

Palm / Passion Sunday

April 13, 2014

Rev. Ken Wratten at St. Stephen's, San Jose

Matthew 21:10-11      Entry into Jerusalem

Isaiah 50:4-9a      It is the Lord God who helps me; who will declare me guilty?

Psalms 31:9-16

Philippians 2:5-11      Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus.

Matthew 26:14 – 27:11-54 Passion narrative

The entrance into Jerusalem: Jesus was praised as Lord, 'Hosanna in the highest.' Coats were spread along his path. He was being given the reception of a visiting king – then within the week he was betrayed by Judas, denied by Peter, judged by the Crowd, 'Let him be crucified!' – and then the Passion.

From Palms to the Passion – and death – of Jesus.

It is difficult for us, 2,000 years removed from these events, to grasp this huge swing of mood within the first 15 minutes of our worship experience today. But it is important for us to read these stories together, to remember how fleeting and fickle human affections are; and how risky it is to trust human approval.

Episcopal priest Anthony F.M. Clavier wrote, "Unless we can walk these paths, leaving our comfort zone, our self-satisfaction, daring to walk beyond safety into the darkness of evil and death, carrying Jesus to the tomb, we will not even begin to grasp the power of the Resurrection."

Fickle humanity

Dan Snyder – defending \$ vs 2 years of sponsoring, supporting him

Laughter & tears on graduation from elementary, high school, college

Expressing irritation, and the least tolerance, for the people we love the most. We are fickle creatures.

Hosanna in the highest – Crucify him

Jesus' passion was predicted in Isaiah 50

"I gave my back to those who struck me, and my cheeks to those who pulled out the beard; I did not hide my face from insult and spitting." Jesus was the radically obedient servant of God, enduring insults, abuse, and torture, knowing that God would be with him; that this torture he was allowing would lead to a new relationship between God and all humanity.

At Gethsemane, when the soldiers came to arrest him, one of Jesus' disciples drew a sword to protect him. He rebuked his disciple; he rejected any use of power or violence. How can our minds grasp the depth of Jesus' trust in God, even at the moment of his arrest, to renounce a strong arm to defend him?

Jesus' trust was echoed in our psalm today.

31:14, "But as for me, I have trusted in you, O Lord. I have said, 'You are my God.'

Even from the cross Jesus voiced his radical agape love for fickle humanity, and his trust in God:

To the thief, "You will be with me in paradise"

To John, "Behold your mother"

About those who betrayed, wounded, and executed him: "Father, forgive them"

You and I are now invited to enter into the sanctuary, the sacred space, of Holy Week; not as spectators, but as participants in the commemoration and the enactment of the sacred acts that have literally changed the world we live in.

You and I are called to a very high standard of conduct, based in love.

You and I are called to radical forgiveness; to radical trust; to radical non-violence.

You and I are called to mutual servanthood; and to a new covenant with God.

You and I are called to share in Christ's Passion with our own Passion for Christ.

So, do we succumb to fickle human nature; or learn from the Master about faith, trust, love, non-violence, forgiveness, and divinely inspired transformation?

I pray that this journey through Holy Week bring you into a deepened awareness of the price that was paid, the trust that endured, the gift that was paid for, and the relationship that lives on.

May God bless your very personal experience of THIS Holy Week. Amen.