

Kuhlman, Patrick
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Palm/Passion Sunday (A)
Philippians 2:5-11
Immanuel Lutheran, Avilla IN

He Bowed His Head And Gave Up His Rights

“Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus.”

He could have held His head high and turned back. He could have asserted His rights. When Jesus was born in Bethlehem as a helpless infant, He didn't stop being God. But He did bow His head and give up His rights. He bowed His head in concealing His glory and majesty that were His as God. He bowed His head when He was born to a poor girl named Mary in Bethlehem. He bowed His head in not always using His divine power. It could have been so different since He was God.

He didn't have to bow His head to betrayal, but He did. He could have asserted His rights in Gethsemane, but He bowed His head to arrest. He bowed His head to the priests and scribes. He willingly suffered abuse and beating and mockery. He rarely spoke up when He was before Pilate. And when He did speak, it wasn't to fight back against Pilate. He bowed His head and carried a cross. He allowed Himself to be nailed to it. He refused to use His power to rescue Himself by coming down from the cross. He gave up His right to life and bowed His head in death. Even though He was God, Jesus did not count equality with God something to be grasped. He made Himself nothing. He humbled Himself. He became obedient to death on a cross. Jesus bowed His head and gave up His rights.

Why? Why would He live this way and do all of these things? He did it because we're people who so often assert our rights. We're the ones who say: “I have my rights. I can do what I want.” We're people who ignore others and push them out of our way in order to assert

ourselves and get our way. We say that no one can tell me what to do. "I have my rights. No one can tell me what to do." We hold our heads high, plow ahead, and muscle our way through life.

Jesus bowed His head and gave up His rights for us. He did it to conquer sin and death. Sin and death are our real and mortal enemies. We were bowed low before them. Our own sin, our own rebellion before God, our refusal to bow before God meant certain death for us. Our stubborn refusal to be obedient to God and our own stubborn insistence on our supposed rights meant that He would destroy us for eternity. In our refusal to be obedient we raise our heads and insist on our 'rights' in defiance of God. We do it over and over and over again. In *Alice in Wonderland* the Queen of Hearts repeatedly cries out, "Off with their heads!" In God's court, that would have been the cry for all of us.

This is why Jesus bowed His head. He gave up His rights for us. He came to Jerusalem to bow His head in suffering and death for us. Because He bowed His head, He has conquered sin and death for us. He has power over sin and death. He uses this power for us, forgiving us and granting us eternal life. Jesus did not command submission by right or power. Instead, He laid aside His power and might so He could be judged for us in our place. He bowed His head in obedience to death on a cross for us so we would be rescued from eternal judgment and the consequences of our sin. He gave up His rights for us so He could suffer Hell for us in our place so we would never have to suffer that fate.

When the suffering ended, when death had done its worst, when the tomb seemed to be the end, then Jesus took up all His divine powers He had willingly surrendered. He was the victor. He doesn't bow His head anymore.

Because He bowed His head for us “God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth, and every tongue confess Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” All heads bow to Jesus, who was crucified for us. Those who refuse to believe and trust in Him will bow to Him before eternal punishment comes to them. Those who believe in Him will bow their heads in reverence and honor and thanks to the Savior who saved them. He will lift them up.

On Palm Sunday, Jesus rode into Jerusalem as a true man and servant of all. In the middle of the palms and shouts, He knew what was ahead. He knew He would bow His head and give up His rights for us. He knew, even when no one else knew. He knew that He would bow His head and give up His rights so He could save us, so our sins would be forgiven, so we could have peace with God.

All of the rights that Jesus gave up for us are now ours through faith in Him. Eternal life and glory and heaven are ours. They can never be taken away from us. We can't lose them because we stumbled in sin. They will never depreciate in value. We have every blessing that we need in Jesus Christ. Isn't it right then that we should have the mind of Christ as well? Isn't it right that we let His mind of self-sacrifice live in us too? It would dramatically change our lives. It would change our friendships. It would change our families and relationships. It would make a bad situation better and a good situation even better.

Jesus bowed His head and gave up His rights. The result is that we are blessed now and forever.