

Second Hand Preacher

Palm Sunday

April 9, 2017

Philippians 2:6-11

Every Saturday night I pray this canticle. I remember back in seminary Sunday Evening Prayer it was optional. It was part of having a break from seminary on Saturdays. Some of us stayed around most of the time, so we prayed this part of the Liturgy of the Hours together in a small group. The Liturgy of the Hours is on a four-week cycle, so most of the psalms, scripture readings, and responses change, but this powerful little canticle remained the same. I fell in love with it then and still see the beauty of this scripture passage today.

The Philippians were a community that St. Paul had a great affection for. He still had points to make with them, but for the most part he wants to thank them for past loyalty. This portion of the letter is believed to be a poem that already existed in the early church. Even though the author is unknown, the impact of the words gives us a real look at the Christian message. These few verses give a teaching to these early Christians who needed guidance from Paul. It is possible that this passage was already known by the Christians of Philippi, but the addition of it here would have reminded them of their true mission. The passage would have given them hope. They were suffering now like Jesus did, but they hoped to obtain his glory in the life to come.

This passage speaks to us today. There will be suffering in this life. Jesus didn't promise extreme happiness and peace for those who follow him. Great wealth and prosperity may or may not be awaiting those who follow the Christ. We don't have to think God is punishing us when things don't go our way. We don't earn God's love. Also God loves us when we suffer as well as when he showers blessings upon us. Bad things are a part of the human condition. Jesus had the agony of the cross and we have all of our crosses, large and small. The key point to remember is that Jesus has victory in the end. We have the promise of eternal life. There will be suffering in this world, but hope of eternity makes it all worth it.