

April 5 2020

Sunday of the Passion/Palm Sunday

Readings for the day: Procession; Matthew 21:1-11

Psalm 31: 9-16

First Lesson; Isaiah 50:4-9a

Second Lesson; Philippians 2:5-11

Greetings friends of Jesus the Christ our Savior and Lord. In a normal year we would be gathered together, singing “All Glory Laud and Honor” as we wave our palm fronds remembering the triumphal entry of our Lord into Jerusalem. This however is not an ordinary year. We have been asked to physically distance ourselves from one another in an attempt to help slow the spread of the Covid-19 virus, thanks be to all who are supporting this effort. As we continue in isolation it is important that we remain in contact with each other, look out for the needs of others and come to the aid of someone that might need your help. While we may be saddened by our inability to gather during this Holy Week and on the Day of Resurrection we are still church together. I’m trying out some technology that is new to me that we might connect better in the word, not quite there yet. As stated we are still church and with that comes the responsibility toward the budget we approved. Your giving is able to be conducted electronically if you wish or simply mail your offerings to the church and it will be taken care of. I thank you for your continued support of this ministry. If you have any questions direct them to me or one of your council representatives. We will gather once again but for now we will gather in Spirit only, perhaps electronically. Let us open this day with the Prayer of the Day.

Let us pray, Everlasting God, in your endless love for the human race you sent our Lord Jesus Christ to take on our nature and to suffer death on the cross. In your mercy enable us to share in his obedience to your will and in the glorious victory of his resurrection, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. AMEN.

My dear friends in Christ grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord Jesus, Amen.

The town had a custom of painting up store fronts, hanging banners and flags up and down the streets, and some residents getting out the face paint, showing how much support they had for the high school football team and their coach. It was quite the seen, people who didn’t seem to care in the least little bit about sports had caught the fever, conversation was about this will be the year of the state championship, and it happened, an undefeated team complete with a trophy. The following season started with the same enthusiasm and pride, the town getting behind their team cheering them on toward another championship. The team made its way through the regular season in fine fashion and were victorious in their first playoff game. The weather for the second game was atrocious, blistering winds, rain blowing sideways, a tough

day to play. At the end of regular play the game was tied at six each, time for sudden death. Each time scored on their first possession forcing a second try. The coach of the returning champs elected to try for a touchdown rather than taking the lesser points of a field goal and failed, their opponents moved the ball into range kicked the three pointer and won the game, disappointment for the champs. The mood in that little town changed, the banners, posters, painted store fronts disappeared, and the people began to talk ill of the coach, questioning his abilities, and worse yet said harmful things about the performance of the kids that were involved. How quickly we turn.

That seems to be the way that humans are capable of acting. Jesus rides into the city, cheers all around, shouts of Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord! A triumphant entry by anyone's standards, but that would be short lived. Jesus leaves the city and while away the plot is formed to seek his death. One of his own a disciple would feel compelled to get involved in this plot, making a deal for some silver to identify Jesus to the priests that seek to have him put to death. At supper Jesus announces that one of the twelve will betray him , one by one they tell the Lord that it is not them except Judas who still has time to rethink what he is about to do states Rabbi, it is not me. Apparently he does not see Jesus as Lord, just as teacher. After turning Jesus over to the high priests, Judas recognizes his mistake, he repents and returns the silver to the priests and kills himself. We have to ask ourselves how great is God's mercy to forgive those that repent, that confess their shortcomings. Where does the cross take us?

Betrayal didn't stop there. The rock, Peter is told that before the cock crows he will deny Jesus and all will abandon him in his hour of need. Being sure of himself Peter state that he would never do such a thing and the others say that they will never abandon Jesus. All enter a garden and Jesus asks them to stay awake and pray with him. The disciples fail miserably as they tire and fall asleep. Jesus is arrested and the disciples flee in fear for their lives. At Jesus' trial Peter indeed denies ever knowing who Jesus is. We must ask ourselves how faithful are we? In these different times of being church are we still standing beside our Lord and Savior? Do we trust in his mercy and forgiveness?

The priests and elders turn Jesus over to Pilot the roman ruler of the area and ask that he crucify Jesus. Jesus is questioned yet he answers with only what Pilot has observed. Trying to prevent an innocent man from crucifixion Pilot offers the people a choice release of a known criminal or Jesus, the people choose to release the criminal. Perhaps it is the urging of the crowd or just mob mentality. Maybe Jesus is put to death because he is a perceived threat to the power structures that exist. One has to wonder what is it that caused his death. Was it a lack of belief that Jesus is Lord, that the way in which we live and those who we choose to follow wish to keep things the same, protecting their power or control? Do we trust that Jesus and his mercy are Lord over all?

And at the end the day we Call Good Friday Jesus life comes to an end. The crowds that once cheered him now jeer him. They offer insult and ask for dramatic signs, yet none offer the goodness and mercy that Jesus offered them. He dies on that cross abandoned by those who

called him Lord, who walked with him, observing and learning what it is like to live in God's abundant mercy. And when he dies that tombs are opened that life will be restored. The story ends or does it? During this Holy Week sit on what you know, gather around the word and let the Word fill you with hope and peace, pray that God's will be done on earth as we await the coming events. Amen