

Introduction to the Palm/Passion Sunday Lessons

Palm/Passion Sunday. It seems odd that we would combine such polarities, from the great cry of the **Hosannas** on the city streets of Jerusalem to the cold hill of the cross, called Golgotha where the people will taunt Jesus. *“If you are the Christ, then come down, off that cross.”* And then there follows the words of Jesus, *“Father, Father forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing. Into your hands, I commend my spirit.”*



Do you see what I mean? These odd polarities, and yet, this is real life -real- and we are in it now, real life, in the midst of pandemic, that is taking the life out of people, good people, and it is the good people, like the nurses and doctors and grocery clerks all giving of themselves for the sake of the other. **For the sake of the other!**

And that is what Jesus is doing, as he enters the city, riding on a donkey to the shouts of Hosanna, with palm branches strewn before him and children singing, and people filled with expectations. But Jesus knows the other side., what is at the end, and in the end, after the meal of the Passover and after the trail before Pilot and Herod, after the flogging, and scourging. **Then will come the cross.**

The story of the passion of Jesus is not an easy one because, well quite frankly it is a long and gory journey and that is what we will be about this coming week, a journey from the shouts of Hosanna to the cry of our Lord, forgive them, forgive them.

Palm Sunday Devotion

Holy is the week

Holy, consecrated, belonging to God

We move from hosanna to horror

With predictable ease of those who know not what they do

Our hosannas sung

Our palms waved

Let us go with passion into this week

We pray,

Dear God, there is much that concerns us in our lives. There is much that troubles, much that delights, and much that challenges, much that confronts us. Help us Lord, to remember you, to call on you, and to know your presence in these days, and most especially in this time of worship. In the name of Jesus, our Savior. Amen

So, the story is a long one and the journey is filled with twists and turns, this road through the Passion, this journey, like our lives have taken a turn. What do you make of this time? All the world it seems, has been ravaged by the coronavirus. We have seen the ravages of the disease, of painful infection, and paralyzed lounges, people lying on beds, and the rows upon rows of loved ones departed, waiting for their burial.

I mean to say, we have been on an ascending path, of feeling ourselves better and great again, flourishing in the throes of a society on the move, in a world aspiring to great things. Oh, we have our problems to be sure, all is not always right with the world. But we were doing well, so well.

And then that insidious little virus, how, what, when and where! It has moved us to the other side, isolating us from each other, and ourselves, and our aspirations, for all the good that we thought we were about.

And I wonder, in our scriptures for this day, I wonder about the people who welcomed Jesus into the city of Jerusalem. How their hopes must have been lifted, there seeing him, that is the Messiah. And the Messiah, he was entering into their lives, to save them, yes to save them. But not from what they thought. They thought of a better life for sure and they had hoped for a political change in the air. But that was not why Jesus came. Yes, he came for change, and yes for transformation, yes!

Jesus did enter that city, with more to be done, and the more would come at a cost.

A huge cost.

There would be misunderstanding across the way, finger pointing, confusion among the followers. A Judas to act upon his fears, a betrayal of a beloved disciple Peter. Three times he would turn away, three time to the crow of the rooster. And the other followers would run and hide.

But not Jesus! No Jesus remains, and Jesus journeys, between the authorities trying to make themselves look so good. Pilate washing his hands of the whole thing, Pilate, would and does endure the long history, as we confess, “*suffered under Pontius Pilate*”. And what of Herod, over time he has become just another after thought, over a long string of Caesars and Tyrants that thought they could rule the world.

So, there we are, and there Jesus is, on trial, off to be crucified.

I would hope that this story, this journey would awaken us, and open our eyes to see that things that need to be seen. I believe that God would have us to be open, accessible and vulnerable, so that an active faith might grow and flourish within us. Why?

Because God desires our passion, a passion that would move us out beyond our little selves, into the larger dynamic of what we can and should be, people who care deeply, people who love their families, people who will be willing to give of themselves, for the other, people who will take time to be with those who are suffering, to those who are confused, for those who are lost in this time, fearful and wondering without any aim or purpose.

We can be changed by this passion, and Jesus will lead the way. Jesus will suffer for you and me the death of all deaths, and in that suffering, there is the means, the humility of the power to overcome, again and again Jesus would say. “*I have come that you may have life and have it abundantly.*” John 10:10

And what does that mean, truly mean for you, for me.

*Holy is the week
Holy, consecrated, belonging to God.*

Amen