

Philippians 2:5-11      Have This Mind  
Psalm 31:9-16  
March 24, 2024

The gospel reading for Palm Sunday comes from Mark, and is a simple telling of the story that marks the day, one of the ironic days in the Christian year. Jesus rides into Jerusalem on a donkey, his way decorated by the cloaks of some of the people, and the branches some of them cut from trees, laid before him. The people strike up a chant from the 118th Psalm to serenade him;

“Hosanna! (which means, “save us”) Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David! Hosanna in the highest.”

It is a great celebration that nevertheless immediately turns anti-climactic, “Jesus entered Jerusalem and went to the Temple. He looked around at everything, but since it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the Twelve.” Nothing happened. He turned around and left.

And so the season of Lent reaches its end as Holy Week begins, the week of the Passion of Jesus, the one who is called the Christ. He goes on to the temple the next morning and throws a fit at the money-changers and those selling animals. During the week he unleashed a litany of memorable sayings. “My house shall be called a house of prayer for the nations? But you have made it a den of robbers.”

As the week progresses Jesus becomes embroiled in many contentious debates, with the authorities; about authority, which he doesn’t answer; about taxes to Caesar, and he comes up with a clever line, “Render unto to Caesar, the things that are Caesar’s, and unto God, the things that are God’s.”

And about marriage in the resurrection, and he gives them, “Are you not in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God? 25 When the dead rise, they will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in heaven. 26 Now about the dead rising—have you not read in the Book of Moses, in the account of the burning bush, how God said to him, ‘I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’? 27 He is not the God of the dead, but of the living.

And about the greatest commandment: “The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord: 30 And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. 31 And the second is like it, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.”

He speaks about the end of the age and says, “But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.”

He is anointed at Bethany with expensive perfume. He met with the Twelve for the Passover meal. There was

betrayal and denial. The wrenching prayer in the garden. Arrest. The cross itself. Death. Burial. The week that began in such hopefulness and joy, naive though it was, ends in darkness and shame. Or does it?

Songs have been written about these events. One such hymn from the early days has already been read in this service, and it offers a different conclusion. It is from Philippians,

“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in human likeness: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

So the *cross* is the glory of God.

After these 2,000 years almost, we come once again to these moments and ask ourselves what they mean to us. Let me first speak of the irony of it all. Palm Sunday represents the contrast between the concerns and the way of thinking and the hopes of *this world*,

coming into direct confrontation with the mind of God and divine things.

The story turns in what is to us an unexpected way. And this turning reflects the reality in which human beings have always lived, and in which we live to this day. Each of us is bound by the circumstances and limitations of our time and place. Our lives are subject to the cycles and trajectories of this life, both personally and in terms of the larger life of the world.

We participate in the world's life. The history we inherit is mixed, with some wonderful and some horrible things in it. We enjoy the technology of the age even if it comes with downsides; and we are made daily aware of the failures of humanity, diplomacy and justice that lead to disenchantment and war. And there always seems to be a war somewhere; and poverty, and disease . . .

But there is also something else at work - and sometimes it confronts us directly as well. Palm Sunday is one of the names we have given to that confrontation. The people were installing a king to rebel against and expel their conquerors. God was establishing an eternal solution to the combined problems of death and sin and emptiness.

God was crashing down the stone wall of the mortality we all share, in an encounter with eternity, and we are met with the reality that there are two realms, the earthly and the heavenly, which overlap in mysterious

ways and it is finally the eternal which has lasting power. There is more to life than what we think!

If the first part of the aftermath of the encounter with eternity, is an encounter with God, the second part involves a reckoning with ourselves, an encounter with the reflection in the mirror, so that not only does the story of Jesus turn, but also we ourselves, turn - that is what *repentance* means.

We can only be healthy if we take ownership with responsibility, immersing our lives in humility and gratitude. We know well that when we live this life, not to ourselves, rather to Christ, we will be changed; a relationship with Christ will change our character, the way we approach the moments of our lives; away from selfishness and anger and fear, away from greed and envy, and the judgment of others, both the judgments others make about us, and the judgments we make about others, and our own self judgements.

So have this mind, that we not only move away but humbly towards a better life; higher character and integrity - what lofty words - even loftier are the realities - compassion, generosity, kindness, honesty, and love, not to achieve but because we have been given . . . eternal life.

And to the grace to bear our mortality with dignity and honor as God makes his way with us, right in the middle of everything else that fills our days, and as we make our way to God, through the power of Jesus Christ our Lord.

[Back](#)[Home](#)