

“Submit”

**Matthew 21:1-11, John 12:23-36, Philippians 2:5-11,
Hebrews 9:11-15, Isaiah 50:4-9 and Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29
Pastor James York
April 17, 2011 – Palm Sunday, North Presbyterian Church**

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Matthew 21:1-11

As Jesus and the disciples approached Jerusalem, they came to the town of Bethphage on the Mount of Olives. Jesus sent two of them on ahead. “Go into the village over there,” Jesus said. “As soon as you enter it, you will see a donkey tied there, with its colt beside it. Untie them and bring them to me. If anyone asks what you are doing, just say, ‘The Lord needs them,’ and he will immediately let you take them.” This took place to fulfill the prophecy that said, “Tell the people of Israel, ‘Look, your King is coming to you. He is humble, riding on a donkey—riding on a donkey’s colt.’” The two disciples did as Jesus commanded. They brought the donkey and the colt to him and threw their garments over the colt, and he sat on it. Most of the crowd spread their garments on the road ahead of Jesus, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. Jesus was in the center of the procession, and the people all around him were shouting, “Praise God for the Son of David! Blessings on the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Praise God in highest heaven!” The entire city of Jerusalem was in an uproar as Jesus entered. “Who is this?” they asked. And the crowds replied, “It’s Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee.”

John 12:23-36

Jesus replied, “Now the time has come for the Son of Man to enter into his glory. I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat is planted in the soil and dies, it remains alone. But its death will produce many new kernels—a plentiful harvest of new lives. Those who love their life in this world will lose it. Those who care nothing for their life in this world will keep it for eternity. Anyone who wants to be my disciple must follow me, because my servants must be where I am. And the Father will honor anyone who serves me. “Now my soul is deeply troubled. Should I pray, ‘Father, save me from this hour’? But this is the very reason I came! Father, bring glory to your name.” Then a voice spoke from heaven, saying, “I have already brought glory to my name, and I will do so again.” When the crowd heard the voice, some thought it was thunder, while others declared an angel had spoken to him. Then Jesus told them, “The voice was for your benefit, not mine. The time for judging this world has come, when Satan, the ruler of this world, will be cast out. And when I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw everyone to myself.” Jesus said this to indicate how he was going to die. The crowd responded, “We understood from Scripture that the Messiah would live forever. How can you say the Son of Man will die? Just who is this Son of Man, anyway?” Jesus replied, “My light will shine for you just a little longer. Walk in the light while you can, so the darkness will not overtake you. Those who walk in the darkness cannot see where they are going. Put your trust in the light while there is still time; then you will become children of the light.”

Philippians 2:5-11

You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had. Though Jesus was God, he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to. Instead, Jesus gave up his divine privileges; he took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being. When Jesus appeared in human form, he humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal’s death on a cross. Therefore, God elevated Jesus to the place of highest honor and gave him the name above all other names, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Hebrews 9:11-15

So Christ has now become the High Priest over all the good things that have come. Jesus has entered that greater, more perfect Tabernacle in heaven, which was not made by human hands and is not part of this created world. With Jesus own blood—not the blood of goats and calves—he entered the Most Holy Place once for all time and secured our redemption forever. Under the old system, the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a young cow could cleanse people's bodies from ceremonial impurity. Just think how much more the blood of Christ will purify our consciences from sinful deeds so that we can worship the living God. For by the power of the eternal Spirit, Christ offered himself to God as a perfect sacrifice for our sins. That is why Jesus is the one who mediates a new covenant between God and people, so that all who are called can receive the eternal inheritance God has promised them. For Christ died to set them free from the penalty of the sins they had committed under that first covenant.

Isaiah 50:4-9

The Sovereign Lord has given me God's words of wisdom, so that I know how to comfort the weary. Morning by morning God wakens me and opens my understanding to God's will. The Sovereign Lord has spoken to me, and I have listened. I have not rebelled or turned away. I offered my back to those who beat me and my cheeks to those who pulled out my beard. I did not hide my face from mockery and spitting. Because the Sovereign Lord helps me, I will not be disgraced. Therefore, I have set my face like a stone, determined to do God's will. And I know that I will not be put to shame. God who gives me justice is near. Who will dare to bring charges against me now? Where are my accusers? Let them appear! See, the Sovereign Lord is on my side! Who will declare me guilty? All my enemies will be destroyed like old clothes that have been eaten by moths!

Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29

Give thanks to the Lord, for God is good! God's faithful love endures forever. Let all Israel repeat: "God's faithful love endures forever." Open for me the gates where the righteous enter, and I will go in and thank the Lord. These gates lead to the presence of the Lord, and the godly enter there. I thank you for answering my prayer and giving me victory! The stone that the builders rejected has now become the cornerstone. This is the Lord's doing, and it is wonderful to see. This is the day the Lord has made. We will rejoice and be glad in it. Please, Lord, please save us. Please, Lord, please give us success. Bless the one who comes in the name of the Lord. We bless you from the house of the Lord. The Lord is God, shining upon us. Take the sacrifice and bind it with cords on the altar. You are my God, and I will praise you! You are my God, and I will exalt you! Give thanks to the Lord, for God is good! God's faithful love endures forever.

"Submit"

Most of us regularly pray for God to help us submit. In the Lord's Prayer we pray "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." Submission is giving up the need to have it your way and allowing God to call the shots, it is yielding your will and following God's will. Submission is loving yourself and others equally.

Submission is often misunderstood and abused. Submission has a very narrow sweet spot. Practicing submission means living in the healthy spot between allowing another to take advantage of you and you taking advantage of another. It is a balance between self love and self denial. Practicing submission is finding the balance between sharing, doing all the talking, and withdrawing in silence, only listening. It is not thinking to high of yourself, that is self glorification, or thinking to low of yourself, that is self-hatred. It is a balance between being of the world and being of the Kingdom of God. Practicing submission is the proper mix of loving God, yourself and others.

There are two levels of submission, our submission to God and our submission to one another. Jesus is the supreme example of submission. Jesus submitted his will to God's will. Jesus also viewed us as equals, as his brothers and sisters. Holy week is abundant with submission. Jesus in the garden prayed, **Luke 22:42 "Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me; yet, not my will but yours be done."** Submission trusts that God sees the big picture, that God knows what will ultimately bring about soul renewal for everyone. Jesus trusted that his agonizing sacrifice would bring resurrection for everyone.

Jesus at the last supper knelt down and washed the disciples' feet. Jesus lovingly washed Peter's feet the same way he lovingly washed Judas feet and all the disciples' feet. Then Jesus said, **John 13:12-17 "Do you understand what I was doing? You call me Teacher and Lord and you are right because it is true. And since I, the Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash each other's feet. I have given you an example to follow. Do as I have done to you. How true it is that a servant is not greater than the master. Nor are messengers more important than the one who sends them. You know these things—now do them! This is the path of blessing."** John explained submission as **1 John 3:16 "We know love by this, that Jesus laid down his life for us-- and we ought to lay down our lives for one another."** Martin Luther explained submission as "A Christian is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none. A Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all."

A thriving sports team is an example of both layers of submission. Since the coach is knowledgeable about the sport, each player, sees the entire field of play, desires the best for both the individual players and the team. The players submit to the drills, conditioning, instruction and coaching of the coach. On a healthy team each player mutual submits to each other. Each player knows the other players unique abilities, each player trust the other players to excel at their position, each player does their part and does not try to do more or less than what their position dictates. Properly practiced submission produces championships. Often a team of modest talent that plays together and executes the instructions of their coach triumphants over a team of selfish superstars.

Practice submission by listening for and striving to live God's will. Internalize scripture and live it. Share God sightings and live the truths learned. Open yourself and share God's grace, joy, peace and love.

Practice submission by mutually loving others and yourself. Have equal respect and care for others and yourself. Value equally the dreams and plans of others and yourself. Strive to live in harmony with all.

Practicing submission gives us wonderful freedoms. Some people live in bondage to what others think of them. Submission sets us free from approval addiction. Henri Nouwen writes, "At issue here is the question: "To whom do I belong? To God or to the world? Many of my daily preoccupations suggest that I belong more to the world than to God. A little criticism makes me angry, and a little rejection makes me depressed. A little praise raises my spirits, and a little success excites me...Often I am like a small boat on the ocean, completely at the mercy of its waves."

Submitting to God enables us to see ourselves as God see us. Submitting to God enables our worth, value and love to flow from God rather than being tossed around by the views of others or even our own inner voice. Submitting to God frees us from the desire to impress anyone. God will give you a healthy self esteem free from the desire to have someone notice how smart, attractive or successful you are. Submit to God and God will empower you to love equally those who praise you and those who disapprove of you because you are sustained by God's love for you. Whenever you find yourself comparing yourself to others stop and submit to God.

Submission sets us free from the need to have it your way. Richard Foster writes, "Submission is the ability to lay down the terrible burden of always needing to get our own way. The obsession to demand that things go the way we want them to go is one of the greatest bondages in human society today. People will spend weeks, months, even years in a perpetual stew because some little thing did not go as they wished. In the discipline of submission we are released to drop the matter, to forget it."

At the core, most fights occur because people do not have the freedom to give in to each other. We insist that a critical issue is at stake however usually we cannot stand to give in because we will not get our way. Submission enables us to distinguish between genuine issues and stubborn self will. Jesus proclaimed and modeled relationships united on an inner attitude of mutual subordination free from hierarchy. Jesus invites us to see the world from another persons' perspective. Submission, in Jesus view, was becoming the least so that God can do great in you and through you. Submission is free of dominance and the desire to have another follow your will. Submission is mutual love for one another.

Submission sets us free to value other people. Foster writes, "Their dreams and plans become important to us. We have entered into a new, wonderful, glorious freedom—the freedom to give up our own rights for the good of others. We can love people unconditionally--no longer demanding that they return our love--no longer do we feel that we have to be treated in a certain way. We rejoice in their success. We feel genuine sorrow in their failures. It is of little consequence that our plans are frustrated if their plans succeed. We discover that it is far better to serve our neighbor than to have our own way."

Submission sets free from the desire for instant gratification. Earthly life is hard. Sometimes we are betrayed, beaten, crucified, everything goes wrong, the pain is overwhelming and God seems to have forsaken us. Sometimes all becomes dark then submission is just hanging on and refusing to quit trusting God. Out of dark death Jesus rose to radiant eternal life. Endure for your resurrection is coming. Scripture proclaims, **Hebrews 12:1** "Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us."

I hope our exploration of the spiritual disciplines has renewed your soul. God delights in extreme makeovers. The psalmist declares **Psalm 23:3** "God restores my soul." Together we have examined how you can live your passion, a rule of life and practice worship, service, generosity, fasting, simplicity, confession, meditation, celebration and submission. The Soul Renewal booklets in the entry way define each discipline and gives suggestions on how to practice each discipline. Pick one that resonates with you, add it to your rule of life and strive to live it. The goal is to not focus on the practice, rather for the practice to help you focus upon God. The disciplines are mere tools to help you open yourself to God's soul renewing love. This winter was long yet spring is coming. Holy week is dark, death will be experienced, yet the light of eternal life, Easter, is coming. Your life is imperfect yet your extreme makeover by God is coming. Amen

Soul Renewal

Spiritual practices for your extreme makeover

Submission is...

yielding your will, following God's will and loving yourself and others equally.

Practice submission by...

- † praying "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven."
- † giving up the need to have it your way.
- † allowing God to call the shots.
- † trusting that God sees the big picture and that God knows what will ultimately bring about soul renewal for everyone.
- † listening for and striving to live God's will.
- † internalizing scripture and living scripture.
- † sharing God sightings and living the truths learned.
- † opening yourself and sharing God's grace, joy, peace and love
- † mutually loving others and yourself.
- † having equal respect and care for others and yourself.
- † valuing equally the dreams and plans of others and yourself.
- † living in harmony with all.
- † being free from approval addiction.
- † perceiving your value from God.
- † seeing the perspective of others.
- † having an attitude of mutual subordination free from hierarchy.
- † loving unconditionally.