

March 24 Worship
Palm Sunday

Announcements/Joys-

Time Of Quiet Meditation- *"I have said this to you, that in me you may have peace."*
John 16:33

Opening Scripture- Zechariah 9:9(page 824)

Opening Chorus- 85- Rejoice, Ye Pure In Heart

Responsive Call To Worship-

Leader: Open for me the gates where the righteous enter.

People: We will enter and give thanks to the Lord!

Leader: We give you thanks for You have answered us.

People: You have become our salvation!

Leader: Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good.

People: God's faithful love endures forever.

Hymn- 220- Hosanna, Loud Hosanna

Unison Prayer- Holy God, you have fed us all out of your own generous and gracious hands. From them, we have received welcome, nourishment, hope, and consolation. May these things grow in us, alongside the gift of faith, so that we may plant their seeds in the world around us. Through the Holy Spirit, guide us in the week ahead to re-member our place in your great and on-going story of resurrection, redemption, and restoration through Jesus Christ our Lord, who taught us to pray, saying...*Lord's Prayer*...

Gloria Patri- Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost.
As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be,
World without end. Amen, Amen.

Old Testament Scripture- Psalm 118:1-2,19-29(page 531-532)

Special Music-

Gospel Scripture- Mark 11:1-10(page 879)

Children's Time/Echo Prayer/Passing of the Peace

Hymn- 218- All Glory Laud And Honor

New Testament Scripture- John 12:12-16(page 936)

Message

“As You Love Yourself”

There is one theme in the Bible that I refer to far more than any other. It is the statement that Christ made when asked “What is the greatest commandment.” Now there is no misunderstanding what Jesus meant when He said; “You shall love the Lord, your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and with all your mind.” (Matthew 22:37) It is the 2nd part of this text that we need to look into; “And a second is like it, you shall love your neighbor as yourself.” (Matthew 22:39) The part that we tend to ignore is the phrase; “as yourself.” What does Jesus mean by loving yourself?

This statement, “love yourself,” is not a commandment. The commandment is to love our neighbor. It is natural and normal to love yourself. God does not, or should not, have to command us to love ourself, it is an instinctive part of how we were created. Self-love is how we survive. Now, don't get me wrong, I am not advocating for a narcissistic or extreme love of self. I am referring to the kind of self-love that allows us to function as “normal” individuals. Loving oneself, like any other human trait, can be overdone and taken to extremes.

Love, as described in the Bible, is quite different from the love that the world speaks of. Biblical love is selfless and unconditional, whereas the world's love is characterized by selfishness. The many passages in the Bible that refer to love teach us that love does not exist apart from God and that true, spiritual love can only be experienced by those who have known God's own love first-hand. Remember, God, first and foremost is love, pure and simple. “So, we know and believe the love God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. In this is love perfected with us, that we may have confidence for the day of judgment, because as he is so are we in this world. There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and he who fears is not perfected in love. We love, because he first loved us.” (1 John 4:16-19)

We live in a world where love of self seems to be the dominant theme in how people are taught. Have you noticed the emphasis on “self- esteem” that pervades our system of education? This is not a new way of looking at life, it has been around for at least 400 years. It began as what is now called “The age of enlightenment,” a philosophical method of reasoning that puts self as the most important part of life. This system places human reasoning and feelings above all else. The differences between what people believed and what people feel was turned around so that it was more important to acknowledge reasoning over faith.

I recently read an article written by someone who had attended a church youth camp when they were 13 years old. One of the topics they taught about was from Matthew 22:39, The passage I referred to earlier about loving your neighbor as yourself. The speaker who was teaching, said this; “You can only love God and your neighbor as much as you accept and love yourself.” The writer of the article said that when they left the speech, they felt that something was not quite right in that statement. I want for us to take a moment to think about that statement again; “You can only love God and your neighbor as much as you accept and love yourself.” What is wrong with that? It sounds OK, but... The writer went on to say that in the years following, they studied the Bible more and more and realized that as nice as that statement may have sounded, there was a fundamental flaw in the reasoning. The priority of how we are supposed to love is twisted towards love of self before love of God. It pushes people to look

inward for love instead of receiving love from outside of ourselves first. It makes self-love the priority.

When we look inwards for love we discover that self-love can be quite unsatisfying. As Christians we all know that first and foremost, we are sinners. When sinners look inside themselves with clear eyes, we don't like what we see, or we shouldn't like it. We are flawed beings. The philosophy of self-love first, promises us that we can find a way to overlook our sinful nature and find peace because we love ourselves. For those who have accepted Christ, we know that this is not possible. We cannot rid ourselves of our nature without God and His grace. We need to accept that we cannot overcome sin without redemption and that redemption can only come through forgiveness when we acknowledge our sinful nature and confess to God.

So, what does the Bible say about self-love or self-worth? There are many passages in scripture that tell us what God has to say about our worth and our value in His eyes. Genesis 1:26-27; "Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth." So, God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them." Having been created by God in His image simply means that we cannot, not love ourselves. God created us for a purpose, to reflect His glory and this is done by loving as He loves. This means that we must pass on that love to others. Not just those that we think deserve it, but to all. God loves all those He created. Not all those He created will love others much less themselves.

Loving ourselves requires us to learn how to love others, it doesn't come naturally. We can be hateful beings when left to our own wants and desires, We, as followers of Christ, must learn humility before all else before we can pass on the love that God has given to us. Learning from Jesus who showed humility in all He did will make us better people. It is in God's plan for us to love as He loved. It is not easy and we will fall short but God has given us the opportunity to keep trying and someday, somehow, we may just get it right. In the meantime, keep trying and keep loving. Praise Be to God. Amen.

Prayers of People/Prayer- You are on your way to Jerusalem, precious Lord. You are one your way to suffering and to death for the sake of our freedom and our salvation. This is mystery and wonder. Our hearts overflow into songs of praise. "Hosanna!", we cry with the crowds. "Blessed are you who comes in God's name!" Yet, you puzzle us: you puzzle us with your suffering love that is more powerful than our brokenness; you puzzle us with your freely chosen humility that brings blessings in our weary places; you puzzle us with your forgiveness that summons us beyond our hurt. Liberating Savior, you make us uncomfortable so that you can lead us into more life and deeper wonder; so that God can take who we are and break us open, and bless us and give us to the world. Grant us grace to welcome this holy restlessness, that we may live by the power of your Spirit, and in your name. Amen.

Closing Hymn- 16- Blessed Be The Name

Benediction- Go into this week, held together by the love of God clothed with the nature of Jesus the Christ reinforced by the strength of the Holy Spirit. Go in peace. Amen.

