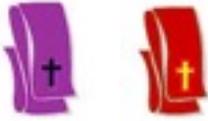




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Palm/Passion Sunday



Lectionary citations:

Liturgy of the Palms

Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29

Luke 19:28-40

Liturgy of the Passion

Isaiah 50:4-9a

Psalm 31:9-16

Philippians 2:5-11

Luke 22:14-23:56

We all love to chant when our side is winning. This was no different. The crowd of disciples were shouting;

‘Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven, and glory in the highest heaven!’

But too much enthusiasm isn’t welcome by any religious establishment. Power to the people challenges elite leadership. So, they ask Jesus to use his influence to bring some order and decency back to the scene. To give them the benefit of the doubt, the Pharisees may not have been hostile to Jesus but merely giving him some commonsense advice. Passover was the feast that recalled the story of God’s people release from their slavery in Egypt, their liberation, and journey to the promised land. Under the Roman Empire, life was harsh. The people were subjected to humiliation, the loss of freedom, crushing taxes, military rule, brutal killings and crucifixions. To celebrate Passover with its story of liberation from slavery was political dynamite. Every Passover the Roman authorities were on high alert.

But despite the obvious risk, Jesus refuses the advice of the Pharisees and refuses to silence the crowd of disciples saying “If they keep quiet, these stones will start shouting.”

Jesus deliberately chooses Passover and its celebration, as a vehicle to proclaim his message. This was always Jesus’ priority over everything else.

The scene recalls the prophecy in Zechariah 9.9

“Rejoice greatly, O daughter Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter Jerusalem! Lo, your king comes to you; triumphant and victorious is he, humble and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.”

That’s what the crowd was responding to in their praise of Jesus. But if we read on a little in Zechariah’s prophecy we fill out the meaning of these words.

“I, the Lord will take away war chariots and horses from Israel and Jerusalem. Bows that were made for battle will be broken. I will bring peace to nations and Your King will rule from sea to sea.” In riding on a colt, Jesus enacted the heart of his message in declaring that the rule of God would bring peace from sea to sea. There was agreement between Jesus and the crowd about the destination of the journey, Peace, but it became clear later that there was no agreement on the way to get there.

The crowd’s understanding was a dangerous mixture of political fundamentalism, and religious fervor. In proclaiming Jesus as King, they were praising the one who would gain victory over the Romans. This was a celebration about winning. This was the excitement of gaining freedom from their oppressors.

So the crowd was shouting, for Home Rule! Stop the Killings! Cut the Taxes! Say NO to Caesar! Soldiers go home! Free the People! and eventually Free Barabbas! Someone wisely said, ‘When the God you worship, has the same enemies as you, you know you are worshipping an idol.’ Palm Sunday is part of Holy Week. The road to Jerusalem was the road to the cross. This was his message of Peace, redefining power. Showing that power could be creative, not destructive, liberating not oppressive, freeing not limiting. The power of Jesus is not the power of the despot, or the power

of politics. It is not the power over others, it is the power of love for others. Jesus travels towards the cross, knowing that love challenges political interests. Love is not about winners over losers, it is winning for all.

In the violent context of military rule and paramilitary resistance, Jerusalem was a powder keg, as Jesus knew. It couldn’t cope with Jesus’ ‘other’ way – the way of love. So as expectations of the crowd grew with its violent aspirations of ousting the Romans, Jesus commitment to non–violence, in refusing to offer any defense other than he was the King the crowd had rightly proclaimed. It was when Jesus refused the crowds violent intentions against the Romans, that the violence within, spilled out and needed a target. The cross was the inevitable consequence when Jesus chose the power of love, over the love of power.

Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. Let the same mind be in you that was*in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross. This world values power. The power of wealth, the power of status, the power of influence. Jesus is asking his disciples to take up their cross and follow him, and says to you and me who claim to be his followers, true greatness is found in pursuing the power of love, and the emptying of self for the good of the other.

Response

Do you prefer Palm Sunday, or Good Friday? Why?

We live in a world of political protest? What are the differences and similarities within the Palm Sunday crowd?

In our consumerist world, you pay to get what you want. Instinctively we seek that what is pleasurable and satisfying.

How might contemporary culture values have influenced our faith? The message of Palm Sunday, the celebration of Peace, is realized through the acceptance of the cross of Good Friday.

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Note: in the Gospel of Luke there is emphasizes on the personal relationship of Jesus with others. Luke describes the kindness and tenderness of Jesus. For Luke, to know this man is to love him. This is evident in the passion narrative. Only Luke describes the following:

* After one of the disciples cuts off the ear of the high priest's servant, Jesus stops and heals him then and there.

* After the third denial, Peter breaks down and weeps. In Luke's account, this happens because "Jesus turned and looked at Peter".

* On the way to the cross, Jesus stops and speaks to the women who are mourning and lamenting him.

* Hanging on the cross, Jesus forgives his executioners.

* One of the criminals crucified next to Jesus addresses him by his first name (with no titles - the only time in any Gospel): "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." Jesus responds: "Today you will be with me in Paradise."

ALL INVITED



69310 Beebe Street
GOOD FRIDAY PRAYER
April 19, 2019 @ NOON

RICHMOND BEEBE PARK
PAVILION - PRAYER
with
PASTORS FROM FIRST
METHODIST (TOM)
TRINITY LUTHERAN (ALEX)
AND FIRST UNITED CHURCH
OF CHRIST (KATIE)



After Mr. Jones bought a cigar in a department store, he immediately lit it and began smoking; however, the salesgirl said, "Sir, didn't you see the sign that forbids smoking?" "What?" Mr. Jones asked indignantly. "You sell cigars here but you prohibit smoking?" Smiling sweetly, the salesgirl answered, "We also sell bath towels."

Thought for the Day:
Salvation is free for you
because someone else paid. —
Anonymous

