

**March 25, 2018**

**TEXT: Mark 15**

**TITLE: Nine Hours on One Fateful Day**

*By the Rev. Dr. Randy Bush*

The last day of Jesus' earthly life was only a partial day. The triumphal entry into Jerusalem, with waving palm branches and cheering crowds, had happened a few days before. Jesus then created a stir by cleansing the temple of the money-changers. He taught crowds of people and was harshly questioned by temple officials. Most days he was in the city, but often he'd retire out to the nearby Mount of Olives and meet with his followers there. One night in Jerusalem he shared the Passover meal with his disciples—telling them how the bread was his body and the cup represented a new covenant poured out in his blood for the forgiveness of sins. Later that evening, he would again go to the Mount of Olives, but his prayer time there would be interrupted by a military police presence and violent arrest. He would be led away to be tried by a Jewish council late into the night.

When the sun arose on the last day of Jesus' earthly life, Jesus would only be alive for another nine hours or so. A sad drama in three acts unfolded. Act 1: During a public trial before Pontius Pilate, a criminal named Barabbas would receive clemency, but Jesus, the young rabbi from Nazareth would be seen as a national threat and blasphemer and sentenced to crucifixion. Act 2: A humiliating scene unfolds, with Jesus mocked, flogged, and forced to carry a heavy cross outside the city walls to an execution hill named Golgotha. Act 3: Jesus spent about three hours hanging on the cross. The sky would grow dark until he breathed his last, after which his body was removed from the cross and hastily laid in a borrowed tomb sealed with a large, round stone.

Depending on your age, you've likely heard this story of Jesus' death on the cross dozens of times. You are all likely well aware of how Lent culminates in Good Friday remembrances of Jesus' death and Easter celebrations of Jesus' resurrection. Yet it is important to remember how the pivotal part of this well-known story happened over the course of a single morning and afternoon. Nine hours one day long ago that changed the course of history—that changed the world—that changes us.

Today we have celebrated the triumphal entry of Palm Sunday. We've heard words of scripture and from Dr. King. We've sung hymns and made the transition from waving palm branches to standing beneath the shadow of a cross. Now we will slow things down even more. Quiet your minds and become aware of your breathing. Listen to a special Adagio Ed will play on the organ. Then hear how the gospel of Mark describes those last hours of Jesus' life. Think about how those nine hours long ago shape and affect and change your life today. Let us enter into this special time of worship.

**Mark 15:1–47**

<sup>1</sup>As 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. <sup>2</sup>Pilate asked him, 'Are you the King of the Jews?' He answered him, 'You say so.' <sup>3</sup>Then the chief priests accused him of many things. <sup>4</sup>Pilate asked him again, 'Have you no answer? See how many charges they bring against you.' <sup>5</sup>But Jesus made no further reply, so that Pilate was amazed.

<sup>6</sup>Now at the festival he used to release a prisoner for them, anyone for whom they asked. <sup>7</sup>Now a man called Barabbas was in prison with the rebels who had committed murder during the insurrection. <sup>8</sup>So the crowd came and began to ask Pilate to do for them according to his custom. <sup>9</sup>Then he answered them, 'Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?' <sup>10</sup>For he realized that it was out of jealousy that the chief priests had handed him over. <sup>11</sup>But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have him release Barabbas for them instead. <sup>12</sup>Pilate spoke to them again, 'Then what do you wish me to do with the man you call the King of the Jews?' <sup>13</sup>They shouted back, 'Crucify him!' <sup>14</sup>Pilate asked them, 'Why, what evil has he done?' But they shouted all the more, 'Crucify him!' <sup>15</sup>So Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd, released Barabbas for them; and after flogging Jesus, he handed him over to be crucified.

<sup>16</sup> Then the soldiers led him into the courtyard of the palace (that is, the governor's headquarters); and they called together the whole cohort. <sup>17</sup>And they clothed him in a purple cloak; and after twisting some thorns into a crown, they put it on him. <sup>18</sup>And they began saluting him, 'Hail, King of the Jews!' <sup>19</sup>They struck his head with a reed, spat upon him, and knelt down in homage to him. <sup>20</sup>After mocking him, they stripped him of the purple cloak and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him out to crucify him.

<sup>21</sup> They 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. <sup>22</sup>Then they brought Jesus to the place called Golgotha (which means the place of a skull). <sup>23</sup>And they offered him wine mixed with myrrh; but he did not take it. <sup>24</sup>And they crucified him, and divided his clothes among them, casting lots to decide what each should take.

<sup>25</sup> It was nine o'clock in the morning when they crucified him. <sup>26</sup>The inscription of the charge against him read, 'The King of the Jews.' <sup>27</sup>And with him they crucified two bandits, one on his right and one on his left. <sup>29</sup>Those who passed by derided him, shaking their heads and saying, 'Aha! You who would destroy the temple and build it in three days, <sup>30</sup>save yourself, and come down from the cross!' <sup>31</sup>In 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. <sup>32</sup>Let 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.

<sup>33</sup> When it was noon, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon.

<sup>34</sup>At 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?' <sup>35</sup>When some of the bystanders heard it, they said, 'Listen, he is calling for Elijah.' <sup>36</sup>And 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.' <sup>37</sup>Then Jesus gave a loud cry and breathed his last. <sup>38</sup>And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. <sup>39</sup>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!'

<sup>40</sup> 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.

<sup>41</sup>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.

<sup>42</sup> When evening had come, and since it was the day of Preparation, that is, the day before the sabbath, <sup>43</sup> 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. <sup>44</sup>Then Pilate wondered if he were already dead; and summoning the centurion, he asked him whether he had been dead for some time.

<sup>45</sup>When he learned from the centurion that he was dead, he granted the body to Joseph.

<sup>46</sup>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. <sup>47</sup>Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses saw where the body was laid.

Almost as quickly as it all began, it was over. Palm branches and Hosannas were now a distant memory. Jesus' voice of authority that was raised in the temple, responded to accusers, and comforted the afflicted and marginalized near at hand was finally silenced—for a while.

In a few hours so much happened—and so much was changed forever. We remember all this so that we may never take a single day for granted. We remember all this so that we may hold onto the promise of our faith: that the light has shown in the darkness, even our deepest darkness, and the darkness cannot overcome it.

Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, have mercy on us.

Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, have mercy on us.

Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world. Grant us your peace.