

Passion/Palm Sunday

3-28-2021

J.V. Trautwein, Pastor

Vicar Karen Pugatch

Celebrate (Introduction)

“This week, the center of the church’s year, is one of striking contrasts: Jesus rides into Jerusalem surrounded by shouts of glory, only to be left alone to die on the cross, abandoned by even his closest friends. Mark’s gospel presents Jesus in his complete human vulnerability: agitated, grieved, scared, forsaken. Though we lament Christ’s suffering and all human suffering, we also expect God’s salvation: in the wine and bread, Jesus promises that his death will mark a new covenant with all people. We enter this holy week thirsty for the completion of God’s astonishing work.”

We come together in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Opening Hymn: [“All Glory, Laud, and Honor”](#)

Psalm: Psalm 31:9-16

“Be gracious to me, O Lord, for I am in distress;
my eye is wasted from grief,
my soul and my body also.
¹⁰ For my life is spent with sorrow,
and my years with sighing;
my strength fails because of my misery,¹⁰
and my bones waste away.
¹¹ I am the scorn of all my adversaries,
a horror¹¹ to my neighbors,
an object of dread to my acquaintances;
those who see me in the street flee from me.
¹² I have passed out of mind like one who is dead;
I have become like a broken vessel.
¹³ Yea, I hear the whispering of many—
terror on every side!—
as they scheme together against me,
as they plot to take my life.
¹⁴ But I trust in thee, O Lord,
I say, “Thou art my God.”
¹⁵ My times are in thy hand;
deliver me from the hand of my enemies and persecutors!
¹⁶ Let thy face shine on thy servant;
save me in thy steadfast love!”

Hymn of Praise: [“All Hail the Power of Jesus Name!”](#)

Prayer of the Day

“We praise you, O God, for redeeming the world through our Savior Jesus Christ, Today he entered the holy city in triumph and was proclaimed messiah and king by those who spread garments and branches along the way. Grant us grace to follow our Lord in the way of the cross, so that, joined to his death and resurrection, we enter into life with you; through the same Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.”

1st Reading: [Isaiah 50:4-9a](#)

2nd Reading: [Philippians 2:5-11](#)

The Palm Sunday Gospel: [Mark 11:1-11](#)

Hymn of the Day: [“Spirit of God Descend Upon My Heart”](#)

The Message: Vicar Karen Pugatch ([Video Link](#))

The Holy Gospel is according to Mark the 11 th Chapter
Glory to you O Lord

Mark 11:1-11

¹When they were approaching Jerusalem, at Bethphage and Bethany, near the Mount of Olives, [Jesus] sent two of his disciples ²and said to them, “Go into the village ahead of you, and immediately as you enter it, you will find tied there a colt that has never been ridden; untie it and bring it. ³If anyone says to you, ‘Why are you doing this?’ just say this, ‘The Lord needs it and will send it back here immediately.’” ⁴They went away and found a colt tied near a door, outside in the street. As they were untying it, ⁵some of the bystanders said to them, “What are you doing, untying the colt?” ⁶They told them what Jesus had said; and they allowed them to take it. ⁷Then they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks on it; and he sat on it. ⁸Many people spread their cloaks on the road, and others spread leafy branches that they had cut in the fields. ⁹Then those who went ahead and those who followed were shouting,

“Hosanna!

Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!

¹⁰Blessed is the coming kingdom of our ancestor David!

Hosanna in the highest heaven!”

¹¹Then he entered Jerusalem and went into the temple; and when he had looked around at everything, as it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the twelve.

The Gospel of our Lord.

Praise to you O Christ.

I am so grateful for the Sanctified Art resources we are using this year. In particular, the sermon prep resources have been fantastic—opening up a way of looking at these texts that is at once engaging and challenging.

This week the resource that grabbed me and filled in some spaces in my seminary education is a book called *The Last Week* by Borg and Crossan, in which the authors tell the story of Jesus' last week against the backdrop of the political environment set up by the collaboration of the Temple authorities and the Empire. Looking at the events through this lens we see Palm Sunday and the entire Passion Narrative in a different light.

Passion (the alternate name for this Sunday) comes from the word *Passio* and means suffering—indeed we tend to think of this last week in terms of the suffering of Jesus. But Passion has another meaning the authors say “we also use “passion” for any consuming interest, dedicated enthusiasm, or concentrated commitment. ... The first passion of Jesus was the kingdom of God...(the) incarnate (the) justice of God... It was that first passion for God's distributive justice that led inevitably to the second passion (suffering) by Pilate's punitive justice. Before Jesus, after Jesus, and, for Christians, archetypically in Jesus, those who live for nonviolent justice die all too often from violent injustice. If we focus on “what Jesus was passionate about” we have a new” way of understanding why his life ended in the passion of Good Friday. To narrow the passion of Jesus to his last twelve hours—arrest, trial, torture, and crucifixion—is to ignore the connection between his life and his death.

Jesus' last week is centered in Jerusalem. In Mark's gospel this is the only time Jesus enters the city. Much of Mark's gospel narrative encompasses Jesus' journey to the city. Jerusalem long the geographical center of the Jewish faith. Believed to be the place where God's glory dwelt on earth was also a city reeling under the strain of Roman occupation. A city of contradiction at once city of hope, city of joy, city of God and faithless city, city of oppression, city of pain, city that murders prophets.

At the time of Jesus, the city was ruled by the wealthy few who had been given positions of power by Rome. Rome trusted wealth. Their power went mostly unchecked as long as the taxes and tributes for the emperor were collected. Even the High Priest was a wealthy landowner—something forbidden in the TORAH.

The temple had become the seat of the “domination System” of rule common in ancient times. This system consisted of rule based on the domination of the masses living in poverty by a wealthy few. It was enforced by financial oppression and legitimated by the use of religious language—after all, the Emperor was the “son of God, come to bring peace to the land.” In short, Rome ruled through the temple. That is not to say that there were not holy and faithful people there—“the wealthy and powerful can be good people—responsible, honest, hard-working, faithful to family and friends, interesting, charming, and good-hearted. The issue is not their individual virtue or wickedness, but the role they played in the domination system. They shaped it, enforced it, and benefited from it.”

This system, especially in this place, worked in direct opposition to the way of the Kingdom of God that Jesus brings. In this system God's justice is replaced by the injustice of humankind. Indeed, at this time the number of people living in poverty both in the city and the surrounding region was increasing, as farmers were displaced from their ancestral lands as new more profitable crops replaced those from which they had gleaned their subsistence lifestyle. Jesus came to these oppressed, poverty-stricken people, outside the power structure of Rome. His message about the kingdom of God and how it was radically different from the empire of Rome was for these people. These were the ones waving leafy branches and shouting as Jesus entered the city.

I am asking you to have the courage to think about Jesus' entry in a different way. Against the socio-political backdrop of the time, I want you to see this as a planned, prearranged counter-procession-one steeped in symbolism from the prophets. Jesus entered the city to highlight the difference between the empire and the Kingdom of God. This might be a slightly different take on Palm Sunday. Jesus entered the city with full knowledge of what was to come-full knowledge! And he still entered-Jesus displayed courage by relying on his faith in the never-ending love of God-knowing, that despite his own fear that God would see him through the suffering that was to come. He entered to bring to light the glaring difference between the empire and the "empire God brings" (to quote MVH). In this act, we are shown again the incarnation of God's love-we are shown the way we are called to act in the face of our own fears. We are shown what love looks like in the face of overwhelming odds and undesirable consequences-we are shown courage.

Jesus entered the city on a humble donkey from the East down the Mount of Olives through the Kidron Valley and up to the East Gate surrounded by peasants waving branches and laying garments at his feet while shouting "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord." Jesus came into the city the embodiment of God's kingdom of humble acts of love and care. He needed courage because despite the way we envision this procession, it was small in comparison to another, likely happening at the same time. He needed courage because the Empire of Rome did not encourage or accept such blatant shows of disrespect.

It took courage because from the west another procession was entering the city. Pilate, the representative of the Emperor, came likely riding on a great steed or carried in a gilded coach at the front of a column of mounted and foot soldiers, entering the city in a show of power and might. Coming from the Imperial Complex at Caesarea Maritima 60 miles to the west to be present during the Pilgrimage festival of Passover. Not as a religious gesture, but as a show of pure power-to intimidate any who would think to resist the Empire. He too, was likely surrounded by people shouting, "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord." Pilate representing the imperial way to power and glory through violence and oppression. Two groups of people, two ideologies, two theological understandings of power hurtling at each other in slow motion, destined to collide later in the week. Leading to the cross- a means of death reserved for those who dared to deny Imperial authority.

Which of these processions do you belong to?

Jesus came to the city, looked around the temple and then went back to Bethany-possibly to eat, to rest, to pray and prepare for what was to come. As *Mary Anne Radmacher* wrote

"Courage doesn't always roar. Sometimes courage is the little voice at the end of the day that says, 'I'll try again tomorrow.'" —

In the days that followed, many would question Jesus' authority. He would answer with stories and scripture. He implored his friends to have faith, he taught them, ate with them, he reminded them of the difficult days to come and when he became anxious, and tired he went away to pray with them.

We are standing outside the gates of Jerusalem-we have chosen the Eastern route into the city. We follow Jesus. We stand in the shadow of the cross boldly proclaiming Jesus crucified and risen. Again, and again we draw on courage-courage to follow despite our fear, despite the way the empire of this world seeks to lead us astray. Following Jesus takes courage because we must die to our old lives in order that we might enter the new life Jesus brings. Courage comes from the same root word we get the word for heart. Jesus found his courage in the heart of God through his faith in the never-failing Love of God whom he named Father, he found it in his never-failing love for us. Maybe courage is love in action. Lao Tzu wrote "Being deeply loved by someone gives you strength, while loving someone deeply gives you courage." We too find our courage in Jesus-Incarnate love of God- we draw on the font of that great love secure in the knowledge that no matter how dangerous the way is, or how isolated we feel, or how frightened we are that we are never alone-the incarnate love walks beside us, indeed within us.

Again, and again we draw on courage because God loves first; again, and again we are invited into that love, shown the way, held together, and reformed by that love. Because again, and again we find ourselves entering into places where fear dwells and courage will remind us that love prevails. Again, and again we are called to stand up against violence against our siblings. Again, and again we cry out in anguish with victims of these crimes. Again, and again we draw on courage so that we may respond and call out these actions- we are called again, and again to be love in action-God incarnate in this world. Amen

Anthem: ["The Holy City" Agne G](#)

Offering*: ([On-Line Giving Link](#))

We give thee but thine own, what e'er the gift may be; all that we have is thine alone, a trust, O Lord, from thee.

The Prayer:

Most loving Father, on this Palm Sunday we remember that day so long ago in which the people were longing for a Messiah who would bring anew the kingdom of Israel. Help us to gain a true understanding of your Son as we celebrate the remembrance of that day. May it be the

beginning of a week in which we prepare for the full extent of your love for us through the cross. Let your love be magnified with the empty tomb and the resurrected Christ. Through this good news continue to guide us to the new day in which we find and experience the love of the resurrection.

We are thankful that with each day, many more people are becoming vaccinated that will bring an end to the great suffering we have experienced this past year. Give us the strength to act out of love in order to continue to follow the Covid guidelines until we reach the point that immunity becomes effective and the virus become manageable. We pray that this new surge will be short lived.

We pray for all who need your comforting and healing presence especially Bob and Pat Allen, Heidi Brackbill, Parker Brennan, the Cronin family, the Elshafei family, the Fultz family, the Johnson Family, Robert Karner, Donna Mayhew, Wendy Neumann, Elise Oliver, Peter Olsen, David Otto, Dottie Reitz, Robert Reitz, Linda Rigby, Colin Shea, Jerry Shea, Jack Smith, the Spiegler family, Linda Stephens, Della Mae Strobel, Yongyin Sun, Esther and Buck Trautwein, Linda Williamson, Wyatt Lee Wolf, Vicki and Christian Zanartu, Pastor Jack, We ask this in the name of Jesus. Amen

The Lord's Prayer

The Benediction

The Lord bless you and keep you;

The Lord make His face shine upon you;

The Lord lift up His presence upon you and give you peace. Amen

And now my brothers and sisters

Live on knowing God's love,

The joy of living this life of love,

And the peace which only comes through the power of His presence within you.

So live on in Love, Joy, Peace, and Power.

Closing Hymn: ["Ride On, Ride On In Majesty"](#)

Hopefully, soon we will resume in person services – stay tuned. The online worship experiences will continue as well as the Midweek Thoughts.

*Offering to be sent to:

Bob Brackbill

10274 Raleigh Tavern Road

Ellicott City, MD 21042

Epiphany Lutheran Church
9122 Sybert Drive
Columbia Hills
Ellicott City, MD 21043
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Please note that you now have the opportunity of online giving with the link found after the offering designation or here: https://tithe.ly/give_new/www/#/tithely/give-one-time/2627291

The Easter Sunrise Service will be held on the Broadway Pier, Fell's Point, 6:30AM. Masks and social distancing will be required.