

Journey to the Cross

“Journey to the Cross”

Rev. Cameron D St. Michael – March 28, 2021

Passion/Palm Sunday

Readings: Mark 11:1-11; Mark 14:32-65; Mark 15:1-47

Reflection: Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29

Greeting: Hosanna to the Son of David! Hosanna in the highest! Blessed is the One who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest!

Proclamation of the Entrance into Jerusalem: Mark 11:1-11

Hear from the Gospel according to Mark how our Lord Jesus entered Jerusalem.

When they were approaching Jerusalem, at Bethphage and Bethany, near the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples and said to them, “Go into the village ahead of you, and immediately as you enter it, you will find tied there a colt that has never been ridden; untie it and bring it. If anyone says to you, ‘Why are you doing this?’ just say this, ‘The Lord needs it and will send it back here immediately.’” They went away and found a colt tied near a door, outside in the street. As they were untying it, some of the bystanders said to them, “What are you doing, untying the colt?” They told them what Jesus had said; and they allowed them to take it. Then they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks on it; and he sat on it. Many people spread their cloaks on the road, and others spread leafy branches that they had cut in the fields. Then those who went ahead and those who followed were shouting, “Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the coming kingdom of our ancestor David! Hosanna in the highest heaven!” Then he entered Jerusalem and went into the temple; and when he had looked around at everything, as it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the twelve. (Mark 11:1-11 NRSV)*

Prayer: Almighty God, on this day your Son Jesus Christ entered the holy city of Jerusalem and was proclaimed King by those who spread their garments and palm branches along his way. Let those branches be for us signs of his victory, and grant that we who bear them in his name may ever hail him as our Lord, and follow him in the way that leads to eternal life. In his name we pray. Amen.

Reflection: Psalm 118

O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his steadfast love endures forever! Let Israel say, "His steadfast love endures forever." Open to me the gates of righteousness, that I may enter through them and give thanks to the Lord. This is the gate of the Lord; the righteous shall enter through it. I thank you that you have answered me and have become my salvation. The stone that the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. This is the Lord's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes. This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it. Save us, we beseech you, O Lord! O Lord, we beseech you, give us success! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord. We bless you from the house of the Lord. The Lord is God, and he has given us light. Bind the festal procession with branches, up to the horns of the altar. You are my God, and I will give thanks to you; you are my God, I will extol you. O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever. (Psalm 118:1-2,19-29 NRSV)*

We read the words of Psalm 118 and we hear of celebration. That we are to give thanks to God. As we remember the triumphant entry into Jerusalem, let us reflect on Christ's entry into our hearts. Do we celebrate Christ in our lives in the same way? Do we proclaim his greatness in all that we are and do?

Prayer: Lord, guide us on this day of triumph and tragedy. Let us follow from the procession into Jerusalem to the Crucifixion. Help us to reflect on the love that is the journey to the cross. May you open our hearts to your love and mercy. Hear our prayers and help us in your grace. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Now let the words of our mouths, and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen.

Sermon:

Our scripture readings for today come from the New Revised Standard Version Bible. Our reading of the Passion Story begins with Mark chapter 14, verses 32 through 65.

They went to a place called Gethsemane; and he said to his disciples, "Sit here while I pray." He took with him Peter and James and John, and began to be distressed and agitated. And he said to them, "I am deeply grieved, even to death; remain here, and keep awake." And going a little farther, he threw himself on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. He said, "Abba, Father, for you all things are possible; remove this cup from me; yet, not what I want, but what you want." He came and found them sleeping; and he said to Peter, "Simon, are you asleep? Could you not keep awake one hour? Keep awake and pray that you may not come into the time of trial; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." And again he went away and prayed, saying the same words. And once more he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were very heavy; and they did not know what to say to him. He came a third time and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? Enough! The hour has come; the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Get up, let us be going. See, my betrayer is at hand."

Immediately, while he was still speaking, Judas, one of the twelve, arrived; and with him there was a crowd with swords and clubs, from the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders. Now the betrayer had given them a sign, saying, "The one I will kiss is the man; arrest him and lead him away under guard." So when he came, he went up to him at once and said, "Rabbi!" and kissed him. Then they laid hands on him and arrested him. But one of those who stood near drew his sword and struck the slave of the high priest, cutting off his ear. Then Jesus said to them, "Have you come out with swords and clubs to arrest me as though I were a bandit? Day after day I was with you in the temple teaching, and you did not arrest me. But let the scriptures be fulfilled." All of them deserted him and fled. A certain young man was following him, wearing nothing but a linen cloth. They caught hold of him, but he left the linen cloth and ran off naked.

They took Jesus to the high priest; and all the chief priests, the elders, and the scribes were assembled. Peter had followed him at a distance, right into the courtyard of the high priest; and he was sitting with the guards, warming himself at the fire. Now the chief priests and the whole council were looking for testimony against Jesus to put him to death; but they found none. For many gave false testimony against him, and their testimony did not agree. Some stood up and gave false testimony against him, saying, "We heard him say, 'I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and in three days I will build another, not made with hands.'" But even on this point their testimony did not agree. Then the high priest stood up before them and asked Jesus, "Have you no answer? What is it that they testify against you?" But he was silent and did not answer. Again the high priest asked him, "Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?" Jesus said, "I am; and 'you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of the Power,' and 'coming with the clouds of heaven.'"

Then the high priest tore his clothes and said, "Why do we still need witnesses? You have heard his blasphemy! What is your decision?" All of them condemned him as deserving death. Some began to spit on him, to blindfold him, and to strike him, saying to him, "Prophecy!" The guards also took him over and beat him.

(Mark 14:32-65 NRSV)*

We continue the Passion Story with Mark chapter 15 verses 1 through 47.

As soon as it was morning, the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council. They bound Jesus, led him away, and handed him over to Pilate. Pilate asked him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" He answered him, "You say so." Then the chief priests accused him of many things. Pilate asked him again, "Have you no answer? See how many charges they bring against you." But Jesus made no further reply, so that Pilate was amazed.

Now at the festival he used to release a prisoner for them, anyone for whom they asked. Now a man called Barabbas was in prison with the rebels who had committed murder during the insurrection. So the crowd came and began to ask Pilate to do for them according to his custom. Then he answered them, "Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?" For he realized that it was out of jealousy that the chief priests had handed him over. But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have him release Barabbas for them instead. Pilate spoke to them again, "Then what do you wish me to do with the man you call the King of the Jews?" They shouted back, "Crucify him!" Pilate asked them, "Why, what evil has he done?" But they shouted all the more, "Crucify him!" So

Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd, released Barabbas for them; and after flogging Jesus, he handed him over to be crucified.

Then the soldiers led him into the courtyard of the palace (that is, the governor's headquarters); and they called together the whole cohort. And they clothed him in a purple cloak; and after twisting some thorns into a crown, they put it on him. And they began saluting him, "Hail, King of the Jews!" They struck his head with a reed, spat upon him, and knelt down in homage to him. After mocking him, they stripped him of the purple cloak and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him out to crucify him.

They compelled a passer-by, who was coming in from the country, to carry his cross; it was Simon of Cyrene, the father of Alexander and Rufus. Then they brought Jesus to the place called Golgotha (which means the place of a skull). And they offered him wine mixed with myrrh; but he did not take it. And they crucified him, and divided his clothes among them, casting lots to decide what each should take.

It was nine o'clock in the morning when they crucified him. The inscription of the charge against him read, "The King of the Jews." And with him they crucified two bandits, one on his right and one on his left. Those who passed by derided him, shaking their heads and saying, "Aha! You who would destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself, and come down from the cross!" In the same way the chief priests, along with the scribes, were also mocking him among themselves and saying, "He saved others; he cannot save himself. Let the Messiah, the King of Israel, come down from the cross now, so that we may see and believe." Those who were crucified with him also taunted him.

When it was noon, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. At three o'clock Jesus cried out with a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?" which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" When some of the bystanders heard it, they said, "Listen, he is calling for Elijah." And someone ran, filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on a stick, and gave it to him to drink, saying, "Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to take him down." Then Jesus gave a loud cry and breathed his last. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. Now when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that in this way he breathed his last, he said, "Truly this man was God's Son!"

There were also women looking on from a distance; among them were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joses, and Salome. These used to follow him and provided for him when he was in Galilee; and there were many other women who had come up with him to Jerusalem.

When evening had come, and since it was the day of Preparation, that is, the day before the sabbath, Joseph of Arimathea, a respected member of the council, who was also himself waiting expectantly for the kingdom of God, went boldly to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate wondered if he were already dead; and summoning the centurion, he asked him whether he had been dead for some time. When he learned from the centurion that he was dead, he granted the body to Joseph. Then Joseph bought a linen cloth, and taking down the body, wrapped it in the linen cloth, and laid it in a tomb that had been hewn out of the rock. He then rolled a stone against

*the door of the tomb. Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joseph saw where the body was laid.
(Mark 15:1-47 NRSV*)*

This is the word of God for the people of God. Thanks be to God.

This Sunday, we make our journey to the cross. We have been discussing this all throughout Lent, getting closer and closer to this moment. And I think it's important that we read this story, that we hear these words, and that we let it sink in. Because this is the moment. It's when the sacrifice is made out of love, so that we would understand that we are loved. It's in this moment that we see a friend give his life. It's in this moment that we see somebody give himself up in our place. In Mark's telling of the Passion, the humanity of Christ shows through. That when Christ goes to pray, he's willing to ask that if there's another way, let that be done. But only if it's God's will. We get those last words on the cross "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" And I think I can relate to this account more than any other account of the crucifixion. And I think it's because the humanity of Christ is on full display. Because we get human fears and human emotions, the worry of being abandoned. The plea that if God has another way to make it so. And I find it comforting. One might wonder how is any of that comforting? But I find it comforting because it tells me that it's okay for me to have worries. It's okay for me to be concerned. That I can look to Christ and say you know what, if he could ask questions and he could worry then so can I. But it also shows me that even in those moments he put his trust in God. That he believed in what he was doing. That, though it's often such a contrast, we see the triumphant entry into Jerusalem and then the arrest and crucifixion of Christ. It's also the playing out of the same story, because in it is always Christ triumphant. Because even in sorrow there is triumph. Because even in death, there's resurrection.

And now we wait. We wait because now we reflect on Christ crucified. We reflect on the sacrifice made. And I encourage you in this time to think about what that means to you, personally, that a friend would face death to save you. And I encourage you to reflect on it, much in the way that the early disciples would have been reflecting on it then. Not sneaking ahead. Not knowing what comes next. But as part of our journey to the cross, let us pause here at the cross, to see Jesus beaten and humiliated in our place, for our sake. Because of love. Let us pause for a moment before we celebrate the joy of the resurrection, but to reflect on the power of sacrifice. That Jesus gave himself up so that we may live. That is where my reflections will be over this next week. Letting it sink in how powerful an action it is by itself. Now, one might say that if we downplay the resurrection then surely we're missing the point. But I would say the opposite. The resurrection is our celebration, the resurrection is a promise. But I don't want to overlook the promise of salvation, forgiveness, and redemption we see on the cross. Instead, I find that one can reflect on that by itself. On that moment and everything that led up to it. That I think it gives us a greater depth of understanding and a greater appreciation for all that comes after. But I don't want to run by this moment, because this is the moment that all was put to the test. That Christ's obedience, including death on a cross, was a sign of love to both God and to us. An act of sacrifice. An act of kindness. An act of mercy. And I believe that

when we let that impress itself on our hearts that we know the deep love that Christ has for us. The love that Christ wants us to have for each other. And it's hard not to be moved by that action. Not to be moved by the few words spoken.

So, we pause to reflect. We let it weigh on our hearts. We let sorrow remind us of love. Because often our greatest sorrows are born of love. We think about all that's been given so that we may live. As we lay Christ in the tomb, we think about the love and the care, the sacrifice, the hardship faced on our behalf. And we let it dwell within us. That our hearts may be even more ready, prepared for joy. But not yet. Because we need to remember the cost of discipleship. We remember what love was willing to bear. And we reflect on that love still being with us today. Amen.

Prayer of Confession and Pardon: God of grace and glory, we thank you that you judge us not by the perfection of our actions, but by our readiness to live boldly by faith. Help us, as individuals and as a congregation, to trust you and follow where you lead, that in Christ your name may be glorified in all the earth. In these forty days, may God's grace be shown to us all, cleansing us from our sins, and restoring us in Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Offering: If you are so moved to make an offering, you may send it to the church treasurer, or you may send it to the PO Box listed below. We are still the church, and the church still needs your support to keep doing all the important work that we do.

Lord's Prayer

Dismissal with Blessing: May we go forth reflecting God's love in our lives as we go forth in the peace of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Our Current Series

Information will be available soon about our after Easter series!

Prayer List

Rev Charliam Renner	Bishop Frank Beard	Our Conference	Our Healthcare Workers
Angie Veach	Eric Veach	Cathy Devall	Brock McMorris
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Cindy Cisney	Nancy Hoke	Don Wells	Tricia Adkins
Ronnie & Elaine Carlen	Don Stewart	Bill Gilbert	Michael & Makenzie Reynolds
Ronnie Winstead	Annie McMorris	Dwight Parsons	Trinity Powers
Lauren Stewart	Charlie Henderson	Family of Tom Shamhart	Family of John Millsap
Rosalee Chancellor	Phyllis Gable	Family of John Robey	Family of Wendell Kemper
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Wayne Carrell	Gary & Mary Winterrowd	Mary White	Leo Smith
Bonnie Hite	Donna Graham	Greg Williams	Eloise Buffenmeyer
Martha Roberts	Charlie & Charlotte Baxter	Paul Schulte	Kim Hennes
Family of Irma Cressap	Family of Jerry Holsapple	Dalton McFarland	

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