

The Coming of the Great King

Texts: Isaiah 50: 4-9a

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

Matthew 26:14-27,66

Prayer:

"Judas Iscariot went off to the chief priests and said, 'What are you willing to give me if I hand Him over to you?' They paid him thirty pieces of silver"

Today is Palm Sunday. Today we begin Holy Week, the week that has Maundy Thursday and Good Friday in it. Lent, and especially Holy Week, is the season in the Church year in which Christians should give most solemn, sacred thoughts to the fundamentals of their religion.

We are moved in these days; to give much thought to the Upper Room event, to Gethsemane, and to Calvary. Our German brothers often speak of this week as **"Stille Woche,"** silent, or quiet, week.

Each year at this time, Judas' betrayal of Jesus for thirty pieces of silver reminds us that the "sell out" is not a new phenomenon on the human scene. Promises broken, loyalties betrayed, principles abandoned--these are not the inventions of our Age. What is new, however, is contemporary society's easy acceptance of the **"sell out"** spirit.

Oscar Wilde once wrote that, in modern society, "People know the price of everything but the value of nothing." Someone else has characterized our time as the "Age of the Sellout," in which "Everything is for sale. Every person has his or her price. Honesty and integrity are traded off, like chattels, for money and power.

Whether it is the "Age of the Sellout" or the "Age of the Fallout" or the "Age of the Blowout," it is our Age.

This is the Time into which we, as a Christian People, have been called to *give light*. This is our one and only opportunity to be the *"salt of the earth."* Our daily fare of misleading TV ads is permanently distorting ours and our children's views of morality, society, and faith."

It is said TV viewers between the ages of five and twelve. According to Professor Bever that by age twelve, many children already have been turned into pessimists by TV. They find it easier to believe that all TV commercials lie than to try to discard which, if any, are being truthful. In Professor Bever's words, "*They become ready to believe that, like advertising, all businesses and all adult institutions are riddled with hypocrisy.*"

Appearances become more important than reality; the image more important than the person. That is why we are told it is naive, unrealistic, even unreasonable to believe in campaign promises. Said one political analyst: "Candidates are packaged and offered for sale to the public like commodities.

"Judas Iscariot went off to the chief priests and said, '*What are you willing to give me if I hand Him over to you.*' They paid him *thirty pieces of silver*, and from that time on he kept looking for an opportunity to hand Him over (Matthew 26:14-16). The biggest sell out of all time for thirty silver pieces: the price of a slave in those days!

So, the price was fixed and the high priests gathered together *thirty pieces* of silver, and they dropped them one-by-one on that hand that had been blessed by the Lord Himself when He called Judas to be an apostle.

And Judas went out clutching those thirty pieces of silver. Remember this, however, all who can hear my voice: please hear me out, we can sell the Lord, but we can never buy Him. Remember also that He is always sold for a price out of all proportion to His true worth.

Inevitably, we betrayers become sick of what we get, as Judas became sick (he flung the silver back into the faces of the high priests, saying, here is your money! ("*I have betrayed innocent blood*"). The high priest responded that is not our problem.

John writes: "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep...I lay down my life - only to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again.

This command I received from my Father." In the halls of judgment, on the way to Calvary, and on the cross, amid all the indignities placed on Jesus. Amid all his sufferings, and in his death, it was the Son of God who was riding on.

There are two reasons for mentioning these things. First, the text says just that. No one can seriously think of these Holy Week events without thinking how Jesus, in his love for us, was marching on, *the coming of the Great King* with true love.

Secondly, some might think of Jesus in a pitiful sort of way. Please don't! Instead, praise him, glorify him! This was his heavenly work for us. Never in history was there such love as this. Never before did God show himself as God did when our Lord rode into Jerusalem, into shame, suffering and death. All this was done to save humankind. *The coming of the Great King with salvation.*

Jesus continues to ride on even in death and in life. Jesus' death was not the end of his life. On Easter Sunday he continued to ride on. Later he ascended into heaven; from there he continues to march on as the Gospel message is carried through out the world in countless ages. Untold numbers of saints have entered heaven's gates and are now living with our Saviour in glory.

This is a great day in the Church. It means little unless Jesus is truly King in and over your life! The world in which we live needs to have a clear vision of Jesus as Lord and Saviour. Each of us needs to see him riding on as well.

One of these days we are going to meet this Son of God who rides on - meet him face to face. He is going to raise those pierced hands and say: "*Come, you who are blessed by My Father, take your inheritance*" (Matthew 25).

He will not abandon us. He will lead us into our eternal fulfillment. We can rely on that absolutely. Jesus is loyal. Jesus keeps His promises. Jesus will never sell us out. We can sell Our Lord; but He cannot be bought.

The message of Jesus was, is, and will always be: *Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. The second is this: Love your neighbor as yourself.*

There is no commandment greater than these. [Mark 12:30-31; Matthew 22:37-39] When is the time for Hosannas? Always!

May God keep us in his grace and as we journey with him to the cross.

Amen.