

Is Humility The Best Policy?

You can catch more flies with honey than with vinegar. I don't remember the first time I heard that proverb. But it's the sort of saying that stays in your mind, isn't it. You can catch more flies with honey than with vinegar. I don't know if it's true. When I want to deal with flies, I use a fly swatter. But it makes us stop and ponder the point of the proverb, doesn't it? When it comes to dealing with problems and people what is the best course to take? When the bully on the playground pushes you down, do you ignore him? Do you speak kindly to him? Do you push him back?

In the gospel for this morning we see the King of kings and Lord of lords entering Jerusalem. We see the Son of David coming to his town. But, what does that entrance look like?: *"Those who were sent ahead went and found it just as he had told them. As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, "Why are you untying the colt?" They replied, "The Lord needs it." They brought it to Jesus, threw their cloaks on the colt and put Jesus on it. As he went along, people spread their cloaks on the road."* (Luke 19:32-36 NIV)

How the King of kings enter his city? In humility. Just look at all of these amazing details. As he travelled on the road to Jerusalem, who came to greet this king? Were generals and dignitaries there? Were there kings and nobles there to greet him? No. There were children and disciples. Did he ride in a powerful chariot with powerful cavalry around him? No. He rode alone on a donkey. Did he enter with golden armor and a royal robe? No. He wore the normal clothes he always wore.

All of these details lead us to the question: why? Why did he humble himself so? Was humility really the best policy? This was *his* town. We find the answer to that question in the garden of Eden: *"The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'" "You will not surely die," the serpent said to the woman. "For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."*" (Genesis 3:2-5 NIV)

Satan tempted them with the *opposite* of humility. He offered them the same knowledge that God had. He said they would be like God, knowing good and evil. He offered them divinity and gave them slavery. For the sin of pride took them. The sin of pride infected them. And through them it has infected all of us.

You see, in order to be freed from sinful pride, we need a humble Savior. We need a king who enters his city on a donkey. We need a king who destroys death by dying. We need a Savior who erases our pride with his holy humility. And who can count all of the times he has been prideful? How many times did pride tell you to not listen to your parents when you were not grown up yet? How many times did pride tell you to not listen to your children now that you are grown up? How many times has your humble King invited you to put your cares and concerns on him in your prayers, but instead, in your pride, you tried to solve your problems alone? How many times did someone invite you to help others, but your pride lead you to serve yourself. Is humility the best policy? Yes, most truly, yes. For a humble king erases our prideful sin.

Our humble king travelled up into the Jerusalem. And it wasn't just the people who wanted to praise him who gathered there. There were people who wanted to persecute and punish him: *"When he came near the place where the road goes down the Mount of Olives, the whole crowd of disciples began joyfully to praise God in loud voices for all the miracles they had seen: "Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!" "Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!"*" (Luke 19:37-38 NIV)

This king who rode into Jerusalem may have had a humble ride and humble clothing, but the words the children and disciples were anything *but* humble. They shouted and sang the words of Psalm 118. They proclaimed him to be the "Coming One." This was a very bold statement of Christ's divinity. And not surprisingly then, the Pharisees tried to humble Jesus. They said: *"Teacher, rebuke your disciples!"*" (Luke 19:39 NIV)

Notice what they called him. While the crowds called him the Son of David and the Coming One, they called him 'Teacher.' And, since they refused to believe that he was ever anything more than just a teacher, they commanded Jesus to rebuke his followers. But listen to what Jesus says to them: *"I tell you...if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out."* (Luke 19:40 NIV)

Here in these words we find the opposite of humility and timidity that the Pharisees demanded. For, indeed,

the *created* need to find a time and a voice to praise their *Creator*. And if those with breath will not or cannot receive the King of kings and Lord of lords, then creation itself will take their place.

These words are a powerful reminder to us that our worship is not an act filled with humility and timidity. For here, gathered around God's word with his saints we proclaim his word. Just think how joyous those children and disciples were. They had the privilege of preaching and proclaiming to all those they passed that this humble man was the Son of David—the Coming One. We too have that same privilege.

I remember learning about a church in Wisconsin years ago. It was an average sized church. But, they started airing their Divine Services on the radio. To prepare his people for this, the pastor sat them down and told them that they had the rare privilege to preach about Christ. They looked at each other and finally said: "I thought that was your job." He told them: "No, every time you sing your hymns and speak the creed, you preach Jesus too. So, when you sing your hymns and speak the creed, do it loudly and clearly so that all those people on the radio can hear you." And now, almost two generations later, when that congregation says the creed with strength and joy. And how could they not? For worship is not an act filled with timidity. It is a time when we humbly receive the forgiveness our King offers. Then with bold and joyous hearts we preach and proclaim the truth about the King of kings and the Son of David.

So then, my brothers and sisters, if creation waits to cry praises to its king; if children shouted "Hosanna, Son of David"; if the crowds sang their praises to their king, what will your response be? Will you preach the creed to each other with timid and fearful hearts? Will you sing the *Gloria*, the *Agnus Dei*, the *Sanctus* as if thousands and millions of saints and angels hadn't sung these glorious songs before you? Will you sing the hymn of the Day as if it weren't worthy of being remembered throughout the week? No. Our king erased our pride with his humility. So we will praise him loudly and boldly for eternity. Amen.