

Mark 14:1-15:47 Palm/Passion Sunday

March 24, 2024

Grace and peace be with you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

So, what did you notice as we went through the Triumphal Entry and the Passion according to Mark this morning?

The most important thing we should notice is that Jesus knows exactly what is going on. The people around him have no clue. But for Jesus, nothing that comes is a surprise to him. He knows every step that is set before him.

He tells the disciples – find the unriden colt tied up for me to use; find the man carrying water on his head for the place for us to celebrate Passover; this woman has anointed my body for burial; all of you will desert me; Peter, although you say you will die with me, you will actually deny me; look, my betrayer is at hand; and I will meet you in Galilee when I am raised from the dead.

Jesus is the only one who knows what is going on, and it is going just as it was written, the prophesy is being fulfilled. The cry Hosanna, which means “God save us,” is being answered in their midst. God is saving all people, even though they do not realize it.

So, when Peter tells the bystander who accuses him of being a follower of Jesus that he does not know the man, in one major aspect that is totally true. Peter does not know Jesus fully at that time in the court yard, but no one does until after the resurrection.

Without the resurrection, there is no way to truly know Jesus. So, in a way, Peter is actually not lying, and Jesus knows that, because Jesus is the only one who knows what is actually going on.

And even though he knows what is going on, or perhaps because of it, Jesus asks that the cup might be removed from him. Three times he asks that there might be another way, but the answer is no, the betrayer is already at hand. It has to go this way.

Unfortunately, Peter, James, and John were not able to comfort Jesus as he prayed or even pray with him at that moment, because they were sleeping.

Perhaps that is by design, or perhaps they were suffering from lethargy after eating the big Passover meal and drinking all that wine. Wine that Jesus will not drink again until he enters the Kingdom of God. Wine that is tied to our Eucharistic meal, a foretaste of things to come.

Which begs the question, does this meal make you sleepy? Something to think about during Holy Week.

But had Peter, James, and John been awake, the boys would not have known what to pray for, because even after being told three times by Jesus that he would be killed, no one can comprehend it, not until it actually happens.

The disciples do not know what is going on, even though scripture is being fulfilled right in their midst. That is why one of them grabs a sword. He has it backwards. It is not about killing, but about Jesus being killed, and Jesus is the only one who knows what is going on. Jesus is the only one who sees it all clearly.

On the cross, the scoffers say to him – he saved others, he cannot save himself - they do not understand and cannot see that in being crucified Jesus is continuing God's ministry of saving others, even them.

And when they say - come off the cross so that we may believe - he will come off the cross and some will come to believe when they see him resurrected from the dead, walking among them, and forgiving them for putting him on the cross.

The great irony is that the only one who realizes who Jesus is is the centurion who exclaims – Truly this man was God's Son! The only one to testify at the cross is a Roman pagan. Something else to consider during this Holy Week.

On top of that, the only one to come for Jesus' body is a member of the council who put Jesus on the cross. All of the disciples deserted Jesus, except for the women who stood faithfully by, but were totally powerless to do anything.

And the amazing thing about Joseph is that as a member of the council, we know he was a devoted Jew who followed the law very closely. Touching a dead body was not kosher. Touching the dead made a person unclean for seven days, but Joseph was willing to do that for Jesus. He was willing to be an outcast for him. Something else to consider during this Holy Week.

Joseph went boldly to Pilate to ask for Jesus' body, and he would have had to be bold to approach Pilate like that. When was the last time you were bold Jesus?

Joseph was waiting for the kingdom of God. We are left wondering if Joseph recognized something that everyone else missed? Or if he was simply compassionate, knowing he had to do the right thing for the one they had killed?

We do not know what motivated Joseph. And again, no one really knew Jesus until after the resurrection.

Because Joseph is mentioned by name in all of the Gospels, we can assume that he became part of the Christian community after the resurrection. Joseph became known just as Jesus became fully known.

In the resurrection, we come to know not only Jesus more fully, but each other more wholly as well.

We are all beloved children of God.

Prior to the resurrection, no one knew what was going on except Jesus. Prior to the resurrection, no one really knew Jesus. Prior to the resurrection, no one really knew God's heart.

It is not until after the resurrection that anyone has a clue as to what is really going on.

It is in the crucifixion and resurrection that God's will is fulfilled. It is the cup that could not be removed.

It had to be done this way, because God wants to be fully known by us and this is the only way to make it clear that God is merciful, compassionate, and abounding in steadfast love for each and every one of us.

When we understand that about God, we better understand each other. By knowing God, we know others. We are God's family.

We are loved so much that we are to die for, and so God did. And because separation from us is so great, Jesus is risen from the dead.

Thanks be to God. Amen.