

Rev. Timothy M. Crummitt

Sixth Sunday in Lent - Year C

Palm Sunday

St. Paul's Lutheran Church

Luke 19:28-40

Isaiah 50:4-9a

Psalms 31:9-16

Philippians 2:5-11

Luke 23:1-49

Gospel

The Holy Gospel according to St. Luke”

¹Then the assembly rose as a body and brought Jesus before Pilate. ²They began to accuse him, saying, “We found this man perverting our nation, forbidding us to pay taxes to the emperor, and saying that he himself is the Messiah, a king.” ³Then Pilate asked him, “Are you the king of the Jews?” He answered, “You say so.” ⁴Then Pilate said to the chief priests and the crowds, “I find no basis for an accusation against this man.” ⁵But they were insistent and said, “He stirs up the people by teaching throughout all Judea, from Galilee where he began even to this place.” ⁶When Pilate heard this, he asked whether the man was a Galilean. ⁷And when he learned that he was under Herod’s jurisdiction, he sent him off to Herod, who was himself in Jerusalem at that time. ⁸When Herod saw Jesus, he was very glad, for he had been wanting to see him for a long time, because he had heard about him and was hoping to see him perform some sign. ⁹He questioned him at some length, but Jesus gave him no answer. ¹⁰The chief

priests and the scribes stood by, vehemently accusing him. ¹¹Even Herod with his soldiers treated him with contempt and mocked him; then he put an elegant robe on him, and sent him back to Pilate. ¹²That same day Herod and Pilate became friends with each other; before this they had been enemies. ¹³Pilate then called together the chief priests, the leaders, and the people, ¹⁴and 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. ¹⁵Neither has Herod, for he sent him back to us. Indeed, he has done nothing to deserve death. ¹⁶I will therefore have him flogged and release him.” ¹⁸Then they all shouted out together, “Away with this fellow! Release Barabbas for us!” ¹⁹(This was a man who had been put in prison for an insurrection that had taken place in the city, and for murder.) ²⁰Pilate, wanting to release Jesus, addressed them again; ²¹but they kept shouting, “Crucify, crucify him!” ²²A 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.” ²³But they kept urgently demanding with loud shouts that he should be crucified; and their voices prevailed. ²⁴So Pilate gave his verdict that their demand should be granted. ²⁵He 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. ²⁶As 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. ²⁷A great number of the people followed him, and among them were women who were beating their breasts and wailing for him. ²⁸But Jesus turned to them and said, “Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. ²⁹For the

days are surely coming when they will say, 'Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bore, and the breasts that never nursed.' 30Then they will begin to say to the mountains, 'Fall on us'; and to the hills, 'Cover us.' 31For if they do this when the wood is green, what will happen when it is dry?" 32Two others also, who were criminals, were led away to be put to death with him. 33When they came to the place that is called The Skull, they crucified Jesus there with the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. 34[Then Jesus said, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing."]

And they cast lots to divide his clothing. 35And the people stood by, watching; but the leaders scoffed at him, saying, "He saved others; let him save himself if he is the Messiah of God, his chosen one!" 36The soldiers also mocked him, coming up and offering him sour wine, 37and saying, "If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!" 38There was also an inscription over him, "This is the King of the Jews." 39One of the criminals who were hanged there kept deriding him and saying, "Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us!" 40But the other rebuked him, saying, "Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? 41And we indeed have been condemned justly, for we are getting what we deserve for our deeds, but this man has done nothing wrong." 42Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." 43He replied, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise." 44It was now about noon, and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon, 45while the sun's light failed; and the curtain of the temple was torn in two. 46Then Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said, "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit." Having said this, he breathed his last. 47When the centurion saw what had taken place, he praised God and said, "Certainly this man was innocent." 48And when all the crowds

who had gathered there for this spectacle saw what had taken place, they returned home, beating their breasts. 49But all his acquaintances, including the women who had followed him from Galilee, stood at a distance, watching these things.

The Gospel of our Lord.

Prayer

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen

Palm Sunday

Good morning! Today's story at the end of Lent begins with a story about Christmas. Christmas morning, to be exact. Growing up in the Crummitt household my parents, along with Santa, got us gifts. In the sixth grade we began our winter break at the height of the first time that the Pokemon rage took over the country. I've always liked collecting things, and so I had my heart set on some new Pokemon cards. I had specifically mentioned it to my parents SEVERAL times, being about as obvious as Randy in A Christmas Story. On Christmas morning the Crummitts had a tradition. My parents would go down, turn on all the Christmas lights, get some Christmas music playing, and Dad would start his coffee. The three Crummitt siblings would sit at the top of our stairs in anxious waiting, excited to see what lay beneath the tree. When my parents gave the word, the race was on, and let me tell you, I ALWAYS won that race. Jumping halfway down the steps I made sure I was the first person to the presents. We tore open the gifts, and no surprise, I was always the first one done there, too. We always opened our stockings last, and I had to wait on everyone else to finish first before

we could get those. But I KNEW that was where the Pokemon cards were hiding, it's just the kind of place my parents would put them. When my brother was finally done, and believe me, he was always the last one to finish, it was time for the stockings. The sack was full of the usual candy and other trinkets, but there in the bottom were the cards!

I grabbed the packages and there must have been 10-15 of them! But as I got a closer look at the cards I realized something was wrong. They weren't the right Pokemon cards, they were some other knock-off pack. I was crushed. What was worse, you could tell my parents felt bad, they had been promised by the guy in the store that they were the right ones. We believe that he had been out of the normal ones and instead of being honest, took advantage of some parents who didn't know the difference.

I had hoped that Christmas would have been something else! But now I was confronted with disappointment. It was much the same for the community in Jerusalem the day that Jesus rode into town. They would soon have all their hopes swept aside. Today, we enter Holy Week, the season of the church year with the highest of highs, and lowest of lows. And nowhere is this more evident for me than with how Jesus enters the city. The crowds gather like a king is entering a city, and he rides A COLT?! Come on! I'll be honest, I was always a little embarrassed with the whole riding a colt thing. I used to wonder, couldn't he have found a chariot or something? Maybe a war horse, something with some presence? And yet he rides in on some little colt.

Expectation

Disappointment

But then I realized that maybe this whole weak persona was part of the whole point. In fact, maybe that's the point of Palm Sunday in the first place. It's about re-

aligning our expectations with the reality that God has been showing us all along. He enters in peace, in what looks like weakness. God has always been the protector of the poor, the weak, the widow, the orphan, the alien, and the prisoner. Jesus' ministry has been marked not by violence, but by community and peace. It has never promised to be more than what it was, reconciliation.

We have a choice today. How will we see God? What are our expectations? The people of Jerusalem and Israel had been hoping for a Messiah, a military leader who would sweep through the Middle East, increasing the kingdom that David had ruled over all those years ago. They expected earthly displays of power, misguided ideas of what it meant to be in control. And what they got was a 30 year old carpenter from the boondocks riding in on a colt.

What will we choose? The life that Jesus led can only end up in one place, and that's on the cross. In a world that misunderstands weakness for strength, and strength for weakness, he was destined to die. When you challenge the powers that be, sometimes they bite back. What's more amazing, is that he enters the city KNOWING that it will mean his death. Our expectations were too high, and tensions were too deep. Somebody had to budge, and so we killed him. I can't stress this enough, Jesus Christ's sacrifice on the cross shapes EVERYTHING! about our faith. He chooses death so that we won't ever have to make that choice again.

It reminds me of my favorite scene in my favorite show. Doctor Who. In episode 8 of the ninth series, titled "The Zygon Inversion" the doctor is doing his usual job of trying to save the world. Here's the necessary background: Doctor Who is a show on the BBC that follows an alien named the Doctor who looks like a human as he travels

around the world in a spaceship that is also a time machine that looks like a police box. He's a Christ-like figure, and in this episode he's trying to stop one rebel group of aliens and a group of human leaders from destroying each other.

The scene takes place in front of two boxes. A scale model of War, the Doctor says. In each box is a button, press one, and all the aliens die. Press the other, and all the humans go. The catch is that neither the humans or the aliens know which button is which, only the Doctor knows. As they stand before the boxes he asks them something:

"So let me ask you a question about this brave new world of yours. When you've killed all the bad guys, and when it's all perfect and just and fair, when you have finally got it exactly the way you want it, what are you gonna do with the people like you? The troublemakers. How're you going to protect your glorious revolution from the next one?"

Bonnie: We'll win.

The Doctor: Oh, will you? Well maybe, maybe you will win. But nobody wins for long.

The wheel just keeps turning. So come on. Break the cycle... This is a scale model of war. Every war ever fought, right there in front of you. Because it's always the same. When you fire that first shot, no matter how right you feel, you have no idea who's going to die! You don't know whose children are going to scream and burn. How many hearts will be broken. How many lives shattered. How much blood will spill until everybody does what they were always going to have to do from the very beginning. Sit down and talk!

The Doctor: Do you know what thinking is? It's just a fancy word for changing your mind.

Bonnie: I will not change my mind.

The Doctor: Then you will die stupid.

Bonnie: You don't understand. You will never understand.

The Doctor: I don't understand? Are you kidding? Me? Of course I understand. I mean do you call this a war? This funny little thing. This is not a war. I fought in a bigger war than you will ever know. I did worse things than you can ever imagine. And when I close my eyes... I hear more screams than anyone would ever be able to count!¹

And here's the line that gets me.

DOCTOR: You're all the same, you screaming kids. You know that? Look at me, I'm unforgivable. Well, here's the unforeseeable. I forgive you. After all you've done, I forgive you.²

We think we have to keep making this choice, of seeing the world in a certain way. But we don't. There is an another option, an option that is sacrifice steeped in love, a story that forgives and ushers in something new. But in order to hear that story, you'll have to wait a little longer. Amen.

¹<http://www.chakoteya.net/DoctorWho/35-8.html>

² Ibid.