

## The Name Above All Names 20 Pentecost A

“Go on ahead of the people...I will be standing there in front of you...” Exodus  
17: 5,6

The goodness of God is shown to us in that he leads from the front. He tells his people – the people of the Exodus - to go ahead and “I’ll be waiting for you when you get there.” People want and need leaders who go ahead of them and are there standing when they arrive at their destination. The instructions to Israel were explicit even down to how to get the rock to yield water for a thirsty nation.

We can be encouraged that the leader of our faith led from the front. Jesus taught with authority even when it was not popular. The apostle Paul when explaining the leadership that we should follow did not use himself as an example. It was on Christ, he said, that Christians ought to pattern their lives. “If there is any encouragement in Christ, any consolation in love, any sharing in the Spirit, any compassion and sympathy, make my joy complete: be of the same mind...” (Phil. 2:1). And the same mind he spoke of was the mind of Christ. Paul wrote further about a song that had been widely sung at that time concerning that Christ-like attitude.

It has been known as the ‘Song of Emptiness’ by scholars because of the action Jesus took to empty himself into slavery. And I’ll try to sing it for you to the tune of Ode to Joy by Beethoven.

‘He was in the form of God,  
Though he did not exploit it.  
He did empty out himself  
Into the human form a slave.

He was humble and obedient  
To the point of death for us.  
From a cross he rose exalted  
Now he’s got the super name.

At the highest name of Jesus  
Every knee shall bend and bow.  
Wherever that knee’s located  
In heaven, earth and sea below.

And what's more the tongue of all  
Shall Him confess as Jesus Lord!  
Yet keeping that mind of service  
Christ gives glory to His LORD!

Jesus Christ is Lord. What is a Lord? It's the one who can exercise control over others lives. A more familiar term would be 'landlord,' or the one who owns your mortgage or your apartment. When the taxes or rent increases we understand who the landlord is. People who surrender their lives to Jesus Christ as Lord have made a choice of free will to live under His control rather than someone or something else.

Scripture teaches that no one can confess the truth of Jesus as Lord except by a common spirit - the Holy Spirit. By that same Spirit within the mind, the Christian attempts to work out his or her salvation with reverence and humility. In what area of our life do we need to bend a knee to Christ?

Paul describes what this knee bending meant in practical terms. Do nothing from ambition or conceit and regard others as better than ourselves. Sadly, it often takes a crisis to hear news of people looking out for the interests of others. Paul asks a lot of his Christian friends though no one could say he did not live to the same standard. Finally in the last verse of his letter Paul reminds his friends that exercising this mind of Christ is impossible without God working in them. God is enabling them both to have the will and the action to do His good pleasure.

Is it possible to live way in today's competitive environment? What would motivate a person to think and act with a servant's mind unless they were different? Christians are called to be different from the rest of the world. What makes the world any better because there are Christians living in it? That difference would be the mind and actions of believers in Jesus Christ. If this mind is not present in his followers then what difference does belief in Jesus make?

Sure, a lot of good is done by people wanting to make a difference and they may or may not be people of faith. Perhaps the last line of the Song of Emptiness tells us the difference. It points to the reason for Christ's humility. Even the divine Jesus Christ gives glory to His Father. What difference does that make? It's the difference between someone who is truly authentic or just blowing air to get noticed or just feel good. It's the difference between self - gain and the giving of self in true servant-hood.

Fifty years ago, one woman set out to bring beauty to her world in Running Springs, California. With the help of her husband Dale, Gene Bauer planted 50 thousand daffodil bulbs over the next forty years, painstakingly into 5 acres of rocky soil. Visitors said it looked as though someone had taken a great vat of gold and poured it down over the mountain peak and slopes. The

flowers were planted in majestic, swirling patterns - great ribbons and swaths of deep orange, white, lemon yellow, salmon pink, saffron and butter yellow. Each different-colored variety was planted as a group so that it swirled and flowed like its own river with its own unique hue. A sign created to answer people's questions wrote that one woman with little brains, worked on such beauty a little at a time.

People call the Bauer's experiment "The Daffodil Principle." Their daffodil garden teaches one of the greatest principles: self - emptiness. By learning to move toward our goals and desires one step at a time, often just one baby-step at a time - and learning to love the doing, learning to use the accumulation of time, people can make a difference in their world. Multiplying little pieces of time and daily effort can accomplish magnificent things.

Tragically, in late summer of 1999, the Willow Fire destroyed 64,000 acres of national forest, taking the Bauer's A-frame home and their five acre garden. Undeterred they rebuilt a new home on their land. Miraculously, the daffodil bulbs beneath the ground survived. Like the legendary Phoenix that rose from the ashes, the daffodils rose the following spring  
<http://www.geocities.com/thedaffodilgarden/>.

Jesus made this point by planting himself into the soil of humanity. In His teaching, He used a grain of wheat instead of a daffodil bulb. "Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain" (John 12:24). When He died on the cross and rose again, the seeds of His new life were carried by followers all over the world.

Jesus started with 12 underachievers and taught them to garden human souls. The mustard seed of true confession, working in them, sprouted and they became beautiful. By bending the knee, that garden of human beauty has expanded to over two billion followers of Christ. He continues to will and to work in everyone that confesses Jesus as Lord. He inspires, influences, affects, and transforms — by patiently planting, watering and giving sun to the human soul. When people experience the impact of Jesus on their lives, they become inspired to bend their knee, to confess Jesus, to plant and grow their own gardens and soon the vat of gold spreads along the mountains and the valleys as far as the eye can see.

Let us nurture our belief until it becomes action. Let us sing that hymn of praise to the One who alone has the name above every name. Amen.