

## Come on the Journey of Grace.

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

**Philippians 2:5-11 (Series B. Passion Sunday) Ps.116:1-2, 12-19**

**Mark 14:1-14, 47**

*The chief priests and the teachers of the Law were looking for a way to arrest Jesus secretly and put him to death.*

### Prayer:

I know that this isn't the first time you have heard the story of the **arrest, trial** and **crucifixion** of Jesus. When we hear it so many times we're inclined to think of the injustice and the tragedy of an innocent man, but at times overlook the violence that lies behind the Gospel accounts.

They did kill him in a particularly cruel, and painful. The violence of the cross wasn't something short and swift, it went on for hours. The Gospel writers simply give us the simplest outline of what happened that terrible day some 2,000 years.

Today is Palm Sunday we hear of the magnificent occasion when Jesus entered Jerusalem. Jesus riding on that humble donkey, into the city of Jerusalem while children spread palm branches on the street in front of him and those on the side shouting "*Hosanna, Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord*".

Perhaps Palm Sunday didn't make much of an impact on the city of Jerusalem. Jerusalem was crowded with people. And this man riding on a donkey and the cheering crowd probably didn't make a big impression on the City. But some of the people who stood on the side knew that something special was happening. And so they shouted "Hosanna".

Amid all the happiness, cheering, and waving of palm branches there was only one who knew that this week would end in violence. The one who rode the donkey was fully aware that "*... the chief priests and the scribes were seeking how to arrest him ... and kill him ...*".

In just a few days he would experience the pain and cruelty reserved only for the worst and most hardened criminals. The crowd that shouted *Hosanna, Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord*". Few days later they would cry out crucify, crucify him, away with him.

As they drove the nails in his hands and feet and his blood soaked the wooden beam of the cross, one could hardly believe that they were wounding the man who had come to save the very people who were driving in the nails. He was dying to save the people who put on the cross.

He was dying for those people who *called out, laughed and made fun of him, mocking him* to come down and save himself. This man on the cross did not look like God. But he is God. The apostle Paul summed it up like this:.....

*He (Christ Jesus) always had the nature of God ... 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" (Phil 2:6-8).*

He had it all my friends. But gave it all up. And what sometimes is devastating for us, is to realize that he did it *for us and because of us*. When the great artist Rembrandt came to paint the scene of the crucifixion, he painted his own face on one of those people in mob.

He knew that it was for his sins that Jesus was nailed to the tree. That Negro spiritual song "*Were you there when they crucified my Lord?*" haunts us. One verse says, "*Were you there when they nailed him to the tree?*" There is only one answer to that question.

Yes! It was Samuel's sin that crucified Jesus on the first Good Friday. When we look at the figure stretched out on the cross, God wants us to see that through the suffering and death of Jesus our peace was being made with God, our friendship reestablished.

The year was 1927 a man named **Asibi**, a native of West African, was stricken with the deadly disease, called yellow fever. Thousands died from this dreaded disease. However, *Asibi* lived. It seems that his body had conquered the disease. Asibi's blood contained the antibodies from which to begin to develop a successful vaccine.

Today doctors and drug companies have developed an efficient vaccine against yellow fever, and their cure has saved the lives of untold numbers of people around the world. Each dose of vaccine, though, can be traced back to one original blood sample - that of *Asibi* of West Africa.

You might say that one man's blood saved the lives of millions of people. You can see how this relates to Jesus. The blood of this one man has saved us and millions, upon millions of others. In a mysterious way, we have been saved by the death of Jesus through faith in his finished work on the cross.

*Where do we go from here? The answer lays in this story, the story is kind of a guardian in our final week of Lent.* A young and successful executive was traveling down a neighborhood street, minding his own business in his brand new Jaguar. He was children running between parked vehicles and so slowed down when he thought he saw something. As his car passed, a brick smashed into the Jag's side door!

He slammed on the brakes and backed the Jaguar back to the spot where the brick had been thrown. The angry driver jumped out of his car, grabbed the nearest child and pushed him up against a parked car shouting, *"What was that all about? Just what the hell are you doing? That's a new car and that brick you threw is going to cost a lot of money boy.*

Why did you do it?" The young boy was apologetic. "Please, mister...please, I'm sorry but I didn't know what else to do," He pleaded. *"I threw the brick because no one else would stop..."* With tears dripping down his face, the boy pointed to a spot just around a parked car.

"It's my brother", he said, "He rolled off the curb and fell out of his wheelchair and I can't lift him up." Now sobbing, the boy asked the stunned executive, *"Would you please help me get him back into his wheelchair? He's hurt and he's too heavy for me."*

Moved beyond words. He hurriedly lifted the handicapped boy back into the wheelchair, then took out his handkerchief and cleaned the fresh scrapes and cuts. A quick look told him everything was going to be okay." Thank you, and may God bless you mister," the grateful child told the stranger.

Those were heavy words to the driver, the man simply watched the boy push his wheelchair-bound brother down the sidewalk toward their home. It was a long, slow walk back to the Jaguar. The damage was very noticeable, but the driver did not repair the dented side door. He kept the dent there to remind him of this message:

*"Don't go through life so fast that someone has to throw a brick at you to get your attention!" My friends, God whispers in our souls and speaks to our hearts. Sometimes when we don't have time to listen, God has to throw a brick at us. It's our choice to listen or not.*

There's no Easter without Good Friday. As we enter Holy Week once again let us recall *the love, the suffering, the dying and the rising* of our Saviour, let us do so first of all with a *humble spirit*, and open our heart and listen to what God says.

And secondly, I invite you to come on this "Journey of Grace." Let us enter Holy Week with an open heart, *ready to turn away* from the things in our lives that grieve God and those around us. Let us take the time to reflect on what kind of relationship we really have with God.

Let us *renew our faith* in the person of Jesus Christ, *recommit* ourselves to following Jesus more wisely and closely in everything we say and do. And thirdly, as we enter Holy Week, we do so with an attitude of *praise and thanksgiving* for this act of God. Because of the cross and the resurrection, God has given us the assurance that we have complete pardon for all of our sin.

Let us pray:

Jesus, Light of God, today we begin with Hallelujah and Hosanna and end with Heartbreak and Hostility. How quickly the crowds turn, prodded by intentional distortion of truth, political manipulation, and betrayal. Grant us the courage to listen deeply, to walk the path to your coming death as if for the first time, to stand with you through it all now, and to never deny that you are our Messiah, our Lord.

***“He is no Fool who gives what he cannot keep,  
to gain what he cannot lose” (Jim Elliot)***

**Amen.**

**March 24, 2024**