

2015\_03\_29 Palm Sunday  
Ascension Lutheran Church, Batavia IL  
Pastor David Pfeiffer

### **A Second Article Mindset**

*what does this mean?*

“I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, and also true Man, is my Lord.”

Philippians 2:5-11

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Grace and peace to you from God our Father who has sent His Son into the world that the world through Him might be saved. Amen.

In blood of Jesus Christ and confession of His name, dear fellow servants of Christ,

One ring to rule them all – and it sits in the pocket of a small, humble hobbit. *The Lord of the Rings* is the story of a magic ring which finds its way into the possession of a hobbit – a small, simple creature who comes from a humble, happy life. The ring is supposed to grant great power to whoever possesses it. But it is an evil power, something which corrupts those who seek it; a coveted power which is sought after by many – kings, wizards, sorcerers – many who would use the ring for personal power and wicked works. Even those who are good are tempted by its magic. Even those who would use the ring’s power for good are soon led to use it for greed and selfish gain. One ring to rule them all – and while everyone was trying to seize the ring for their own gain, the ring found its way into the hands of a small, humble hobbit.

It is a story about seizing power. And isn’t that what we experience on some level? In each vocation there is a privilege and responsibility that God is granting us among His creatures. Whatever the reason; whatever the justification; we often use the privileges we’ve been given to gain an advantage for ourselves. It is a story about seizing power.

Maybe the 19th century British historian was right. “Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.”

But as another said: “where does that leave God?” God after all, is the only one who truly has absolute power. On that grandest scale, God has absolute power over all things. And how will he use it? For his own gain? For his own advantage?

And this is what the 2nd article of the Apostles’ Creed is all about. The 2nd article which addresses “God’s Son, Jesus Christ, who was crucified, dead, and buried.” This

issue is what Martin Luther was putting into words when he penned the explanation to the 2nd article. And this is what our text is all about. It is a chance to delve into the mind of Christ.

*5 Let this same mindset be in you, namely, the mindset of Christ Jesus:*

After a series of exhortations to the Philippians; emphasizing and reemphasizing the importance that believers be likeminded toward each other; that we deal with each other in love and not for selfish gain; that we value others above ourselves. Now he shows how this is accomplished; namely, by letting the mindset of Jesus become your mindset. This is about having a 2nd Article mindset.

And so today, we find our life as Christians is to discover “A Second Article Mindset.” And to express what this means by confessing: “I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, and also true Man, is my Lord.”

### **Philippians 2:5-11**

<sup>5</sup> Let this same mindset be in you, namely, the mindset of Christ Jesus:

<sup>6</sup> who, although he was existing in the form of God, did not regard equality with God something to be seized for his own gain, <sup>7</sup> but rather he emptied himself by taking the form of a slave and being born in the likeness of men. <sup>8</sup> And appearing as a man, he humbled himself and became submissive to the point of death, even death on a cross.

<sup>9</sup> For this reason, God has also exalted him and granted him the name which is above every name <sup>10</sup> that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow – of those in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth – <sup>11</sup> and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

This Word of the Lord is spoken for you.

### **A Second Article Mindset**

*what does this mean?*

“I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, and also true Man, is my Lord.”

This is God’s Son with skin on him. Although he was in the form of God, meaning, although Jesus was divine in shape and substance; although he was God in every way, he did not seize it for his own gain.

Power so often is something that has to be seized. Kings, politicians, corporate CEO’s, big name lawyers. Power just doesn’t come naturally. And as you read the history

books, you see it is never that easy. It often requires putting someone else down or even to death in order to rise up.

But not so with Jesus. He didn't need to seize or grasp after this power. As some translations read, "He did not consider it robbery." Being in the form of God was Jesus' natural existence as God's Son. We saw it on the Mount of Transfiguration. Jesus' natural form of existence, natural clothing, natural glory was divine. But he did nothing to cling to it, or to show it off for his own gain.

So we confess in the 2nd Article, I believe in Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father from eternity.

*7 but rather he emptied himself by taking the form of a slave and being born in the likeness of men. 8 And appearing as a man, he humbled himself and became submissive to the point of death, even death on a cross.*

And as we have heard already today, he comes on a donkey. This Palm Sunday, we are taken from the heights of hosanna to the horrors of hell. From that mountain top he comes into view. Shouts of praise, palm branches, the fulfillment of all that the Scriptures had written is coming to pass – the King of the Jews rides to power. He comes to claim what is rightfully his, what has been promised him:

"Behold, your king is coming to you – His dominion shall be from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth." (Zechariah 9:10)

Yet, when it is just within his grasp, when he could so easily call down legions of angels, when with a word of his mouth he could bring the governor, the high priest, the scribes, all to their knees, he is silent. And he came on a donkey.

*8 And appearing as a man, he humbled himself and became submissive to the point of death, even death on a cross.*

And with that, the shouts suddenly turn ugly. From the heights of hosanna, to the horrors of hell – they cry out: "Crucify him, crucify him!" The power is there for the taking, and He gives it up. He empties himself. And watches, as all the world seizes after what belongs to him.

He watches silently, as Adam and Eve seizing the fruit with hopes of becoming like God. He watches silently, as the chief priests and scribes seizing after the hope of securing their privileged position among the people. He watches silently as you and I

seize after privileges that we use for our own selfish gain – as spouses, parents, children, tax payers, property owners, employers, officials, those who represent God in the world with the responsibilities to care for this creation – and we seize it, our precious, robbing God of what is his, releasing Barabbas, inciting insurrection, aggravating arguments, wielding information for our own advantage and purpose to put ourselves ahead, and leave God behind – and we seize what belongs to God and use it for our own gain; putting him down in order to rise up, even to the point of death, and he watches silently. We bind him, whip him, mock him, and pierce him in our own sins. And He watches without saying a word.

“For he did not regard equality with God something to be seized for his own gain, but rather he emptied himself by taking the form of a slave and being born in the likeness of men. And appearing as a man, he humbled himself and became submissive to the point of death, even the death on a cross.”

And this is what forms us; this is what shapes us; this is what gives us a second article mindset where we open our mouth to confess the meaning and conclusion and culmination of all that has happened by saying: “I believe that this Jesus Christ – true God and true Man – this Jesus humbled to the point of death is my Lord.”

*9 For this reason, God has also exalted him and granted him the name which is above every name  
10 that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow – of those in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth – 11 and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.*

As we talk about the 2nd Article we are talking about a confession. We use words like doctrine, theology, creed; and there are times the catechism just seems so distant from real life. Its not so much “what does it mean,” but “what does it matter?” What does this matter as I leave this place of peace and return to a place of problems, sins, guilty, failure, weakness. What does this matter when I step out of my church shoes and back into my work shoes? What do these words matter when I finish this holy conversation with these people, only to turn around and find myself be caught in hostile conversations with those people.

But this is where a 2nd Article mindset is exactly what matters most. For first of all, it reveals that this Jesus who was in the form of God, who took the form of a slave, emptied, humbled, submitted himself to the point of death, did all this for you.

**It matters because, this Jesus – true God and true Man has redeemed you.** And this shapes our mindset in a 2nd article way:

“He has redeemed me, a lost and condemned person, purchased and won you from all sin, from death, and from the power of the devil, not with gold or silver, but with His holy, precious blood and His innocent suffering and death.”

It matters because this is the only way you can know that God is with you on Monday; that God has made you his own; that God will not allow sin or death or the devil to threaten or take you.

**It matters because this Jesus who has redeemed you is Your Lord.** And this shapes our mindset in a 2nd article way:

“He did this that I should be His very own, live under Him in His kingdom, and serve Him in eternal righteousness, innocence, and joy; just as He is risen from death, lives and reigns in eternity.”

*5 Let this same mindset be in you, namely, the mindset of Christ Jesus:*

As a church, a fellowship joined together, bowing the knee and confessing with the tongue that we live under one Lord, let this mind be in you.

As families and relationships where conversations are not always peaceful, where things have been said and done to hurt each other, where you don't see how there can be any forgiveness left to give, let this mind be in you.

As Christians who are often put down trampled on, mocked for what they believe, as those called to represent Christ in your vocations in the world, let this mind be in you, namely, the mind of Jesus – who humbled himself and submitted to the point of death.

Use your privilege and vocation – not as a chance to seize an advantage, but as a call to empty yourself and take the form of a slave.

So the ring finds its way into a the pocket of a small humble hobbit. And he gives it up, freely. Throws it away to be rid of it. So, we are called to empty ourselves. The privileges we are given as spouses, parents, children, tax payers, property owners, employers, officials – are now a opportunities to represent Christ in the world and care for this creation. In this we bow our knee before the own who has laid down his life and confess with our mouth a 2nd article mindset: “I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, and also true Man, is my Lord.”

Amen.

