



## Witness the Joyful Entry

### Palm Sunday

Scripture - Luke 19:28-40

*"Blessed is the king  
who comes in the name of the Lord!"  
"Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!"*

March 20, 2016

## Thoughts for the Week

### The Need For Confession

Dietrich Bonhoeffer shocked the [Protestant] theological world when, as a Lutheran theologian in the early part of the twentieth century, he began advocating that Protestants reinstate the practice of confession. He did so not because he felt confession to a fellow human being was necessary in order to gain forgiveness from God [the point the first Protestants initially rebelled against], but because human confession has a practical purpose -- it makes our sin seem more real to us.

If you question this, ask yourself: "Why is it much easier to confess sins to God than to your pastor? Why is there more shame when another sinful human being observes my weakness than when I pronounce them before an all-holy God?" Could it be because God's presence is so weak in our lives? If we truly understood and cherished the beauty and holiness of God, we would shake a bit more when we approach him. But his invisibility often creates a buffer, thereby softening the impact of his presence.



In and through another person God becomes real to us in human form. There is a flesh-and-blood person sitting next to me who flinches when they hear or see what should make me flinch, but doesn't -- and I see my hard heart exposed by their soft one."

One might say that when it came to the Catholic sacrament of confession the Protestant Reformers, *"threw the baby out with the bath-water."* It is one thing to reject confession to a priest as a sacrament that earns us salvation merit; it is another thing altogether to see confession as a helpful and healing practice for our spiritual growth and well being.

After all, if we take James 5:16 to heart, and realize it is spoken in the imperative or command form, we will see that it's really not optional for our growth in godliness. The thought that we can keep all our struggles secret, or worse yet should, simply stunts our spiritual growth, impoverishes us spiritually, keeps us in bondage to the sins we hide, and leads to self-deception regarding our true desire to move beyond that sin as well as our need for others in the body to hear us, love us, encourage us, offer us godly counsel, be firm with us, help us see past our blind spots, and hold us accountable.



Sin is like mold in a dark, damp basement.

Keep it hidden in the dark and away from the light and it grows and festers.

But open the windows, and expose it to the direct sunlight,

and it will soon shrivel up and die.

Too many believers feed their sin by keeping it hidden from the brothers and sisters they should be confessing it to as part of the sin-killing process of sanctification.

## "I will give you a new name."

"Have you ever thought about the meaning of your name? Names in the Bible are often pregnant with significance. Naming a child ranged from a parent's reaction at birth (Issac means "laughter") to religious significance (Adonijah means "the LORD is sovereign). In the ancient Near East, your name defined you. But what about when someone's name is changed? God has a thing for changing names: "No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham (Gen. 17:5). "He said, 'Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel." (Gen. 32:28) "Sarai" was given the new name "Sarah"(Gen.17:15), and "Simon, son of John" was given the name "Cephas" which means "Peter" ( John 1:42). What's all the fuss about a new name? It's mega-crucial. A new name from God means you've been redefined. God grants a new identity, a new life, a new outlook...

Christian, you have a new name. So, "you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God." (Gal. 4:7). "See what kind of love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called the children of God; and so we are" (I John 3:1). "No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing, but I have called you friends." (John 15:15). Do you know who you are? What defines your life -- or rather, who defines your life? All of your hurts, hang-ups, disappointments, and struggles do not make up who you are. Only Jesus does. If you are in Christ, you are no longer defined by your sins, whether past, present, or future. Jesus gives you a new identity.



*Happy Birthday - Paul (3/27)*

## Praise God in All Things

Throughout God's Word, we find the instruction to "give thanks."  
Here are a few examples:

*"Give thanks unto the Lord, call upon his name,  
make known his deeds among the people" (I Chronicles 16:8).*

*"O give thanks unto the Lord; for he is good;  
for his mercy endureth for ever" (I Chronicles 16:34).*

*"Sing unto the Lord, O ye saints of his, and give thanks  
at the remembrance of his holiness" (Psalm 30:4).*

One verse in the New Testament defines when we are to "give thanks."

*I Thessalonians 5:18 says:*

*"In every thing give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you."*

There are no boundaries, no "exception clauses"  
in regard to when we are to give thanks.  
We are to give thanks "in every thing."

How does this truth relate to the suffering we experience?

Does it mean we are to be thankful when a young mother dies of cancer? Does it mean you should give thanks when you lose your job?

Does it mean we should rejoice when a couple suffers the anguish of multiple miscarriages?

Thanking God in all things does not mean that we thank God for evil.  
Rather, we are to thank God in the midst of all things.

With their decision to sin, Adam and Eve rejected God's plan  
for a life without pain and sorrow,  
and the curse they received fell on all who have been born since then.  
The good news is that God the Father has redeemed us from that curse  
through the blood of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

## Prayer Thought – Laos

Gracious and loving God, we come before you with praise and thanksgiving for your works of creation, your love that surrounds us, and your Spirit, which comforts us.

We ask your forgiveness for the sin of self-concern where we seek first our private good, to the neglect of our neighbor's needs near and far, and thus break the community of the human family, in defiance of your will.

Guide us in our pursuit of peace for the people of Laos and all nations. Help us engage in acts that promote justice for all peoples.

We pray for those who put self before others that perpetuates the cycles of haves and have-nots, rich and poor, satisfied and hungry, landowners and dispossessed, exploiters and exploited, strong and weak.

In the name of Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace, we pray. Amen.

## Stewardship Thought

*“I tell you, Peter, before the cock crows this day,  
you will deny three times that you know me.” (Luke 22:34)*

How many times have you heard someone make a disparaging comment about Jesus or the Christian faith?

How do you react?

Do you remain quiet not to cause a disturbance or worst yet, because you don't want your friends or family  
to think negatively about you?

Pray for the courage to speak up and enter into a respectful dialogue.

## Quote for the Week

*Lovingly invite others to experience the good news of new life in community with Christ. Opportunities abound  
in your daily lives if you choose to see them.*

*Undertake compassionate and just actions that seek to abolish poverty and end needless suffering. Pursue peace  
on and for the Earth. Let nothing separate you from this mission.*

*Stephen M. Veazey, words of counsel - 2013 World Conference*