



## **Palm and Passion Sunday**

Pastor Andy CastroLang

April 14, 2019

### **Scripture (NRSV):**

The First reading:

#### **Luke 19:28-38**

#### **Jesus' Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem**

<sup>28</sup> Jesus went on, going up to Jerusalem.

<sup>29</sup> When he had come near Bethphage and Bethany, at the place called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of the disciples, <sup>30</sup> saying, "Go into the village ahead of you, and as you enter it you will find tied there a colt that has never been ridden. Untie it and bring it here. <sup>31</sup> If anyone asks you, 'Why are you untying it?' just say this, 'The Lord needs it.'" <sup>32</sup> So those who were sent departed and found it as he had told them.

Then they brought it to Jesus; and after throwing their cloaks on the colt, they set Jesus on it. <sup>36</sup> As he rode along, people kept spreading their cloaks on the road. <sup>37</sup> As he was now approaching the path down from the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to praise God joyfully with a loud voice for all the deeds of power that they had seen, <sup>38</sup> saying,

"Blessed is the king  
who comes in the name of the Lord!  
Peace in heaven,  
and glory in the highest heaven!"

The Second reading:

#### **Luke 22:24-27**

## **The Dispute about Greatness**

<sup>24</sup> A dispute also arose among them as to which one of them was to be regarded as the greatest. <sup>25</sup> Jesus said to them, “The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those in authority over them are called benefactors. <sup>26</sup> But not so with you; rather the greatest among you must become like the youngest, and the leader like one who serves. <sup>27</sup> For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one at the table? But I am among you as one who serves.

## **Luke 22:39-42**

### **Jesus Prays on the Mount of Olives**

<sup>39</sup> Jesus went out, as was his custom, to the Mount of Olives; and the disciples followed him. <sup>40</sup> When he reached the place, he said to them, “Pray that you may not come into the time of trial.”<sup>[a]</sup> <sup>41</sup> Then he withdrew from them about a stone’s throw, knelt down, and prayed, <sup>42</sup> “Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me; yet, not my will but yours be done.”

## **Luke 22:45-48**

<sup>45</sup> When he got up from prayer, he came to the disciples and found them sleeping because of grief, <sup>46</sup> and he said to them, “Why are you sleeping? Get up and pray that you may not come into the time of trial.”<sup>[a]</sup>

## **The Betrayal and Arrest of Jesus**

<sup>47</sup> While he was still speaking, suddenly a crowd came, and the one called Judas, one of the twelve, was leading them. He approached Jesus to kiss him; <sup>48</sup> but Jesus said to him, “Judas, is it with a kiss that you are betraying the Son of Man?”

Then they seized him and led him away.

The Third reading:

## **Luke 22:63-65**

### **The Mocking and Beating of Jesus**

<sup>63</sup> Now the men who were holding Jesus began to mock him and beat him; <sup>64</sup> they also blindfolded him and kept asking him, “Prophecy! Who is it that struck you?” <sup>65</sup> They kept heaping many other insults on him.

## **Luke 23:13-25**

### **Jesus Sentenced to Death**

<sup>13</sup> Pilate then called together the chief priests, the leaders, and some of the people, <sup>14</sup> and said to them, “You brought me this man as one who was perverting the people; and here I have examined him in your presence and have not found this man guilty of any of your charges against him. <sup>15</sup> Neither has Herod, for he sent him back to us. Indeed, he has done nothing to deserve death. <sup>16</sup> I will therefore have him flogged and release him.”<sup>[a]</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Then they all shouted out together, “Away with this fellow! Release Barabbas for us!” <sup>19</sup> (This was a man who had been put in prison for an insurrection that had taken place in the city, and for murder.) <sup>20</sup> Pilate, addressed them again; <sup>24</sup> but they kept shouting, “Crucify, crucify him!” <sup>22</sup> A third time he said to them, “Why, what evil has he done? I have found in him no ground for the sentence of death; I will therefore have him flogged and then release him.” <sup>23</sup> But they kept urgently demanding with loud shouts that he should be crucified; and their voices prevailed. <sup>24</sup> So Pilate gave his verdict that their demand should be granted. <sup>25</sup> He released the man they asked for, the one who had been put in prison for insurrection and murder, and he handed Jesus over as they wished.

The Fourth reading:

## **Luke 23:26-27**

### **The Crucifixion of Jesus**

<sup>26</sup> As they led him away, they seized a man, Simon of Cyrene, who was coming from the country, and they laid the cross on him, and made him carry it behind Jesus. <sup>27</sup> A great number of the people followed him, and among them were women who were beating their breasts and wailing for him.

## **Luke 23:32-38**

<sup>32</sup> Two others also, who were criminals, were led away to be put to death with him. <sup>33</sup> When they came to the place that is called The Skull, they crucified Jesus<sup>[a]</sup> there with the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. <sup>34</sup> Then Jesus said, “Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.”<sup>[b]</sup> And they cast lots to divide his clothing. <sup>35</sup> And the people stood by, watching; but the leaders scoffed at him, saying, “He saved others; let him save himself if he is the Messiah<sup>[c]</sup> of God, his chosen one!” <sup>36</sup> The soldiers also mocked

him, coming up and offering him sour wine, <sup>37</sup> and saying, “If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!” <sup>38</sup> There was also an inscription over him, <sup>[d]</sup> “This is the King of the Jews.”

The Fifth Reading:

**Luke 23:44-56**

### **The Death of Jesus**

<sup>44</sup> It was now about noon, and darkness came over the whole land <sup>[a]</sup> until three in the afternoon, <sup>45</sup> while the sun’s light failed; <sup>[b]</sup> and the curtain of the temple was torn in two. <sup>46</sup> Then Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said, “Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.” Having said this, he breathed his last. <sup>47</sup> When the centurion saw what had taken place, he praised God and said, “Certainly this man was innocent.” <sup>[c]</sup> <sup>48</sup> And when all the crowds who had gathered there for this spectacle saw what had taken place, they returned home, beating their breasts. <sup>49</sup> But all his acquaintances, including the women who had followed him from Galilee, stood at a distance, watching these things.

### **The Burial of Jesus**

<sup>50</sup> Now there was a good and righteous man named Joseph, who, though a member of the council, <sup>51</sup> had not agreed to their plan and action. He came from the Jewish town of Arimathea, and he was waiting expectantly for the kingdom of God. <sup>52</sup> This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. <sup>53</sup> Then he took it down, wrapped it in a linen cloth, and laid it in a rock-hewn tomb where no one had ever been laid. <sup>54</sup> It was the day of Preparation, and the sabbath was beginning. <sup>[d]</sup> <sup>55</sup> The women who had come with him from Galilee followed, and they saw the tomb and how his body was laid. <sup>56</sup> Then they returned, and prepared spices and ointments.

On the sabbath they rested according to the commandment.

### **Sermon:**

I always felt tricked by Holy Week when I was a child.

I knew why I came to church (besides the fact that my parents went every week without fail): to hear a story about Jesus, to be bathed in familiar and comforting music, to be wrapped in lovely rituals that made me feel that I belonged.

I came because somebody was gonna say that God loved me.

And I would leave with a smile after greetings from people who were kind and friendly to me, a kid.

But this week, Holy Week, coming up, always felt awful.

I didn't want to go.

I didn't want to hear, let alone participate in, these terrible stories about the last days and hours of Jesus' life.

The people in church were supposed to read their part in the Passion story and our spoken part was just this: "Crucify him, crucify him."

I hated it.

I would never do such a thing, say such a thing, to anyone. Especially not Jesus, he was nice...and kind to children.

I always cried. I didn't want to do it.

I am not a child anymore. But I still don't like it.

Yet here I am now, insisting it is our turn to hear the dreadful events, again.

Many preachers will focus on the palm parade today and avoid this story, cause I'm betting you don't like it either.

And we come here to feel better, to be renewed, refreshed, strengthened for another day, another week. Am I right?

Like the child I was long ago, we want to go from Palm Sunday to Easter joy.

But I am no longer a child. And the brokenness within me, the brokenness within us, and the brokenness within the world around us, cannot be forgotten.

And the pain of my ways of being wrong, and stupid and hurtful...even when I'm trying to do better...that pain is real. That remorse is real. My sins are real.

Ignoring it in Easter joy is a cover up and it just isn't enough for me anymore.

I need the dark stories of the Passion. I need to be reminded that I can be as wretched and weak and fearful as Judas and as Peter, and find forgiveness.

I need to know that the human tendency towards selfishness, the program of governments towards oppression, the cruelty of violence, can be faced...and can be rejected.

I need to know that my own selfishness and violence can be faced, and can be forgiven. I need to know that the pain of suffering is not only mine, but is known to God.

Nietzsche famously said that he could believe only in a God who knows how to dance.

Nice.

However, I need more than the dance.

I can believe only in a God who knows our human suffering, our agonies, and does not despair. Does not condemn.

I have to go to the Passion story because I know, now, so much more about human suffering...whether it is the suffering of poverty, the suffering of prejudice, of addiction and disease, the suffering of being trapped in the cycle of violence and vengeance...

I know that we feel trapped, and that we despair and cannot find our way out of the darkness.

Jesus is there. In it all. Jesus knows. Jesus experiences betrayal, abuse, pain, injustice, a senseless death.

We hear it all: Weak friends. Cruel systems. Brutal torture. Degradation. A weeping mother holding her dead child.

We know this. Jesus knew it, too.

Corrie ten Boom, a Dutch Christian and Nazi death camp survivor made famous a saying of her sister Betsye before she died at Ravensbruck concentration camp.

She said, "No matter how deep our darkness, God goes deeper still."

Here is the proof. In this gospel. God goes deeper still.

I urge you to face this story, and face the darkness, and wait, wait, wait for the surprising thing that God will do, even with our darkness.

Because, we believe in a surprising God...

One who can dance

One who can go deeper

One who will rise.