

Year B – Palm/Passion Sunday
Luke 22:14-23:56
April 14, 2019

Palm/Passion Sunday has all the makings of a classic drama as it ushers us in waving our palms, singing triumphantly; shouting “Hosanna,” while all along in the background, like any good drama, lays a hint of suspense as Jesus’ impending trial and crucifixion loom. Quickly our emotions run the gamut of the scale from joy, hope and elation to sadness and sorrow. And then we’re left on the edge of our seats waiting until next Sunday, Easter, to hear how this drama plays out.

Are we here because it’s the Easter season and it’s the thing to do? Are we gathered to simply reenact a drama 2000 years old as we wave our palms, read Luke’s gospel, and gather around the feast of The Lord’s Supper? Does observing these rituals really matter?

Yes, because we gather not as some symbolic reenactment or simply going through the motions of yet another Holy Week but as part of God’s storied people -- not simply re-living the story but entering and becoming one with the story we are invited and grafted into by the power of the Holy Spirit. It’s a story filled with amazement, suspense, turmoil, betrayal, sadness, life, death, and most certainly one of love begun at the dawn of creation by a life-giving Creator. It’s a story of an ongoing battle between good and evil, about a people who continually turn from the true source of life to other avenues that will quickly fade and it’s about God’s faithfulness and unending grace amid it all. It’s a story that will at times make us shout “Hosanna,” sing “Halleluiah,” be awed by the birth of a baby on Christmas and become saddened with the words and images we hear today.

It’s a story hard to comprehend but then again so is God’s love for God’s people. As the Spirit gathers us together Sunday after Sunday, we are instilled with the faith to believe this story and continually be shaped, healed, strengthened, and transformed around word and sacrament. The rituals we live out every time the church gathers are not simply meaningless actions but, rather, are gifts of grace allowing us to more

fully enter and remember the stories of God that have the power to transform us and take us to a new place.ⁱ

Where do you find yourself at this morning in the story? Perhaps, it is with the hope of the crowd as the long-expected Savior had entered the holy city and would soon set things right. Perhaps, like that same crowd following Jesus' death, your hope has been cast aside and you are wondering what now? Perhaps, you stand at the foot of Jesus' cross longing to hear, "Father, forgive them." Perhaps, you fear journeying with Jesus and like his disciples retreat to safer quarters. Perhaps, you are in need of Sabbath rest following the death of a loved one or dear friend. Perhaps, you are filled with the anger of some in the crowd or maybe you are beating your breast and wailing as did others. Or maybe you are like the centurion praising God for who Jesus is and what he has done. Maybe you simply need to hear and be assured of the words Jesus spoke to the criminal who hung beside him, "Today, you will be with me in Paradise."

Wherever you find yourself in the story, know Jesus has been there. The Son of God has lived it. Felt it. Endured it. Experienced it. You are not alone. There is hope. There is life. This old rugged cross stained with blood and permeated with the stench of death will give way to sprigs of new life and the sweet aroma of everlasting hope and joy.

ⁱ Anderson, Herbert and Edward Foley, *Mighty Stories, Dangerous Rituals* (Jossey-Bass, 1998).