

Rev. Timothy M. Crummitt

Palm/Passion Sunday - Year B

Mark 1:1-11

Isaiah 50:4-9a

Psalm 31:9-16

Philippians 2:5-11

Mark 15:1-39[40-47]

03/24/2024

Processional Gospel

1When they were approaching Jerusalem, at Bethphage and Bethany, near the Mount of Olives, [Jesus] sent two of his disciples 2and 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. 3If anyone says to you, ‘Why are you doing this?’ just say this, ‘The Lord needs it and will send it back here immediately.’ ”

4They went away and found a colt tied near a door, outside in the street. As they were untying it, 5some of the bystanders said to them, “What are you doing, untying the colt?” 6They told them what Jesus had said; and they allowed them to take it.

7Then they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks on it; and he sat on it.

8Many people spread their cloaks on the road, and others spread leafy branches that they had cut in the fields. 9Then those who went ahead and those who followed were shouting, “Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!

10Blessed is the coming kingdom of our ancestor David! Hosanna in the highest heaven!” 11Then 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.

Gospel

The Holy Gospel according to St. Mark:

1As 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. 2Pilate asked him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" He answered him, "You say so." 3Then the chief priests accused him of many things. 4Pilate asked him again, "Have you no answer? See how many charges they bring against you." 5But Jesus made no further reply, so that Pilate was amazed. 6Now at the festival he used to release a prisoner for them, anyone for whom they asked. 7Now a man called Barabbas was in prison with the rebels who had committed murder during the insurrection. 8So the crowd came and began to ask Pilate to do for them according to his custom. 9Then he answered them, "Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?" 10For he realized that it was out of jealousy that the chief priests had handed him over. 11But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have him release Barabbas for them instead. 12Pilate spoke to them again, "Then what do you wish me to do with the man you call the King of the Jews?" 13They shouted back, "Crucify him!" 14Pilate asked them, "Why, what evil has he done?" But they shouted all the more, "Crucify him!" 15So Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd, released Barabbas for them; and after flogging Jesus, he handed him over to be crucified. 16Then the soldiers led him into the courtyard of the palace (that is, the governor's headquarters); and they called together the whole cohort. 17And they

clothed him in a purple cloak; and after twisting some thorns into a crown, they put it on him. 18And they began saluting him, "Hail, King of the Jews!" 19They struck his head with a reed, spat upon him, and knelt down in homage to him. 20After mocking him, they stripped him of the purple cloak and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him out to crucify him. 21They 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. 22Then they brought Jesus to the place called Golgotha (which means the place of a skull). 23And they offered him wine mixed with myrrh; but he did not take it. 24And they crucified him, and divided his clothes among them, casting lots to decide what each should take. 25It was nine o'clock in the morning when they crucified him. 26The inscription of the charge against him read, "The King of the Jews." 27And with him they crucified two bandits, one on his right and one on his left. 29Those who passed by derided him, shaking their heads and saying, "Aha! You who would destroy the temple and build it in three days, 30save yourself, and come down from the cross!" 31In 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. 32Let 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. 33When it was noon, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. 34At 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?" 35When some of the bystanders heard it, they said, "Listen, he is calling for Elijah." 36And 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." 37 Then Jesus gave a loud cry and breathed his last. 38 And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. 39 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!" [40 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. 41 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. 42 When evening had come, and since it was the day of Preparation, that is, the day before the sabbath, 43 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. 44 Then Pilate wondered if he were already dead; and summoning the centurion, he asked him whether he had been dead for some time. 45 When he learned from the centurion that he was dead, he granted the body to Joseph. 46 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. 47 Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses saw where the body was laid.]

The Gospel of Our Lord

Prayer

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

Palm and Passion

Good morning! We now enter Holy Week! It begins today with Palm Sunday, and the texts today are loaded with meaning and importance. But, I doubt you want to sit here for a sermon on all 58 verses, and so we need to find the heart of the story.

In the past twenty years there has been a renewed effort to put the focus of today's lessons on the cross and crucifixion of Jesus. As I told our Monday Zoom Bible study, I used to be against this, but I have since come around. The largest reason for this is that while we WILL hear the crucifixion again on Good Friday, not everyone makes it to that service. Which means that for the large majority of Christians (who use the Revised Common Lectionary) they never get the chance to hear what is arguably the most important story in the entire biblical narrative.

Another reason I think the inclusion of the passion story is important is because when read together with the triumphant entry into Jerusalem that begins the service, we are given a very interesting comparison. It is these two reactions to Jesus that I want us to focus our attention on today. So let us turn to our processional Gospel reading.

The Gospel of Mark is the shortest of the four written, and scholars have often called attention to the way that the story seems to rush towards the city of Jerusalem. The entire text builds up and moves towards this very moment: Jesus' entry into the city on the back of a colt. The anxiousness of the Jewish elite and the Roman authorities makes a lot of sense when you realize what's going on. Jesus comes to Jerusalem only once in the Gospel of Matthew, and it is here at the end of his ministry. He does this during the festival of Passover, one of, if not the most, important holidays in the Jewish faith. Passover was a holiday where the city of

Jerusalem would SWELL with visitors. Jewish believers from all over flocked to the city to celebrate. And what were they celebrating? The saving work of God in Egypt when the Israelites escaped captivity and fled.

We tend to see this holiday as a religious one, but it was very much a nationalistic celebration too. So put yourself in the shoes of the Roman authorities. You're an occupying force in what is hostile territory, the capital has swelled in capacity. The city had an ongoing population of around 250,000. But some estimates put the numbers during the Passover at over a million! The city was a powder keg just waiting to explode.

The hopes of SO many rested on Jesus' shoulders. Just listen again to what the call out to him: *"Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord! 10Blessed is the coming kingdom of our ancestor David! Hosanna in the highest heaven!"* David was considered their greatest patriarch, and so Jesus enters the city like a king. He even starts to live up to their expectations! The very next day he enters the Temple and runs out the money changers with a whip! But in just a few short days, everything changes.

"He saved others; he cannot save himself. 32Let the Messiah, the King of Israel, come down from the cross now, so that we may see and believe." They mocked. Jesus' death was a reminder to all the population that THIS is what happens when you stand up to the powers that be. He was crucified, hung up on a tree in an act so gruesome that it was considered to be in bad taste to even discuss crucifixion in polite company. This was a state execution so horrific that Roman citizens were safe from it

ever happening to them. It was reserved for the worst of the worst, the lowest of the low.

We will hear more about what happens next in seven days, but I think today we need to dwell with this reality. We KNOW how the story ends, but two thousand years ago they didn't. As the disciples and believers looked up at Jesus they saw all their hopes dashed and destroyed. Jesus' words become our own: "*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?*"

We are confronted with the reality of sin. Literally, in front of our eyes we see where sin leads. It kills God, it hangs Jesus on the cross. We cannot escape this. In the Gospel of Mark all roads lead to Jerusalem, and for us all actions lead to death. We began today entering Jerusalem in joy, but we leave today in somber reflection of the passion and death of Jesus Christ. It's a hard place to end, believe me, I know. But it is where we are. Fortunately, there might be more to the story... Amen.