

THE TRUTH OF THE GOOD NEWS!
Mark 11, 14 and 15
Palm/Passion Sunday...March 28, 2021
Eastminster Presbyterian Church

In terms of worship, it is not uncommon anymore for the coming last week of Christ's life, called Holy Week, to move from this Sunday, with its festive waving of palms and shouts of hosanna straight to next Sunday with its festive rolling away of the stone and hallelujahs. It seems that, for many, the story of Christ's life in the "in-between" time is too depressing. I am so very grateful that here at Eastminster we do not skip the realities of those last days...the final supper with friends, betrayal, pleading prayers, scared disciples, an unfair trial, taunting, beating, and ultimately death. It is not the pretty picture of the Good News; but it is the truth of the Good News.

So, what is at risk when we try to shortchange the Gospel...when we go from the celebratory moment of Christ the King faithfully entering Jerusalem, the very seat of hostility against him **to** Christ the resurrected Lord, the living promise of God's faithfulness to us? What gets shortchanged? In a word: Faith. A faith that has not been exposed to the struggling times in the life of God, Father Son and Spirit, runs the risk of not trusting that through the difficult moments of our own lives, God is with us, offering moments of resurrected hope when we believe all is lost, gone, dead.

And so today, we do celebrate. We on this side of the story, know the victory of life over death as Jesus rides into Jerusalem. We know that once inside the city gates of Jerusalem, Jesus' life became the sign for total commitment, no turning back from what lay before him...death. So, even as we rejoice for Christ's triumphal entry complete with parade and palm, our hearts ache for the truth yet ahead of our Lord, his passion, his suffering. As much as we would like to fast forward our lives through all the trying and uncertain and fearful moments, our faith asks us to ride through the proverbial gate of commitment, trusting in the ultimate hope that is ours through the resurrection of Jesus, shouting both our hosannas and our hallelujahs.

Hebrew words, like those in other languages, are often combined to create a whole new meaning. Yaw-shah (Yaw show) means to save or deliver. Naw means to plead or pray. The crowds along the parade route that day were shouting, "Yaw show naw...save us, deliver us, Jesus, we pray, we plead!" As we head into Holy Week, remembering the suffering of Jesus, do we need to be shouting out: Yaw show naw: Save us; deliver us, Jesus, we pray, we plead?

We can put all sorts of theological spins on the cries of the crowd, but in all reality, most likely, many of them were crying out for delivery from the Roman government and its oppression. It was a very immediate, human need, but a need that believed in a saving power beyond self. Isn't that exactly what we do today?

As Christians we believe in the saving grace of Jesus. But like every day, ordinary followers, we encounter circumstances from which we need saving. Saving from turmoil

in our families, the world. Saving from anger and bitterness. Saving from debt and poverty. Saving from illnesses that ravage our bodies, kill our spirits. Saving from self-centeredness or arrogance. Saving from all the fears that seek to shatter our faith. Save us Lord, we cry out, from all the broken places in life; make us whole.

While this parade of palms is celebratory, it is also a parade that allows us, even invites us, to lay open the deepest part of our souls, believing that our Lord, humble servant, died not only for the salvation of our souls, but that his saving grace is here for us during every dying moment of every day...illness, loss, despair, loneliness. Along the invisible parade route of life today, we can also shout out, "Hosanna, hosanna, hosanna!" For what are your hosannas crying out?

When we look back at the parade of palms, it becomes a little easier to understand how the "hosannas" were replaced by the "crucify him." Jesus did not, in the military and political sense, save the Jewish people from their Roman oppressors. But he saved them, and the whole world from a far greater oppressor...sin!

Just as God entered into the brokenness of our world in Jesus Christ, part of our ongoing "saving" involves a God who continues to come to us in the trenches of our lives. How often do we find ourselves in life's situations where we are in need of being saved, need for hope? In the middle of our deepest needs, God, in Jesus Christ, steps into the messiness of life and offers hope, offers saving grace when we least expect it and often from where we never imagine it coming. We cry our hosannas and God saves. In Jesus Christ, God did not wield power; God saved through humble obedience. And the Spirit of the Lord within each of us calls us through humble obedience to be Christ's hope in our world.

Today we begin Holy Week in a faithful, sacred way. We shout hosanna from our lips. With Jesus as Lord of our lives, we are saved for eternity. With Jesus as Lord of our lives, we are being saved daily in so many ways. We cannot stand in a parade line forever. But what we can do, is trust that beyond the palms and the parade, we can live. Thrive. Hope. We can share the truth of the Good News, and give thanksgiving that because of the suffering of our Lord, the world has been saved for another chance to be God's better place. Hosanna and hallelujah! Amen