



SUNDAY CONNECTION

Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion, Cycle C

Readings and Gospel Commentary For Sunday, April 14, 2019

Gospel at the Procession with Palms—Luke 19:28-40

Jesus sends his disciples for a colt and then rides into Jerusalem

First Reading - Isaiah 50:4-7

The Lord's Servant will stand firm, even when persecuted.

Responsorial Psalm - Psalm 22:8-9, 17-20, 23-24

A cry for help to the Lord in the face of evildoers.

Second Reading - Philippians 2:6-11

Christ was obedient even to death, but God has exalted him.

Gospel Reading - Luke 22:14—23:56 (shorter form: Luke 23:1-49)

From the cross, Jesus speaks words of forgiveness and promises that the good thief will be with him in paradise.

Commentary On The Gospel

This Sunday, called Palm or Passion Sunday, is the first day of Holy Week. Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and the Easter Vigil on Holy Saturday are called the Triduum, three days that are the highlight of the Church year. There are two Gospels proclaimed at today's Mass. The first Gospel, proclaimed before the procession with palms, tells of Jesus' triumphant entrance into Jerusalem. Riding on a borrowed colt, Jesus was hailed by the crowds as they shouted blessings and praise to God. This event is reported in each of the four Gospels.

Luke's Gospel is the only one to report the exchange between Jesus and the Pharisees as Jesus enters Jerusalem. Jesus' response shows that this event, and those yet to come, are part of a divine plan. We hear this echoed again in Luke's description of the Last Supper when Jesus speaks of Judas' betrayal, saying that the Son of Man “goes as has been determined.”

At the Liturgy of the Word on this Sunday, the events of Jesus' passion are proclaimed in their entirety. In Lectionary Cycle C, we read the passion of Jesus as found in the Gospel of Luke. We will hear these events proclaimed again during the Triduum when we read the passion of Jesus from the Gospel of John.

Throughout Luke's Gospel we see that Jesus' words and actions proclaim the Kingdom of God. This motif continues throughout Luke's passion narrative. Jesus appears to be in total command of events at the Passover meal as he hands over the kingdom to his disciples. He welcomes them to the Passover meal announcing that this will be his last until the Kingdom of God is fulfilled.

As throughout Luke's Gospel, however, the disciples show little understanding of this kingdom that Jesus often announces. Following the meal, the disciples argue about who is the greatest. Jesus takes the opportunity to distinguish the meaning of leadership in the Kingdom of God from the forms of leadership seen in the world.



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Jesus initiates a conversation with Simon and predicts his denial. Jesus then instructs his disciples to prepare themselves for the events that will follow. His words reveal an awareness of the challenges that all of them will face in the days ahead. As the disciples and Jesus enter the Mount of Olives, Jesus indicates the importance of the disciples' time in prayer, telling them that through prayer they will be able to face the challenges ahead.

As he prays, Jesus is tested. In the garden, an angel is sent to strengthen him and to prepare him for the events ahead. After this moment, Jesus is again in charge of the events and circumstances.

In Luke's Gospel, Jesus is portrayed as active and vocal throughout his passion. When one of the disciples strikes the high priest's servant, Jesus heals the man, an event reported only in the Gospel of Luke. Jesus stops the disciples' protest against his arrest by noting that this is the "time for the power of darkness." Jesus engages and responds when brought before the Sanhedrin; his words speak about the "power of God" that will bring about the reign of the Son of Man. When questioned by Pilate, Jesus responds with just one phrase; yet before Herod, Jesus refuses to speak.

When Luke describes the Way of the Cross and Jesus' crucifixion, he calls to our attention many events that are not reported in the other Gospels. Throughout his Gospel, Luke has paid heed to the women who accompanied Jesus. Now, on the road to Calvary, Jesus speaks to the women who walk with him. Only Luke reports Jesus' words of forgiveness spoken from the cross. And only Luke reports the dialogue between Jesus and the good thief. Finally, in contrast with the Gospels of Mark and Matthew, Luke reports no words of abandonment spoken by Jesus on the cross. Instead, Jesus, in full command until his death, commends his spirit to his Father and takes his final breath.

Throughout Holy Week, we will continue to reflect on the events of Jesus' passion and death. As we meditate on the cross, we ask again and anew what it means to make the statement of faith that Jesus, in his obedient suffering and dying, revealed himself to us as God's Son and brought to fulfillment the Kingdom of God.