

PALM/PASSION SUNDAY, YEAR C, APRIL 10, 2022

Many of you might remember the old ABC's Wide World of Sports introduction which had the catch phrase "From the thrill of victory to the agony of defeat". Today that catch phrase aptly describes our Palm/Passion Sunday. We go from the thrill of the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem to the agony of the cross.

When the people in Jesus' day saw him riding into Jerusalem that day, they knew that something exciting was happening. They knew that Jesus was riding as the Messiah would, and they thought they knew what that meant. They thought it meant they would be free from the Romans and that Jesus was going to be their King. So, they got caught up in the excitement of the moment and celebrated and rejoiced at the picture which was forming in their mind's eye. It was a picture of a king who would save them, a picture of a nation reborn, a picture of a people who would be free to be a mighty nation again. So, they celebrated, they danced down the street, they shouted Hosanna's!!

And then just a few short days later, that same crowd cried, crucify him. They learned that the picture which had developed in their mind's eye was not the picture that Jesus had painted for himself. Jesus had painted a picture of a suffering Messiah, one who would suffer with them and for their sins so that they might have new life.

And the people cried crucify him not because they understood that he was to be the suffering Messiah, but because Jesus did not fulfill their expectations. They cried crucify him because Jesus had let them down and because they wanted a warrior king like King David who was a great general and defeater of Israel's enemies. They wanted a conquering king who would lead them into battle, but Jesus was the lamb who was to be sacrificed! Their disappointment was immense.

These contradictions of who we want Jesus to be and who he is are what give Jesus's story its shape, weight, and texture, calling us at every moment to hold together truths that seem bizarre, counterintuitive, and irreconcilable. The truth is that Jesus' story from Palm Sunday to the cross to Easter is about life. It is a story of our lives. Joy. Love. Fear. Grief. Betrayal. Pain. Even the ordinary: eating, drinking, washing. In the stories we read this week we learn both joy and grief, celebration and pain.

So, today we are invited to gather and shout both Hosanna and Crucify him because we are no different than the people who surrounded Jesus that day wanting a Jesus of their own making. We tell this story because we must recognize who Jesus really is for us. He is the one who died and lives again, the one who binds us to people of all races, nationalities, and affiliations and the one who joins us together with people we love and with people we'd rather not associate with. We tell it again because this week, in this time, we keep the reality alive that there is a God, and that despite the pain that we see every day, that God is a God of Love and Hope, and a God who cries with, loves, and cares for every person.

So, I invite you this morning to open your eyes to see who Jesus really is. Weep with him for those who are broken including yourself. Realize that Jesus walks with you offering hope and joy even if you are in the midst of grief and pain. Of this, there is no doubt. The only question that remains is: Will we walk with him? Amen.