

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.

—Philippians 2:5-6

There are days in the liturgical year that require fewer words from the preacher. This is one of those days. And somehow, it feels more fitting to say something *before* we hear the Passion Of Jesus from Mark's Gospel.

In his letter, Paul is attempting to describe for the members of the congregation at Philippi what the wisdom of Christ is like. The apostle is inviting the people to consider words that would have been familiar to them. This passage about Jesus was most likely a hymn and the Philippians had probably sung it in worship on many occasions. Now, knowing of their struggles, of their hardship, of the threats both external and internal they faced, Paul invites them to sing this hymn again so that they might draw encouragement from it.

Though "in the form of God" Jesus did not shield himself from difficulty, he did not request the privilege of his station. He did not exalt himself or exploit his status in any way. Rather, he choose to be found "in human form," subject to all that afflicts humankind; all that afflicts you and me.

This is Saint Paul's understanding of the Incarnation; this is God's willing choice to take on our lot and our life in Jesus so that God might identify with us wholly. There is nothing that we experience – no fear, no joy, no sorrow, no pain, no disappointment, no hope, no betrayal, no dream, no failure – that God has not also experienced. God knows us fully and completely through Jesus, the Son of God, who chose not to be exalted but rather to live *our* life, even to the point of death. And not just any death but the humiliating death of being executed as a criminal on a cross.

Why? So that we might know God's profound love for us, God's desire to be in complete solidarity with us, and God's commitment to be always for us.

"Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus."

The Rev. Paul Briggs
Palm Sunday, March 24, 2024*
St. Thomas' Church, Camden, Maine

**On March 23-24, the mid-coast region was hit with a Spring snow and ice storm. The walkways around St. Thomas were coated in ice and temperatures hovered in the 20's. On Saturday evening, I had cancelled the 8 a.m. Eucharist thinking things would be cleaned up before 10 a.m. Sunday. When I arrived at St. Thomas on Sunday morning, Roy Gilley was chopping ice by the Wood Street entrance. Jan Gilley and the Rev. Rosalee Glass were also present, having arrived a few minutes before me. I realized that conditions were treacherous and asked that the 10 a.m. be cancelled. The Gilleys went home. Deacon Glass suggested we hang around in case other folks showed up.*

A half hour later, twenty one of us celebrated Palm Sunday together in the chancel. More than half were relatively new to St. Thomas, there were at least five children, a visitor from town, and a couple who had no internet at home. We didn't really know one another very well and so when it came time to offer the Peace, I asked each person to say their name and "Peace be with you."