

KING OF THE CURVE BALL Matthew 21:1-13

When our kids were young our entire family enjoyed a cartoon show that was created by Steven Spielberg called *Pinky and the Brain*. The main characters were two lab mice that had been genetically altered to be super mice. The story line was that they were genetically altered by Dr. Mordough of Acme Labs using the Acme Gene Splicer, Bagel Warmer and Hot Dog Steamer. Brain was a brilliant megalomaniac, obsessed with the desire to grasp power and rule the world. He constantly cooked up bizarre schemes to accomplish his goal. For instance, in one episode his plan was to build a giant clothes dryer that would create global static cling, and he would use its power to take over the world. Pinky was a scatterbrained, good hearted, continually happy air head, who would constantly interjected nonsense words like narf and poit into his conversation at totally random moments. Every show Brain at some point would say “Pinky, are you pondering what I’m pondering?” And Pinky would answer something along the lines of, “I think so, Brain, but if they called them Sad Meals kids wouldn’t buy them.” Anyway, in every show Pinky would ask, “What are we going to do tonight, Brain?” And Brain would answer, “The same thing we do every night, Pinky. Try to take over the world.”

Today we are going to recall again the events of the day we know as Palm Sunday, events that happened 2000 years ago and initiated the final events of the life of Jesus Christ. We are going to find out that Brain is not the only one who was obsessed with the idea of taking over the world. We are going to encounter a whole lot of people who had exactly that idea, only not through some cockamamie plot. We are going to find out that they had totally the wrong idea about what matters in this life. As we look at these events we will discover that we have something unfortunately in common with them. We may not be obsessed with taking over the world, but we can easily be absorbed with our own little version of that, unaware that it will not get us what we really need. Let’s look at Matthew 21:1-13.

JESUS CHOSE SURPRISING TRANSPORTATION

It was the Sunday before the Passover, which would be followed by the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Jewish pilgrims from all over the Roman Empire came to Jerusalem for the great holy days. In the first century every year there was an upsurge of hope at the time of the Passover that this year the long promised Messiah, the one who would deliver Israel from oppression, would finally arrive. Word had been circulating about a holy man from Galilee up in the north. Some said he was clearly a prophet because he had manifested the power of God in miraculous ways. There was even a rumor going around that he had brought a dead man back to life in the town of Bethany just outside of Jerusalem. Interest in this new young rabbi was at a fever pitch. Many were asking, “could he be the Messiah?” The leadership of the nation, however, had already decided against this young man. They feared that he would be yet another Messiah wannabe who would rally the masses to a rebellion against Rome, leading to what would inevitably be a massacre when the Romans brought in their legions to quell the insurgency. They were desperately looking for some way to rid themselves of a man they viewed as a dangerous nuisance.

For some time Jesus had drawn large crowds, and that was helped along by the raising of his friend, Lazarus. So as Jesus approached the city a large crowd of disciples and interested followers accompanied him. As this mass of people approached, the noise and the crowd drew the attention of people already in the city. Curiosity brought many of them out to see what was going on so the crowd swelled to huge proportions.

Before Jesus reached Jerusalem there was that curious incident where Jesus had two of his guys borrow a couple of donkeys so he could ride on the younger one. Prior to this Jesus walked everywhere he went. But this was a unique occasion. In John 12:23 Jesus said, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.” Previously he had said, “My time has not yet come,” but now he says, “the time has arrived.” He was now going to openly declare himself to be the promised Messiah of Israel.

Why ride on a donkey though? It is obvious that a particular point is made about Jesus getting the donkey to ride on. Why did Matthew make such a point of this? And is a donkey your idea of a royal beast? It’s certainly not mine. If I were going to declare myself the promised leader of a nation I think I’d look for something a little more regal and noble than a donkey. Maybe a majestic Arabian horse, for instance. Hey if the President came to town would you expect him to arrive in some contractor’s beat up 15 year old Chevy truck?

Was the Jesus Crusade bank account running so low that they could only afford the economy minus option when it came to transportation? Or when they went to Hertz Rentabeast were they told, “We’re awfully sorry, but with everyone in town for the Passover we’ve rented all our horses. The only thing we have available is a donkey. I’m afraid it’s either a donkey or you’ll just have to walk.”

Hundreds of years before that day the prophet Zechariah had said in Zechariah 9:9, “Say to the Daughter of Zion, ‘See your king comes to you, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.’” That was widely known among the Jewish people as a prediction that the Messiah would arrive riding on a donkey. Jesus was making an explicit claim to fulfill that prophecy. He claimed to be Messiah. The people understood this. Their actions and their words indicate this. It was common when a king was coming to visit a town for the locals to go out to meet him and to spread their cloaks on the ground for him to travel over. That’s what we see happening in verse 8. They were welcoming Jesus as the king he was claiming to be.

We could have called this day “Cloak Sunday” because of those actions, but some others cut branches off the palm trees, waved them and laid them on the road. Actually we only know they were palm branches from John 12:13. Palm trees are popular at our house. We have dishes that have pictures of palm trees on them. We have chairs with pictures of palm trees on them. We have cups and glasses with palm trees on them. We even have some candle holders shaped like palm trees. We have some paintings that have palm trees. That’s because we love the tropics and we love the look of them. However, never in my life have I put palm branches on a road to welcome

guests to our house. That's not the most obvious way of welcoming someone, at least in my mind. But the palm branches had significance for the people of Israel.

In the second century B. C. Israel was occupied by forces of the Seleucid Dynasty in Syria. Simon Maccabee led a rebellion against the Syrians and drove them out of Israel. He was honored by the waving of palm branches. When Jewish insurgents revolted against Roman rule they made coins with palm trees on them. Imagine that we have a parade for Marines returning from combat duty in the Middle East. Do you suppose you might see an American flag or two waving as they marched by? Bringing out the palm branches was for ancient Israelis the equivalent of waving the American flag today. It was a symbol of Israeli nationalism and expressed a hope for Israeli victory. It was their way of saying, "Yippee! The Messiah has arrived and now he is going to beat the stinking Romans and grind them into the dust, and we're going to be free."

The people start yelling "Hosanna!" That's actually a Hebrew expression that was taken directly into Greek. The Hebrew term was *hoshia-na*. You might know that the name Jesus was the Greek form of Yeshua, which meant the one who saves. Hoshia-na meant "save now!" It wasn't a call to invest money. It was a plea to God for help. By shouting "hosanna" the people were saying, "God has heard our plea for help. He has sent Messiah to come and save us." They also quoted Psalm 118:25 saying, "blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord." Originally that was a blessing on pilgrims who came to Jerusalem to worship God, but by the first century it was understood as a blessing on the king of Israel. In fact, ancient Jewish scholars saw it as having messianic significance.

Some in the crowd were saying, "Let's find a crown and put it on this guy so he can get started on the business of trouncing the dirty Romans." Not everyone agreed. Some believed with all their hearts Jesus was not Messiah and they wanted to get rid of him. The majority were curious but not sure what to think. They were wondering if this guy could possibly be the real deal.

Why was it the Lord's plan to have Messiah enter Jerusalem on a donkey? A donkey isn't exactly an impressive, attention-getting ride. As we have seen there was a strong tide of Israeli nationalism running on Cloak Sunday so long ago. The people of Israel had a problem with Rome. Central to the identity of the ancient people of Israel was that they were the chosen people of the one true God, the Creator, the Almighty God, the only true God. Unfortunately most people of that day would respond to such a claim by saying, "You're the people of an Almighty God? Then why are you so weak? How come your supposed God couldn't overcome the Romans?" Last year during Spring Training some of the Padres said they were excited about the upcoming season because they had offensive power all up and down the lineup. Did you watch the Padres last year? Their offense was historically awful. If that's what you call power I'd hate to see what you call weakness. Israel was the San Diego Padres of nations in their day. It's pretty hard to claim your God is all powerful when you are a conquered people, oppressed by the Romans, who have to exert precious little of their power to rule over you.

The Romans built a fortress right in Jerusalem close to the temple. They called it the Antonia Fortress, named after Marc Antony. They housed troops there. They kept the chief priest's holy robes locked up in their fortress and only let the Jews' leader use them one day a year. The Romans let the Jews have their leaders, but they were always subject to Roman approval and were limited in their authority. The real authority was Rome. The Romans levied heavy taxes on the Jews and used them to pay for the occupation forces. Talk about no taxation without representation, the Romans invented the concept.

In the Arab world today America is hardly everyone's favorite nation. There are a number of reasons for this. Our support of Israel is one. But another big irritant is the presence of American forces in Arab lands. Many Arabs are enraged because American military forces are on the ground in Saudi Arabia especially. They think the very presence of our forces is defiling. The late, unlamented Osama Bin Ladin said in a fatwa, "The United States has been occupying the lands of Islam in the holiest places, the Arabian Peninsula... plundering its riches, dictating to its rulers, humiliating its people." Then he issued an edict that good Muslims should do everything they can to destroy America and to kill Americans whenever possible. That's how the Jews felt about the presence of the Romans in ancient Israel. The Romans were humiliating their people, dictating to their leaders and defiling their holy land.

The ancient Jews thought Messiah was the answer. In Daniel 7 the prophet had a vision that depicted what would happen in the future. He saw four beasts that represented superpowers. There was Babylon, the Medo-Persian empire, Greece and Rome. Each one would rule over and oppress Israel. In verse 12 Daniel said they were each allowed to live for a time. But in the end the last beast, a boasting, arrogant Rome, was destroyed. Daniel wrote in verses 13-14, "There before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, all nations and men of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed."

Sounds like he's going to destroy those arrogant Romans and is going to rule over the entire earth forever. Vive Messiah! Yay for Israel. We're going to be the superpower over everybody forever. And this Messiah is going to do it with his divine power. That's what they wanted and that's what they hoped Jesus would do.

But let's go back to Jesus' choice of transportation. If you are going to be a conquering hero what do you ride? You ride a majestic horse. What you don't ride is a donkey, especially a young donkey that had to have its mommy alongside it. But that's precisely what Jesus rode. God's plan was specifically to have him ride on that animal because it made a statement. The donkey is a lowly animal, one associated with service, not conquering. Even Zechariah's prophecy gave notice of this. "See your king comes to you, gentle and riding on a donkey." Would you describe a conqueror as gentle? It's really hard to smash and destroy people gently.

The people wanted power. They wanted a king with power. The donkey is about service, it is about humility. Jesus was going to humble himself to serve, but it wasn't just Israel he would serve. It was the whole world. He would come to die even for the Romans, whom his countrymen despised, so that he might save them as well as the Jews.

That was the message of the donkey. It was so radical no one understood it. After describing these events John wrote in John 12:16, "At first his disciples did not understand all this. Only after Jesus was glorified did they realize that these things had been written about him." They didn't understand the significance of all that had happened until after Jesus had left the planet. They kept thinking he was going to start ruling right away.

JESUS CHOSE A SURPRISING TARGET

What happens next came as an ever bigger shock. Matthew telescopes his account a little. The other gospel writers reveal there is a little gap between verses 11-12. It actually was the next day when the events of verses 12-13 take place. Jesus went into the temple area and drove out all who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the merchants and the seats of those selling doves.

What was going on? Why did he do that? Jewish folks from all over the empire came to worship at the Temple because that's what God's Law ordered them to do. While they were there they primarily did two things. They offered sacrifices, and they paid a tax that all Jews had to pay to help support temple operations. However, the Roman Empire didn't have one currency system. It was a patchwork of conquered peoples, all of whom used their own monetary systems. The relative values of their currencies made for a complicated and moving target. So when people came to Jerusalem from Greece, Macedonia, Lystra, Derbe, Rome itself and all over the empire bringing their money to pay the tax there was no way the temple staff could deal with it. So a thriving currency exchange business cropped up in Jerusalem. People coming from out of town could take their local coinage to the currency exchange and get the half shekel that was accepted payment.

There was also a thriving sacrificial animal business. If you had to travel a long way would you want to have to drag your animals along with you? Given that the airlines charged a fee for such baggage...oh wait, that's not right. However, Laurie and I have figured out if we go on vacation to a place where you can go snorkeling it is a lot more convenient and quite cheap to rent flippers than to pack those big, unwieldy things in a suitcase, taking up a lot of room. So ancient Jews figured they could just buy approved animals in town rather than cart one along. This was especially obvious after they'd brought an animal that a priest rejected because it had some sort of supposed flaw that you didn't think was any big deal. Just buying one in Jerusalem that was already approved was much easier.

So those businesses actually provided a helpful service for the people. However, can you see any potential flaw in that system? Suppose you go see a movie and want to buy some popcorn at the theater. How good of a deal are you going to get? You can buy a box of 3 bags of Pop Secret movie butter microwave popcorn at the market for \$3.64. That's a \$1.21 per bag. That same

amount of popcorn at the theater will probably cost you \$6 or more. That's outrageous. It's a 500% markup! Or how about a hot dog at Petco Park or any food at all at Disneyland? Laurie and I are looking into getting a second mortgage on our house as a way of funding dinner on an upcoming trip to Disneyland. Do you think modern American capitalists invented high prices for captive audiences? You can bet your last drachma that pilgrims in Jerusalem got some terrible exchange rates for their currencies and paid exorbitant prices for sacrificial animals. So here's the question. Do you suppose those businesses were motivated primarily to help the pilgrims in their efforts to worship as God commanded? No, they were about making as big a profit as the market would bear. The only thing that would keep them from jacking up rates even higher was competition.

What made the problem intolerable for Jesus was that these businesses originally started in the city, but for "convenience" they had actually moved into the temple area itself. The priests made the argument that they were just trying to make it easier for the worshipers, but the truth was a cut was going to the priests. The businesses were set up in the outer court, the "court of the Gentiles," meaning the only place Gentiles could come have some contact with God was now occupied by people running lucrative businesses.

This was an accepted practice for ancient Jews. It was the norm. It was as much a part of life for them as paying income taxes is for us today. No one gave it another thought. No one except Jesus. He was sick of it. He'd seen it all his life and he wasn't going to put up with it any more. After he did this I suspect a lot of people thought, "why did he get his loin cloth in a bunch? What's the big deal?"

For Jesus the big deal was that people were using the worship of God as a way to line their pockets. They pretended to be supporting worship, but they were all about making money. He was not going to accept people hypocritically making it look like they were all about worship of God when what they were really about was enriching themselves. That is a loud statement that what matters is this life and having a lot of this world's stuff. God comes in a distant second to that. In fact, the heart of idolatry is the effort to sway divine powers or forces to serve one's own very worldly ends. That's just what those people were doing. He was really angry that in fact they took advantage of people in order to make themselves richer, all in the name of God.

I point this out because of what a shock it was. Remember the people were expecting and hoping that Jesus would be Messiah and would lead a divine attack against the Romans. But he completely ignored the Romans and instead attacked their own people! Let's be clear about this. They wanted Jesus to go after Romans, but instead he went after Jews!

IMPLICATIONS

JESUS DOESN'T FIT IN A BOX

My sophomore year in college, my last year of organized baseball, we were playing a game against UC Riverside. I was on a roll coming into that game. I had going what would turn out to be a string of 11 straight at bats in which I would reach base. In that game I would keep that string going in an

unusual way. In this particular at bat the pitcher got two strikes on me, but then appeared to make a mistake. He threw a pitch that I was sure I was going to crush. It was right where I liked it, thigh high coming over the middle of the plate. I started my swing, but was shocked at what happened. Before it reached the hitting zone that ball suddenly dove straight down toward the ground. It looked like it had hit a wall or something because it changed direction so violently. I swung and missed badly as the pitch bounced two feet in front of home plate. I missed it by a good 4 feet. I hadn't recognized that the pitch was a curve ball. It was the most radical curve I saw in all the years I played baseball. It was ridiculous. So I struck out on it. There was good news however. The pitch was so bad it bounced past the catcher and went all the way to the back stop. I took off running, and beat the catcher's throw to first base. Once again I had safely reached base. I did it by striking out.

I tell that story because in that instance I saw what I wanted to see, a nice fat pitch coming right over the plate. But that pitcher literally threw me a curve. I never saw it coming. Jesus shows in this passage that he is the king of curve balls. Many on that first Cloak Sunday saw what they wanted to see. They saw the Messiah, the king who would defeat their enemy for them and usher in an era of power and plenty for all the Jewish people. But Jesus threw them a curve. He wasn't coming to defeat Romans, but to save them. The only people he attacked were hypocritical religious people that used their religion to serve their own selfish interests.

Jesus did this a lot. God sends his Son into the world as the Messiah. What would you expect that to look like? Would you expect him to arrive as an infant born to an unmarried peasant girl in a humble stable? Would you expect him to live in total anonymity as the child of a carpenter in a backwoods town that would make Meridian, Mississippi look like a thriving metropolis? Would you expect that when he finally began his public ministry and chose leaders for his new movement that he would pick fishermen and despised tax collectors? In what may have been the most profound sermon ever preached, the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus addressed people in a culture that believed if you were godly the Lord would bless you with riches, so clearly those who are wealthy are most blessed. They respected people of influence and power just like we do. But Jesus opened that sermon saying, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." What a curve ball that was. The entire sermon in fact, is one big curve that no one expected. Jesus is the king of the curve. He just doesn't do things the way we expect.

Jesus' followers kept arguing over what their positions would be when he finally squashed the Romans and set up his superpower kingdom. Even after he died and rose from the dead they didn't get it. In Acts 1:5 the risen Jesus is with his guys and they ask, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" They *still* think this is all about beating the Romans and setting up a physical kingdom. Wow did they have trouble getting the picture.

We have the same problem the ancient Jews had, but in a slightly different form. The ancient Jewish people knew that associated with the Messiah's kingdom were prophecies of a time of peace and unprecedented prosperity and abundance for those in his kingdom. It was a time of power, of ruling over the world. And that's what they wanted. They wanted good stuff in this life.

They wanted this world's power, they wanted ease, they wanted abundance. But Jesus came to bring all people eternal life, to reconnect them to God, to give forgiveness, grace, and a life of love, joy and peace. He came to give them holiness and strong souls that were alive to God and full of hope. God was working to bring life to all people, to expand his kingdom in this world and to procure an eternal future for countless people.

We unfortunately want things that are much like what the ancient Jews wanted. We want our lives to be lives of abundance, peace, ease, power and the good things of life. Hey, if God loves us that's what he would want for us, wouldn't he? If God is really almighty he can do that, can't he? But Jesus is the master of the curve ball. He throws us stuff we don't expect. In other words, we want our kingdom, but God is working for his eternal kingdom to come in the lives of people everywhere. He's not out to make our lives easy and full of this world's good stuff. He's out to give us eternal life, to make us holy, to give us strong souls, to make us people who love like he loved, to use us to glorify him, and that's a totally different animal.

There are going to be moments in our lives when we experience things that feel like God has thrown us a curve. That's because we are looking for the wrong things. God always loves us, but he is not working to make us rich, comfortable or powerful in the world's ways. He is working to draw us closer to him, to make us more like him, to make our souls strong and full of love and grace for others.

I get a constant reminder that people sometimes work at cross purposes because Laurie teaches music lessons in our home. Some kids make great progress in learning to play the piano, some seem to barely inch along. It is easy to think some kids are more talented than others, but that's not what's happening at all. There is basically one factor that separates the ones that are going to be good from those that are not. That factor is how much they practice. I bring that up because when I was a boy my parents made me take piano lessons. I kind of liked the music thing, but I can't play the piano today. There's one reason for that. Every day my parents would make me come inside and practice the piano. I felt that was downright cruel. The other guys were outside playing baseball or football and the ogres that were my parents punished me by making me stop playing with them and come sit at that stupid piano. I had done nothing wrong, why would they treat me so cruelly? I fought them on that tooth and nail and I won the battle. They finally announced that if I wasn't going to practice then there would be no more piano lessons. Yes, I won that battle, and lost the war, because today I wish I could play.

My parents had a purpose for me. It was that I would learn how to play a musical instrument and become proficient at it. They were looking at the long sweep of my life ahead, not just at that moment. But that was not my agenda for my life. I was consumed only with what mattered in Kid World at that moment. My agenda was that I be allowed to play outside. Hey, obviously this was the far more crucial and wise choice, was it not? Haven't you seen the commercials on television urging kids to go outside and be active? I was ahead of my time. My parents' insistence on me giving up a half hour of precious play time to practice the piano felt mean and incomprehensible to me. It was only as an adult that I realized they were seeking my good and I thwarted something

that would have been wonderful through my insistence that keeping me from what I wanted was unkind.

The people of Israel could not comprehend the infinite greatness of what Jesus was there to do because they were focused on their narrow agenda for their lives. We can do the same thing. The message is that we will benefit greatly by accepting God's agenda for our lives, even when to us it seems incomprehensible.

The principle to live by here is to be obsessed with God's Kingdom, not with the powers, possessions and pleasures of this world.

HUMILITY IS HUGE

Paul wrote of Jesus in Philippians 2:7 he "made himself nothing" and in verse 8 "He humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross." Jesus went from being worshiped in heaven by beings more powerful and glorious than we can imagine, to being rejected and ridiculed and he never even blinked. He was utterly unconcerned with how he might appear to people. He didn't ride into town on a donkey worrying about how that might look to some people. He only cared that they got the message the Father wanted them to get, that while he was Messiah, he was a humble and gentle Messiah. He was so humble he washed his own followers feet, then suffered the horror of mocking and the cross. It was his humility that enabled him to serve the Father. It was his humility that enabled him to meet the most desperate needs of people and to serve them. It was his humility that enabled him to accomplish the greatest feat and win the greatest victory creation will ever know.

Pastor and author Jim Cymbala said, "Humility is the key to experiencing God's power." It was true of Jesus. But where does that kind of humility come from? It requires two crucial elements: First, Jesus was secure in his identity. In John 5:20 Jesus said, "The Father loves the Son and shows him all he does." In verses 22-23 he said, "The Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son, that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father." So in verse 41 he said, "I do not accept praise from men." In other words, he knew who he was, he didn't care if people praised him. He was secure so he didn't have to worry about self-image, his position, or what other people thought of him. He was humble and free of all that.

I'm going to tell you something that could put my man card at risk. Laurie and I went to see the movie *Cinderella* recently. Hey, come on guys, I was doing something nice for my wife. Besides, the next time she says, "Why are you watching this football game? You don't care about either of these teams," I can say, "Hey, I went to see *Cinderella* with you." Anyway, there's a moment in the movie when Cinderella arrives at the ball. She stands on a balcony at the top of some stairs before descending. She comes in and stops there, and the entire crowd down below comes to a halt as they all look at her in wonder. They are enraptured by her beauty. I immediately thought this is what every girl dreams of, that just her entrance into the room would capture everyone's admiring attention. But as I thought about it I realized it is not just every girl's dream, it's every human's dream male and female alike. Not just to be beautiful, but to be noticed and admired. I have lived all my life being no one special. I'm not tall and so strikingly handsome that people notice me

everywhere I go. Really all my life I've been about as noticeable as a grain of sand on wide beach. Just one more among the mass of humanity. I've not done anything nor do I have any special talent that would draw attention to me. So I will never be that person. But that's all right. I know that there is one person in this world who notices immediately when I come in a room, and that's my wife. Laurie cares about me being there and is always aware of me. Because she loves me that makes the indifference of all the other people a matter of no consequence. I don't really care what they think because I matter to the one who matters to me. And that's where real humility comes from. When we know absolutely that we matter to God, that he delights in us, when we get focused on that as the fundamental reality of our existence, then we can stop worrying about how we look to other people or what they think of us. **True humility is not thinking lowly of oneself, it is being totally unconcerned with oneself.** And that is a powerful thing.

The second factor was that Jesus was totally focused on his mission in life. He wanted to accomplish that mission so much that everything else was irrelevant. What people thought of him did not matter. His own comfort and safety did not matter. Only the mission mattered. That laser like focus on the mission allowed him to be utterly unconcerned with his own status, image and comfort.

Years ago when I was working in a ministry at Long Beach State University we had a Christian drama troupe come to our campus. It was a traveling group from the Lamb's Players down in Coronado and they came to put on a play called *The Hound of Everyman*. It was a medieval play that was hilarious but also presented the good news of Jesus. When they arrived on campus they first set up their stage, then they put on their medieval costumes including their makeup. Then a group of them began walking around that huge campus with one of them banging on a drum and the rest calling out to people, "There's going to be a play, come to the play." They walked right through the Student Union building among other places and I cringed. I thought they looked ludicrous. Why would you do such a thing and make yourself look foolish like that? It was because they were on a mission. They had a message to tell people, they wanted them to come see the play and hear the good news, so they simply weren't concerned with how they might appear to some folks. Real humility requires the same thing of us. If I am clear that my mission is to make God's grace and glory known and to do his will in every situation, then I will not be thinking about myself. If others think I am nothing, so what? That is not what my life is about.

Jesus, the one through whom all things were created, came with humility. Does that tell you something? It tells me that humility is a quality of real holiness and goodness. It tells me that it is of utmost importance. It is the quality of true wholeness and health. It tells me it is essential to carrying out God's work in our lives. If we want to be healthy and to experience God's power in and through us, we must have real humility. Let's live in the security of knowing that we are loved and valued by the Almighty God and let's throw ourselves with total passion into the mission he has given us.