

B Palm / Passion Sunday 3.24.24

Mark 11:1-11; 14:1-15:47

Focus Statement: Jesus is in for the whole ride.

Palm / Passion Sunday is always kind of a strange day. We start in the social hall waving palm branches, processing into the sanctuary to the playing of organ and trumpets, singing and shouting praise to Jesus. It's this fun, loud, excited, grand parade of praise. And now we're in the sanctuary, like just in the sanctuary. All we've done is say the opening prayer, and we're about to bring the mood way down. Because we're about to read the passion narrative, all of it, interspersed with not the peppiest selection of songs from the hymnal.

And you might be wondering why we do this. Why shoehorn the passion narrative into Palm Sunday? Why not let celebration have its day and leave the cross for Friday?

And we could do that. Heck, we could do Hosannas today and then jump to trumpets and Christ is Risen next Sunday and leave the cross out entirely, or at least drape it in gold, lilies, and butterflies, dressing up the uncomfortable truth of how we got from here to there. It would be easier, in some ways, to do it that way. To not have to face the painful truth that resurrection came first through betrayal, suffering, and death.

It would be easier, and it would be more comfortable, and there are certainly voices in our culture that tempt us to do just that. To focus on the easy, on the comfortable, and ignore the hard truths of living. But friends, here's the thing. The easy is only easy for those in power, for those in control, for those for whom things are working well. In the reading we're about to read, easy and comfortable worked for the chief priests and the Pharisees, it

worked for the Romans. It didn't work for all the people suffering under the persecution of those in power.

And, it won't work for us. Not all the time. When things are going well, and everything is strumming along, then it's nice to go from Hosana to He is Risen and ignore the hard. But when you're in it. When you're struggling under the weight of grief or fear, loss or pain, then the passion narrative reminds us that ours is a God who will walk through death and beyond for us. That Jesus didn't jump from Hosana to He is Risen. When he signed on to be the incarnate one, the Beloved Son of God, he did so knowing full well that his path would lead to betrayal, suffering, and the cross. And that it would come out on the other side triumphant because the promise of God is that resurrection always conquers death, because God is a God of life.

Dear people of God, in Holy Week we enter into an ancient story. A story that begun way before Jesus, begun even before the voice of God moved over the waters of creation. And, a story that is as current as it is ancient. In Holy Week we don't just recreate the historical Jesus, we find our own way into this promise of a God who is with us in moments of praise and times of pain, in declarations of faith and deep betrayal. Palm / Passion Sunday is a roller coaster of emotions because life can be. And so we practice. We practice seeing Jesus in our highest highs and lowest lows. Because the promise of our history is that wherever we are, there God is also.

So as we move this morning from shouts of Hosana to calls for his crucifixion, I invite you today, as I will invite you this whole week, to enter into this story. Let yourself be caught up in the wild ride of it. Practice looking for Jesus leading the way through all the tumult that is to unfold. So that when your own life takes twists and turns, you can trust, even when you cannot see, that Jesus is there as well.

We're standing at the edge, dear people of God, let us see where Jesus is taking us. It will get dark and heavy. And when it does, look to the cross. See the signs of hope. And remember that Jesus always triumphs.