

## Hope for the Fallen

**Texts: Isaiah 50:4-9a**

**Philippians 2:5-11 (Series C. Passion Sunday) Ps.31:9-16**

**Gospel of Luke 22:14-23:56**

Prayer:

If Jesus' entry into Jerusalem was triumphal on Palm Sunday, what went wrong less than a week later? Why did the crowds who adored Jesus on Sunday, turn on him by Friday of that week? And what choice does Palm Sunday present to us today?

It was Palm Sunday and Jesus was coming into Jerusalem. There's no denying that there is a touch of glory in the entrance of Jesus into the city of Jerusalem. Jesus was welcomed as a hero. People had heard how Jesus had raised Lazarus from the dead even though he had been dead for more than four days.

The news had spread about how he had healed people who were incurably sick, how the blind were able to see, the deaf to hear, changed water into wine, and how he restored people to their families after he had driven out evil spirits. The news had reached the people of Jerusalem about the compassion and love of Jesus, and how he shown mercy to tax collectors, outcasts and prostitutes.

The crowd was excited that this miracle-working teacher was coming to town. They waved palm branches; they spread their coats on the road; they shouted, *Hosanna to the Son of David. Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord.*" The crowd welcomed him as they would a king.

This was the man who came in the name of the Lord to intervene in the wretched circumstances of their lives and to give hope for the future. This was the man who would give them freedom from Roman oppression, bring prosperity and bring a time of peace to their troubled land.

No wonder they cheered and paved the way with palm branches and clothing. In the eyes of the crowd there was no doubt that Jesus was the promised king sent by God. But this king was different. There was no white stallion. No show of power and strength.

No band music playing in the background. Instead he rode a humble donkey, an animal used to cart things from one place to another. To put the Palm Sunday story into modern times, imagine Jesus sitting on the tailgate of a pick up truck and riding into town. Not too glamorous compared to a chauffeur driven, white leather seated, airconditioned stretch limo.

As Jesus rode along, he didn't smile and give royal waves to the people lining the street. His heart was heavy. Luke tells us that as Jesus got closer and closer to the city, he wept, *it was not the first time*. He knew that his enemies had begun to plot how they could get rid of him.

When he cried! *"O! Jerusalem, O! Jerusalem, killing the prophets and stoning those who are sent to you! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not!"*

He knew all too well that in a few days the crowds would not be shouting their praises for this new king, but they will be calling out: *Crucify him! Crucify him!* He wept because they wanted peace in their city, but could not see in Jesus the source of *true peace and hope for the fallen* – of *forgiveness* and a *restored* relationship with God.

Jesus wept with grief because he could see a time when Jerusalem would be nothing but a pile of rubble and the people waving palm branches would fall under the Roman sword.

This is no ordinary king riding on a donkey. He has come to serve. He is a servant-king. On Good Friday we see the love that caused Jesus to be burdened with the sin of all humanity. He gave up his life for us.

And what choice does Palm Sunday present to us today? It is in this context that we are confronted with Paul's words to his Philippian friends. Paul, it seems, is quoting an early Christian hymn that speaks about Christ and who he is and what he has done for us. It is almost a mini-creed. Paul presents Jesus in the contrasting pictures of both *King* and *Servant*.

Listen to the apostle. "*[Jesus] always had the nature of God, but he did not think that by force he should try to remain equal with God. Instead of this, of his own free will he gave up all he had, and took the nature of a servant. He became like a human being and appeared in human likeness. He was humble and walked the path of obedience all the way to death— his death on the cross.*

At the heart of Jesus' work was the *humble, selfless desire to serve.* "... *He gave up all he had, and took the nature of a servant.... He was humble and walked the path of obedience all the way to death ...*" The Palm Sunday king did not want to dominate, and lord it over others.

He wanted to serve. He always considered the needs of others first, even if that meant giving up his own life. If serving meant laying down his own life, then he would do it. This theme of service comes through powerfully during Jesus' whole ministry.

Recall what happened at the Last Supper. No one was prepared to wash the dust off the disciples' feet before beginning the meal. So Jesus, the master, tied a towel around his waist, grabbed a bowl of water and knelt before the disciples and began to wash their feet. The picture of a true servant.

Even though Jesus was the teacher, the master, even the king, he didn't give a second thought to doing the lowliest and lousiest of jobs of all, washing another person's dirty feet. A job only a servant would do.

In the Old Testament, Isaiah describes what is today known as *The Suffering Servant*. Isaiah is looking forward to the Saviour and describes the kind of person he will be. . . . *Because of our sins he was wounded, beaten because of the evil we did. ... He was treated harshly, but endured it humbly; he never said a word.*" There is no glory here – just a suffering servant.

He allowed all of this to happen because of his love for you and me and because of his desire that the relationship between God and humanity be restored. He died a servant, meeting our greatest need – forgiveness for the sin that plagues every moment of our lives here on this earth.

Paul says in verses leading up to our text today. *Don't do anything from selfish ambition or from a cheap desire to boast, but be humble toward one another, always considering others better than yourselves. And look out for one another's interests, not just for your own. The attitude you should have is the one that Christ Jesus had...* [namely humility and service].

The apostle is urging us to adopt an attitude of servanthood. As those who have benefited from Jesus' shedding all his power and glory to serve our needs, we are encouraged to be servants of Christ and continue to carry on his ministry of service. Just as Jesus has met us at our greatest point of need, so also, we are encouraged to meet others at the point of their greatest need.

That might be the person who comes seeking assistance at a most inconvenient time; the telephone call with a plead for help that comes right in the middle of something we are doing; that request that seems beyond our ability or capacity to handle; the job that is easy and will help someone, but we just don't want to do it.

Servanthood means just this - helping and caring with a humility and a love that wants to serve others unselfishly. Jesus once said: "*If anyone wants to be great, he must be the servant of the rest, and if one of you wants to be first, he must be your slave - like the Son of Man who did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life to redeem many people*" (Matt 20:26).

As we enter Holy Week once again, let us reflect on the way Jesus gave himself completely and wholly in service to us. We were in need. Our sin would condemn us. We were cut off from God and yet Jesus graciously suffered and died for us. He was a *true servant and Hope for the Fallen*.

Secondly, let us enter Holy Week with a repentant heart, aware of the ways that we have failed being true servants to one another. Our selfish attitude has grieved God. Let's take the time to reflect on what it means to be a servant and determine to tear down the barriers of pride and self-concern, and seek to humbly serve at those points in people's lives where there is need.

And thirdly, as we enter Holy Week, let us take time to stand before the cross in wonder and with thanksgiving, and praise God for the total and complete way Jesus gave himself for us. Today, Palm Sunday / Passion Sunday 2022 choose to honor our great King, Jesus Christ by giving him our very best. Withholding nothing... Giving him our all.

Dr. Martin Luther King said it best, "A time comes when silence is betrayal." That time came for Peter, that time is now for us. We, together, are the voice and power of Christ's love in times of Palms and in the ensuing Storms. Let us always sing HOSANNA in the name of Jesus, our Redeemer Lord. **Amen.**

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**Prayer concerns:** *Matilda Molyneaux-Piper, Shirley Walker, Hanne Bourgeoise, Sven Berg, Astrid Hylland, Ellen Eriksen, Euclide & Ellen Dahal-Lanteigne, Karen Abazio, Pastor Timothy, the dire tension between Russia and Ukraine, Protectors at various places in Canada, Covid -19 patients, essential and Frontline workers, Note: of thanks to God as the Covid-19 virus is easing off and more restrictions are being lifted, and finally Families of departed souls in recent weeks and months.*

**Prayer:** Lord God in Christ, agitate our spirits and provoke our desire to seek Your mind in all that we do. Urge us to empty ourselves of all that draws us away that we may find our true and everlasting life in You. We ask this of You, our Hope and our Redeemer; and the Holy Spirit, the Sanctifier of our Souls; who together with the Almighty Creator is One God, now and forever. **Amen.**

**Make melodies in your heart with these hymns:**

- **All Glory, Laud Honour # 344**
- **Go to Dark Gethsemane # 347**
- **Ride On, Ride On in Majesty # 346**

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

***Mari Tae***

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

n/a

April 10, 2022