

Palm Passion Sunday

March 29, 2026

The Rev. Amanda Gerken-Nelson

“Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death— even death on a cross.”

“Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus” Paul wrote, and then he quotes what scholars think is one of the earliest hymns about Jesus

The tune is lost to history, but the lyrics tell us how Paul and our faithful ancestors knew and understood Jesus: “though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death— even death on a cross.”

It paints a powerful picture, doesn't it?

Actually, the image of Jesus that this song paints is not unlike the first painted depictions of Jesus that have been identified by historians which were of a shepherd: quite simply a man with a sheep over his shoulders

Not the Jesus with flowing robes and glowing halo you see in medieval stained glass in old cathedrals, not Jesus enthroned on high or with a crown and scepter as you see in some icons and mosaics

No, the earliest depictions and descriptions of Jesus the Christ are of a simple man, who, though he was in the form of God emptied himself and took the form of an everyday kind of person – who humbled himself and died in a most scandalous manner

This is the one one God exalted “and gave him the name that is above every name”

In many ways, this hymn that Paul quotes in his letter to the church in Philippi pierces through the confusion and complexity of the two stories told about Jesus this morning and names the honest and enduring truth that Jesus embodied

that Jesus was indeed the messiah

And the messiah did indeed come into this world as a servant not a king

and God’s son was not spared the humiliation of the cross, rather the cross reveals the depth of God’s love for our broken world

Pastor Elisabeth Johnson says that “this hymn makes the astonishing claim that...the one who humbled himself and took the form of a slave shows us who God is and how God acts. God’s essential character is shown to be one of self-emptying love rather than self-aggrandizement or grasping for power and glory.”<sup>1</sup>

Jesus emptied himself and took the form of a servant, not a king

It is, in some ways, that simple – *that* is who Jesus is and who our God is

And it is, as ever, that complicated – that is who Jesus is

And, this is how we enter holy week: we enter into holy week at the intersection of where the simple and complicated meet – where the truth about our God and the truth of our world intersect, where the truth that we long for and the truth of what we experience collide

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.workingpreacher.org/commentaries/revised-common-lectionary/sunday-of-the-passion-palm-sunday-2/commentary-on-philippians-25-11-19>

We enter into holy week attentive and curious to understand more, we enter into holy week humbled and wounded at the brokenness it will reveal, we enter into holy week open to revelation, and we enter into holy week anxious at the truths we might encounter

But if you can, somehow, carry with you the thread of enduring truth embodied in that song that Paul handed down to the church in Philippi and now hands down to us

May it pierce through the complexity and confusion and weight of the week to come, and meet us where we are at the intersection of all our identities, thoughts, and contexts

May “the same mind be in [us] that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death— even death on a cross. Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

May this be our enduring truth. Amen.