

Sermon Transcript

Thine Is the Glory

2 Maccabees 10:1-7 and Mark 11:1-11 | Palm Sunday | March 24, 2024 |

Pastor John Klawiter, preaching

Grace and peace to you my friends in Christ,

Today feels so special, doesn't it?

I know, I know... it's not Easter yet, but really, with the kids leading the parade with palm branches, then the students having first communion, and of course, the hundreds of Easter eggs hidden in the church, today is one big party.

It's fun, festive. It's almost as if it's already Easter.

What could possibly be the harm in starting our celebration now?

I wonder what these guys would have to say about that (**VIDEO of football**)

What did these football players have in common?

They all celebrated too early and it cost their team a touchdown. They didn't finish—they didn't complete the play.

Now, I'm starting to feel a little guilty. Is it too early to celebrate?

Linda, I may have made a horrible, tragic, awful mistake when I suggested we do the gospel acclamation today as "Thine is the Glory" (SLIDE of hymnal)

Look, plain as day: "Thine is the Glory," (SLIDE of circle) **it's an Easter song.**

It's like singing a Christmas song before Christmas. You just don't do it!

Unless you're Christmas caroling, or you're a child performing in a Christmas pageant, or Mariah Carey is belting out "All I want for Christmas is You" on the radio, Christmas songs are meant for Christmas. Not before. Those are Advent songs.

There are rules.

We are still singing Lent songs. Somber, repentance, reflective. No happy, no Alleluia, none of that.

We don't sing a victory Easter song when Jesus hasn't even been crucified. Hasn't even entered the tomb. Hasn't had the women come to the tomb with spices only to find that the tomb is...

Wait, that's next week. I'm getting way too far ahead of myself.

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Handel's "Thine is the Glory" is beloved. But... we should wait.

Fun fact about our hymnal. If you're adventurous, feel free to grab it from your pew and open up to #376.

If you look at the bottom left corner of the page, you'll see that, in fact, German born composer **George Frideric Handel** (SLIDE) wrote this piece during his life which spanned from 1685 to 1759.

There's something interesting about this. Look closer.

The text (SLIDE of circle) to Thine is the Glory was written by some guy who lived 100 years later.

So, the words about the risen conquering son are not from the original work by Handel. Did Handel write this waiting for someone to come along and put words to what he was feeling about Jesus?

Nope. Check out the hymn tune... in the bottom right corner. (Slide)

Judas Maccabaeus

Judas Maccabaeus, a great Jewish hero who came along about 160-170 years before Jesus was born.

Handel wrote this piece to celebrate a Jewish revolt—not to proclaim Christ's victory (**SLIDE, picture of Judas M**).

Written in the part of the Bible known as the Apocrypha, the story of Judas Maccabeus tells about a conquering hero who rides through town while the adoring people cheer with ivy-wreathed wands and beautiful branches of palm fronds.

Martin Luther said the apocrypha is good to read and useful, but not equal to the Holy Scriptures.

So, why are we reading this story today on Palm Sunday in church?

For the same reason Handel thought the story was important enough to compose an oratorio about it.

Handel details how the Maccabean revolt against the Greek empire helped purify the temple.

King Antiochus has forced the people to cave to Greek customs and rituals and forced them to worship Zeus as god in the temple.

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Judas Maccabeus, the Hammer, leads the revolt through a series of battles and is able to regain the temple. They reconsecrate the temple and the occasion is still celebrated to this day. It's called Hannukah.

People follow similar behaviors and patterns of what they've witnessed before. When they had needed someone to save them and rescue them from an enemy, Judas Maccabeus had saved the day! Thus, the celebration that they perform is memorable.

When Jesus comes into town, this feels like a Maccabeus kind of moment.

A large enemy force has occupied their land. They are told to worship the emperor as god, hail Caesar. A young leader from the countryside is coming in to Jerusalem to confront that enemy head on.

If you're the people, what do you do?

You throw a parade. You mimic the actions of how Judas Maccabeus was lifted up—the conquering son. Except the celebration is too early.

The parade into Jerusalem is on a donkey—a symbol of peace.

Jesus isn't riding into town to destroy the enemy through violence. He's coming to proclaim the kingdom of God is at hand.

Jesus knows that his message, spoken aloud in Jerusalem, leads to death. It's why he won't stay in the city overnight—returning to Bethany each night until he shares in a final meal with his closest students.

Jesus knows that the fervor of the crowd will turn on him just as quickly when he won't fight for them in the way they're expecting.

They want to be saved by the sword. Following Jesus sounds like they'll be killed by the sword. They don't want that. They turn on him.

We don't need you. We don't need another man riding into town on a donkey if you're not here to deliver us from our enemies.

In fact, his own friend, also known as Judas—a name that was SO popular when its owner, Judas Maccabeus, restored the temple—would now become the name uttered when we've been betrayed. Judas.

Why do things turn so quickly on Jesus? Are we afraid to talk about it?

We want to skip the suffering. We want to jump over the hard part. Avoid the death—death at human hands, no less. We don't want to admit that we would turn on Jesus, too.

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But it's through the suffering and death that we ultimately saved. Through the cross, we will find new life.

For the disciples following Christ, they found that new life as the purpose for the rest of their earthly lives—this became their mission to share the good news of the love of Jesus Christ with the world.

Holy Communion is our way to celebrate that mission. It's never too early to participate in this sacrament. It's a reminder of the grace in the midst of suffering that happens in Holy Week.

Today, we recognize young members of our church who are taking a step in their faith journey.

They will participate in the sacrament of Holy Communion—remembering the events of the night in which Jesus was betrayed.

Would those students please come forward now with your cup?

When you receive communion, Jesus says, "Given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins, do this in remembrance of me."

Martin Luther, in his Small Catechism, points out that the benefit of eating and drinking the bread and wine is the forgiveness of sins. Through forgiveness comes life and salvation.

You have participated in classes to provide instruction on the meaning of Holy Communion.

Will you join in the fellowship of the church of Jesus Christ and receive the forgiveness of sins through participation in the holy supper? If so, say, "I will by the grace of God."

Let us pray,

Heavenly God, through the covenant of Holy Communion, we, your people, receive the gracious gift of forgiveness of sins. Guide us this Holy Week to celebrate your promise of eternal life by remembering your sacrifice and death—that the victory is won for our sake and the sake of the world, out of your love. Amen.