**Humiliation**

Based on [John 18-19](https://biblia.com/books/esv/Jn18)

Preached for April 10, 2020

Good Friday

Pastor Nathan Fuehrer

The stock market crash that triggered the great depression in the 1930s was devastating on many levels. One consequence was that there were men who had become very wealthy, who as a result lost everything. And the psychological gravity of the situation, of having the confidence of sucess one moment and then failure the next, led many men to commit suicide. The spectre of success, leads to covetousness and unhappiness. I am told by missionaries that they are struck by how, despite poverty, how happy people are who live in poverty-stricken countries. If you’ve got nothing, you’ve got nothing to lose...Bob Dylan once wrote. It’s true. Many rich people have worries in this world about losing what they have. The poor cannot lose what they don’t.

On Good Friday, it is a good time to meditate upon the sufferings and death of Jesus Christ. And this suffering and death happened because the Son of God *humbled* himself. What does that mean? It *doesn’t* mean he fell from his throne. It *doesn’t* mean he lost his Godliness. It *doesn’t* mean that he became weak. His stock didn’t crash; nor was his portfolio compromised. God became man and still remained God. So Jesus suffered and died for our sins, not because he was weak or powerless, but because he did not use his majesty to save himself.

In due time, the Eternal God came down from heaven into the world and was made man. God did not humble himself simply by becoming a man. He humbled himself as a man by taking on the form of a servant...by serving in ministry, not glorifying in majesty. This is the difference between someone getting beaten because he is weak and someone getting beaten because he doesn’t fight back. Jesus does not retaliate against his attackers, because it is through his humiliation, his forebearance of majesty that he obtains salvation for us.

We see this throughout Jesus’ life and ministry, but it is a central theme of his passion. Although he has all power and authority, Jesus passively lets his enemies do what they came to do. But in the Passion account, St. John does give us a glimpse of Jesus’ power. When he’s about to be arrested, and the soldiers say they are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, he says “I am He” and with that word they drew back and fell to the ground. Here Jesus flexes the muscle of his majesty, just once, to show that he is not powerless. He still has the power and authority of God, but in his state of humiliation he does not use it to save himself.

There are two useful teachings to meditate upon in the humiliation of Jesus during the passion. The first is for us to know that he is not only the sacrifice for our sins, but he is also the priest who offers it. Judas betrayed Jesus, but he did not make the sacrifice. The High Priests turned Jesus over to Pilate to be condemned, but they did not offer the sacrifice. Pilate played “hot potato” with Jesus and handed him back to the Jews. The Jews demanded Jesus be crucified, but the soldiers nailed him to the cross. So neither Judas, nor the High Priests, Nor Pilate, nor the Soldiers offered Jesus up as a sacrifice to God for sins.

Jesus offered himself as a sacrifice. It was by his intention and by his leave that he would be sacrificed. Like Isaac, he even carried the wood on his own back up the mountain to the place of sacrifice. In this way, we can see that the plan for the salvation of the world was carried out through the obedience and willingness of Jesus Christ. He alone made atonement for the sin of the world.

The second useful way to meditate upon the humility of Christ is to use his humility as our example. It is easy enough to act weak when you are weak. It is easy enough to live in poverty if you are poor. It is easy enough to suffer when you can’t stop it. But Jesus’ humility is that he did not leverage the power of the world in order to save the world. He did not lie in order to help people believe the truth. He did not flatter the High Priest or negotiate with Pontius Pilate. His humility was that he came into the world and yet did not become of the world.

It is through many crosses and sufferings and trials that we must enter the kingdom of God. And it is the way of this world to believe that our strength comes from our ability to avoid suffering, to subdue our enemies, to abandon difficult relationships. Success in this world is something you orchestrate for yourself by collecting the right friends, managing your money, taking control of your life. That’s all fine and good, until the stock market crashes as it were, and the order of the world upon which you built your life is washed away.

The world teaches that it is stable enough to build your life upon, but it is sinking sand. And if there is no greater benefit of the present world crisis I hope at least it is this...that the world is a foundation that you can presently depend upon to build a successful life. And many people trust in that successful life and believe themselves to be strong, self-made. But even the strongest success story in this world is only as strong as the world, which is passing away.

But Jesus is our example in that, he did not build his life upon the integrity of the world, but on the integrity of the truth...the integrity of God’s Word. And that truth appears weak in the world, but it is the only true strength that can survive all things, a virus, a stock market crash, even death.

Jesus was not weak. He allowed himself to be crucified in his love for you, to save you from your sin. Therefore, allow yourselves to be living sacrifices for others. Do not resist the one who is evil. Give, forgive, turn the other cheek. Do not be conformed to this world, but humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you.