seed, but God is thinking of you. This is how God thinks about you. That’s why we need to learn to think in a different way about God and Jesus and about us. Repentance is not a little episode you do once in a while. It is a whole way of life, of learning to think with the mind of Christ. Have that among yourselves.

What does God think about all of this? Giving him a name above every name that at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, whether in heaven or on earth. There is nobody—the people worshipping here and the people not worshipping here or anywhere—nobody in the world who will get around that rock. Everybody, whether he’s Muslim, atheist, or Christian, will deal with that rock. Nobody goes around him. Every knee shall bow. And it will be either in the worship that you are doing in your heart, or it will be for the execution. I don’t know who you are. Every knee shall bow and every knee shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. That’s what God thinks about this.

Your sin does not own you. Your death does not own you. Your money does not own you. Your work does not own you. Your sadness does not own you. Your joy does not own you. He is Lord. Jesus Christ is Lord, and that is how God is glorified.

God is glorified in this King of glory, not only after he gets through with the cross, but glorified in that cross and suffering and death and resurrection. Therefore God has highly

exalted him and given him a name above every name, so that God says and thinks: when you glorify Jesus, you are glorifying God the Father also.

The Greeks: “We Want to See Jesus”

What do the Greeks think about this? The Greeks said, “We want to see Jesus.” They were Galileans, but they came to Philip from Bethsaida of Galilee. And these Greeks, we don’t know where they were from. It probably meant they were Greek speaking people. They could have been Jews. But we want to see Jesus. Whoever they were, they wanted to get their eyes on him. That’s what they thought about him.

What Do We Think?

What about you? What do you and I think about this? This is Palm Sunday.

Our Lord says that he who wants to save his own life will lose it. God does not like competitor saviors. God: “I, even I, I am he, I alone am God.” He has made the Savior and this is the glory of God that he’s made the Savior, Jesus of Nazareth by way of the cross, death, and resurrection. “I am God, that is your Savior.”

Well, what do you think? You are busy trying in some way to save your own life, that you and Christ are competing with each other, and if you hold on to you, you can’t hold on to him. If you hold on to him, you don’t belong to you. You belong to him. He is Lord.

Now this is not as if to say, oh yes, I used to belong to myself, but now I’ve given myself to the Lord. The hour of decision is always very busy about what you have decided, but the hour of glory is very full of what God has done. And that hour of glory is for you.

So that “he who serves me,” says Jesus, “will be honored by God.” To serve Jesus is to worship him, to trust him. It’s not to say, “Oh, I shall stop being a garbage collector, and I’m going to be a Sunday school teacher; then I will be serving Jesus.” No, God is God. We don’t make up the ways. God is God. To serve Jesus: to worship him, to trust him. “You trust me,” says Jesus, “and my Father will honor you.”

Learning to Think This Way

What do you think? We know what Jesus thinks of this day, this hour. What God the Father thinks of this hour, what the Greeks thought of it. Can we learn to think that way also?

Number one, that we will receive our life from him. Number two, that we will trust his cleansing for our dirt, his straightness for our crookedness, his truth for our deceit, his goodness for our malice. That we will trust his glory for our shame, his strength for our weakness—to trust him. Number three, that we will learn how to look at God and His beloved Son Jesus, and at each other as well as ourselves, where the person's interests that are in front of us seem to us to have more significance than our own. We begin to see the interest of the other, and that is what occupies our attention. It means also that we begin to have some tender affection for each other, that we receive each other the way God has received us in Christ. And finally, that we and our children will be taught to think, to think with this mind of Christ.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus for life everlasting.

SOURCE

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