

March 20, 2016

TEXT: Luke 22:39 – 23:56

TITLE: Passion Sunday

Much of the information we receive today comes to us in short bursts—15 second commercials, sound bites, 140-character Tweets, news headlines. This helps us be reasonably well-informed, but seldom well-versed and never at peace. The spiritual antidote to feeling so mentally distracted is to take time for those things that matter—to meditate and quiet our souls through times of prayer, to stop running around so much and read God's word.

Today we celebrate both Palm Sunday and Passion Sunday. The move between these two events is an abrupt one, which can't be helped. It is a shift from a celebrated entry into Jerusalem to a demeaning trial and tragic crucifixion. Instead of just hearing a short passage from the bible, today we will hear a longer description of Jesus' last days as captured for us in the gospel of Luke. It will move from the conclusion of the Last Supper meal out to the Garden of Gethsemane where Judas betrays Jesus, where armed soldiers lead Christ away to mock trials done first by religious leaders and later by Roman authorities. It will end with Jesus' painful hours on the cross followed by the burial done in haste in a borrowed tomb.

As we read this gospel story, objects will be set on this table as remembrances of what happened that day. Listen with your ears, your eyes and your hearts to the story of Jesus' arrest, crucifixion and death. Think about the cup of sorrows, the fireside words of denial, the jar of spices for anointing a beloved corpse. The sacred road we walk over the next seven days is a necessary one, and at times a somber one, but I promise you that its shadows will give way to the light of Easter next Sunday. Thanks be to God.

The story begins with a cup of sorrows and a sword of violence. (*Reading #1 – Luke 22: 39-42, 45-51*)

Beside a fire in the courtyard, Peter denied Jesus three times. Then men tied up Christ, blindfolded him and mocked him as a false prophet. (*Reading #2 – Luke 22:54-65*)

Pontius Pilate famously washed his hands of any responsibility for Jesus' death, allowing a murderer to live while condemning the Son of God. (*Reading #3 – Luke 23:13-25*)

The Passion story comes to an end with a final word from the cross, a body taken down, and jars of spices and ointments taken to a garden tomb. (*Reading #4 – Luke 23:44-56*)

Charge & Benediction: Friends, as we move into Holy Week, let us be neither distracted nor afraid. Let us take time to quiet our souls and remember what great love has been shown to us by God in Christ. This love is stronger than sin, stronger than darkness, stronger than death itself. In this love is true life.