Palm Sunday • Philippians 2:5–11 • March 29, 2015

Todd Jones
Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, jonest@csl.edu

Follow this and additional works at: http://scholar.csl.edu/cj

Part of the Practical Theology Commons

Recommended Citation
Available at: http://scholar.csl.edu/cj/vol41/iss1/14

This Homiletical Help is brought to you for free and open access by Scholarly Resources from Concordia Seminary. It has been accepted for inclusion in Concordia Journal by an authorized administrator of Scholarly Resources from Concordia Seminary. For more information, please contact seitzw@csl.edu.
19:6, 1 Pt 2:9); the priestly role of the pastor is to forgive sins by pointing to the sacrifice already made by Christ.

Suggested Outline

Jesus Has “Been There and Back”

Introduction: Real sympathy often comes from those who have experienced the same situations. As our great high priest, Christ suffered more than we could ever bear.

I. The role of the high priest in the Old Testament was representative of the people.
   A. He had to be “one of them.”
   B. He was to be their mediator before God.

II. Christ is an even greater high priest.
   A. He is truly “one of us.”
      1. He was human, tempted.
      2. He learned obedience to the will of God.
      3. He suffered.
   B. He is greater than we are.
      1. He is the Son of God.
      2. Though tempted, he never sinned.
      3. What he suffered was far worse than our suffering: as both priest and victim, he suffered the wrath of God on sin for all men.

III. As our representative, Christ brings us into “identity” with him.
   A. Primary is identity with his death—for us. His obedience earned our salvation.
   B. Jesus also knows our temptations and sufferings.
      1. There is nothing we can ever face that Jesus has not already experienced.
      2. There is nothing we can ever suffer that Jesus has not suffered more severely.
   C. As priest and king, Jesus brings us into the “obedience of faith” by which we live in his kingdom.

Andrew H. Bartelt

With its meaty theological content and rich poetic imagery, it is no surprise that the lectionary lifts this portion of Philippians from its context.

Exegetical Notes

Verse 6: Our English too often comes off sounding like Jesus was something less than God, as if he merely appeared to be God. However, a distinction between μορφή and its synonym εἶδος is that μορφή can indicate that Christ’s appearance is the reflection of his true substance. Jesus has the form of God because he is in every sense of the word God. Paul concludes verse six “(Jesus) did not count equality with God a
thing to be grasped.” One might conclude that Jesus was not equal with God and that prior to the incarnation he had the opportunity to seize equality, but rather chose the humility of the incarnation. However, this is not consistent with μορφή. I would offer that an alternate translation of ἁρπαγμὸν is that Jesus did not count equality with God a thing to cling to. Paul elaborates in the next verse.

Verse 7: (Jesus) emptied himself. Rather than clinging to equality with God, Jesus let go of everything for us. Paul describes this using different imagery in 2 Corinthians 8:9: “though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich.”

μορφὴν δούλου λαβών: Notice that μορφὴν is the same word used in verse 6. It could be argued that Paul is using the term to simply mean “form.” However, it also could be that Paul is consistent in his use of μορφή in this passage and that he intends to tell us that being a servant is intrinsic to the nature of God. As if to drive the point home, notice that Paul uses ὁμοίωμα to describe the incarnation. In contrast to μορφή, ὁμοίωμα indicates that the image is a copy of the original. While Christ became fully man, his essence was more than just a man.

Verse 9: διὸ: This is a strong conjunction best translated “for this reason.” Yes, you could simply translate it “therefore.” However, that seems too simple. It almost makes it sound like a concession the Father makes to the Son for a job well done. Rather, this was God’s plan and purpose. God, the Father, begot the Son, born in the flesh to suffer and die for our sins. It is because of this reason that Jesus is given, literally “graced,” with the name that is above all names.

Preaching Notes

One could use Philippians 2 to prepare a powerful message of an unthinkable sacrifice that would reunite two hearts torn apart by betrayal and deceit. While our text does not set the backdrop, Genesis 3 does a pretty good job. You could also use passages from Hosea 11. In that chapter the Lord shares his grief over his lost love through Hosea’s grief for his unfaithful wife. The story continues—how will the two be united once again? In our modern tales weapons would be assembled, plans would be made. Retribution and vengeance would fall upon the one who betrayed or caused the betrayal. But, how can you bring vengeance upon the one you still love? How can you crush the one you want to save?

Now we enter into Philippians 2. The Lord God almighty set in motion a plan. Not a plan of retribution, but a plan of restoration and rescue. Setting aside the glory of his kingdom, Jesus becomes a slave to humanity. He takes the guilt, the shame, and the humiliation of the one who is unfaithful. He brings himself to the cross for the sin and shame that belongs to his love. His bloodied brow and pierced body are not the stuff of romance novels or movies but are images of his act of obedience, which is true love.

Christ is exalted. He is exalted because his sacrifice removed the barrier between God and his love, you and me. As Paul says in Romans 5:1, “we have peace with God
The Resurrection of Our Lord • 1 Corinthians 15:1–11 • April 5, 2015

The Occasion for Paul’s Words
The first verse of the text begins with these words: “Now I would remind you, brothers.” This formula indicates that Paul is responding to an issue which had been a part of his original instruction to them. In this case, the issue is the resurrection of the body. Apparently the subject of physical resurrection had become a cause for some confusion, consternation, and contention within the Corinthian church. It appears that some in the church not only denied the bodily resurrection of the saints, they also doubted the resurrection of Jesus (v. 12). No doubt this is due to the influence of the prevailing Greek understanding of the afterlife, which asserted that only shades continued beyond death and that the body was heretofore dispensed with. Paul’s argument is not only that the resurrection of the body is a reality, but that the resurrection of Jesus Christ is fundamental to the gospel message and essential to our salvation.

Homiletical Development
Focus: The resurrection of Jesus Christ is an indispensable component of the gospel and an essential basis of our salvation.
Function/Goal: The hearer values the impact of Christ’s resurrection upon his/her salvation.

Suggested Outline
Easter is Essential!
Introduction: “Christ is risen! He is risen indeed!” We make this acclamation each year at Easter. But we may wonder about its significance. We may ask: “So what? What difference does that make? How is this story of an executed Galilean who came back from the dead important for us today?”

The Corinthian Christians of the first century had similar thoughts and questions. In fact, some of them regarded the message of the resurrection as dispensable. And so do people today. For example, the Muslims affirm that Jesus was a great prophet, but they deny that he rose from the dead. Rationalists regard the story of Jesus’s resurrection as a fairy tale. Even some liberal churches teach that Jesus did not rise physically, but only spiritually, whatever that means. All of these people deny the significance of Jesus’s resurrection.

But the fact is that the empty tomb and the living body of Jesus Christ do make a difference. The fact of the resurrection is important! In fact, it is essential to the faith.