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Read Philippians 2:1–11. I will print the NET–2 translation.

Chapter 2 Christian Unity and Christ's Humility

2:1 Therefore, if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort provided by love, any fellowship in the Spirit, any affection or mercy, 2 complete my joy and be of the same mind, by having the same love, being united in spirit, and having one purpose. 3 Instead of being motivated by selfish ambition or vanity, each of you should, in humility, be moved to treat one another as more important than yourself. 4 Each of you should be concerned not only about your own interests, but about the interests of others as well. 5 You should have the same attitude toward one another that Christ Jesus had, 6 who though he existed in the form of God did not regard equality with God as something to be grasped, 7 but emptied himself by taking on the form of a slave, by looking like other men, and by sharing in human nature. 8 He humbled himself, by becoming obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross! 9 As a result God highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, 10 so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow—in heaven and on earth and under the earth— 11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

COMMENTS:

Our Study of this reading will be divided into two sections. We will study vs. 1–4 first and then vs. 5–11 which is Palm Sunday or Passion Sunday Epistle Lesson in the old traditional 1 year Lectionary and in each year of the 3 year Lectionary we use now.

Verse 1 is unusual in its fourfold use of the word ‘any.’ Paul uses any with “encouragement in Christ,” comfort by love,” “fellowship in the Spirit,” or affection or mercy.” In 1:27b Paul said, “I should hear that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind, by contending side by side for the faith of the gospel.”

Now in 2:1 he stresses that the nature of the church is always a shared life. We are different but we are walking down the road of service to God and man together. Then Paul adds 4 word pictures of life together in v. 2: same mind, same love, united in Spirit, and one purpose. When they do this, Paul’s joy will be complete.

This unity in the church is as hard to maintain as unity in marriage. There is always a delicate balance your desires and the desires of those with whom you are connected. He says one way to do that is always to be ready to lay aside our wishes as less important than the wishes of others.

I hear v. 4 as a call for us to consider the welfare of others as well as our own. This is not as high a call as Jesus make in John 13:34 when he told the disciples to love others like Jesus had loved

them. Jesus' call was to place the interest of others before our own. The whole purpose of Jesus becoming a human being was to help us, not to do something for himself.

In the Greek, vs. 6 thru 11 are poetry. In fact many believe it is one of the first hymns of the Christian Church. V. 5 is an introduction to the poem and when we properly understand Palm Sunday, it shows why it is used as a reading as an introduction to Holy Week.

The Palm Sunday story is frequently only thought of as a victory parade for Jesus. A true victory parade would have included a marching band of military troops, wagons carrying and displaying capture treasure. And the victor being honored would ride a great white host.

The only marks of a victory parade were the cloaks laid on the donkey and the road as well as the palm branches and the cheering people. Now it is true this is the only time Jesus got even close to being honored as King of kings and Lord of lords, but it was not a full-blown victory parade.

Even the prophecy from Zechariah 9:9 quoted in Matthew 21:5 said he came in humility riding a beast of burden. And when those who did not know him asked who he was, he was acknowledged only as a prophet, not as the Messiah promised of old.

Even though he is the eternal Son of God from eternity, the second person of the Holy Trinity, he did not consider his heavenly status needed to be recognized. He was willing to lay aside the glory and honor he experienced in the presence of the angels of God's army and whatever other holy spiritual beings exist there.

He willingly took on the servant role by becoming a human being. He did not pretend to be human. He was a real human being now in addition to being the eternal Son of God. And when he ascended back into heaven, he kept his human nature and will for all eternity as far as we know.

As a child of Abraham, he became obedient to death, even death on a cross. This was considered the most humiliating death possible. No Roman citizen could be executed by crucifixion. That was only used only for the enemies of Rome.

The one the world rejected, was the one God exalted. He gave him a name above every name. At the name of Jesus, every knee will bow, no matter where they are. And every tongue will acknowledge him as Lord. This happens because Jesus fulfilled all the plans of his father and this glorified God.

When will this happen? It sometimes seems to us that the followers of Jesus are declining. But every knee will bow and every tongue will confess on that day when Jesus returns. Some will bow in fear because they ignored God in their life. Some will bow in joy, finally standing face to face with Jesus, our Savior!

What a wonderful day that will be! That is why the church has prayed down through the centuries, "Even so Lord, come quickly."

REFLECTION QUESTION: We are so trained to try to be #1, that the idea of giving priority to others rather than trying to be first, disturbs us. It goes against the American Way of Life. We happen to live in America, but we are not servants of America. We are servants of God and stewards (caretakers) of all God gives us. We need to remember the words of 1 Corinthians 6:19-20: "Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom

you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.” Don’t forget to whom you belong!