

April 10
John 19:16b-22

Palm/Passion Sunday

“Mocking the King”

Hymn 274 You, Lord, Are Both Lamb and Shepherd (v.1,2,3) - PICARDY

Text: Sylvia G. Dunstan; Music: French melody. Text ©1991 GIA Publications

Hymn verses sprinkled throughout the sermon, with Dianne maybe playing a note or so throughout

1. We come to the cross. It's come to this.
2. For his followers, it was the nightmare scenario,
 - a. with Jesus dying on the cross
 - b. with the Roman authorities mocking Jesus and the Jews by writing the charge “King of the Jews” on the cross above his head – meaning “this is what happens to anyone who gets the idea to be your king...”
 - c. with their fellow Jewish neighbors distancing themselves from anything having to do with Jesus, deriding him so Rome would not mistake them for sympathizers.
3. This has been quite a journey. Throughout Lent we've seen Jesus travel to Jerusalem, and the people had been hopeful.
 - a. We saw him heal people, even raise Lazarus from the dead!
 - b. But it was like Jesus was on a collision course with the Empire.
4. On this Palm Sunday we waved palms, just as the crowds back then did, as they thought: this is it! Hosanna, which means Save us!
5. But this is also Passion Sunday, and so we also stare at the cross in disbelief, reading that terrifying story of the public execution of this compassionate, loving teacher.
6. This is the tension of the day: celebration and execution
7. This is the tension Jesus embodied: Jesus as King and rebel, as teacher and law-breaker
8. We invite you now to reflect together on this Palm Sunday / Passion Sunday by singing the verses of this hymn throughout the sermon. Please remain seated as we sing.

1 You, Lord, are both Lamb and Shepherd.

You, Lord, are both prince and slave,

you peacemaker and sword-bringer of the way you took and gave.

You the everlasting instant; you whom we both scorn and crave

9. As 21st Century Christians, perhaps we come to have a detached perspective on the cross.
 - a. We have it in our sanctuary, some of us wear one around our neck.
 - b. Some churches of course have a crucifix, which is the cross with Jesus still on it.
 - c. Here we have the empty cross. A used cross.
 - d. That is to say, a reminder of both the injustice Jesus suffered, but also a reminder that the empty cross shows it's not the end of the story.
10. Jesus took the weight of humanity on his shoulders in life and in death,
 - e. He brought people closer to God and to one another
 - f. He taught about a loving and compassionate God who is ready to forgive
 - g. There on the cross Jesus, who was fully human and fully God, carried on himself once and for all
 - i. the consequences of the fight between good and evil,

- ii. the consequences of someone trying to live in connection to God and to other humans,
 - 1. while being squeezed by the powerful who demand to be worshiped instead of God.
- h. He was killed for challenging Rome, the occupying Empire.
- i. Killed for speaking God's word of compassion for those pushed aside by society.
- j. Killed for asking too many questions of those who make the rules.
- k. Jesus bore that injustice on himself to expose it, to shine a bright light on it, to break it.
- l. If that cross was supposed to represent that the Empire wins, that dissent is silenced,
 - i. this empty, used cross now actually gives voice and hope to those silenced because they realize Jesus knows their pain, this cross has come to signify all is now changed because we know where real power comes from.

**2. Clothed in light upon the mountain,
stripped of might upon the cross,
shining in eternal glory beggared by a soldier's toss,
you, the everlasting instant, you who are both gift and cost.**

- 11. Jesus was mocked, mistreated.
- 12. He was stripped of his dignity, of his humanity.
- 13. He died as he lived, on the edge of society, surrounded by questionable characters.
- 14. But the way of Jesus is the way of love. Nothing can stop that. Not even injustice. Not even the cross.
- 15. We stare at this empty, used cross, and we grieve the pain of so many people crucified by systems set up against them, we grieve the injustices which push people to the edge of polite society only to be derided and mocked.
- 16. We stare at this empty, used cross, and we refuse to let hate win over love, and we try to follow the example of Jesus in making good trouble against the powers which try to make themselves into gods.
- 17. And we now wait in the hope of resurrection, even though under the shadow of the cross, resurrection feels impossibly far away.

**3. You, who walk each day beside us,
sit in power at God's side,
You who preach a way that's narrow, have a love that reaches wide.
You, the everlasting instant; you who are our pilgrim guide.**

- 18. Thanks be to God for God's word for us.

Dianne plays again the last few bars of the hymn, softly, almost distant.

Reflection questions:

- 1. Share a time when you felt that Jesus surely knew your pain because of the pain he suffered.
- 2. What does it mean to you that Jesus was executed on the cross as a common criminal?
- 3. Does our privilege distance us from those who suffer injustice as Jesus did? If no: what connects us? If yes: how do we shed or use that privilege to connect?