

Palm/Passion Sunday  
March 28, 2021

Prior to my neck surgery a few years ago, I loved roller coasters. They are so exhilarating with all the twists, turns, ups, downs, and loopy loops. Sometimes you scream with glee, other times you hold on tight as your heart beats quicker and fear suddenly sets in as you crest that large hill and see a near vertical drop to the ground hundreds of feet below. In the span of a few minutes, your body runs a gamut of experiences, thoughts, and feelings.

This morning, we hear the story of Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem, cloaks and palm branches being laid upon the ground for him, the crowds shouts of "Hosanna," and our emotional thermometer might seem to plummet from high to low as elation gave way to heavy hearts as we heard the story of the passion filled with betrayal, scorn, denial, and brutality. The week we embark on is like a roller coaster ride filled with ups and downs, twist and turns, smooth spots, and rough patches of track, even knowing the outcome of Easter Sunday. Yet, we continue year after to year to gather and participate in the story of the divine drama - with our own shouts of "Hosanna!" - with our own prayers asking God to save us - not from the hands of Roman oppression but from the power of sin and death. We come in search of the One who can save us from that which torments us, enslaves us, and leaves us awake asking, "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?" – What are those fears, pains, and needs we each bring? What are those things hidden deep within that only God knows we need saving from?

We come, whether it be in this space or in our homes, in need of inner peace, healing, wholeness, forgiveness, and salvation. Perhaps, more so than ever, on the roller coaster of life that has been the past year the journey of this week reminds us life is filled with ups and downs, twists and turns – some good and some not so good. Yet, it is nothing our Lord has not experienced. He journeys with us.

The Spirit he promised to send, instilling in us faith and equipping us for our journey continually draws us in and gathers us together each year – to hear the celebration and to hear of the pain, torture, and death endured by our Savior at the hands of so many set on maintaining control, preserving their self-interests, and failing to see the one they are about to condemn is indeed the One sent by God to save us from so much that binds us.

And amidst our sailings through calm waters and stormy seas we not only gather but we enter the story of God and God's people. We, too, will share in the last supper on Maundy Thursday and be fed with the bread of life and drink the cup of our Lord. We read God's living word that has been shared by our ancestors from generation to generation. Somewhere in all this the Spirit, always at work, breaks through the whirlwind of activity and stills our hearts with the promise of hope, forgiveness, and salvation through the grace of God revealed in Christ.



Somehow the mysteriousness of God meets us in the highs and lows, and gives us strength to move forward, to find peace for the journey ahead, to hear words of comfort and grace, and to experience God's sustaining love. In many ways, today and this week remind me of a sign hanging within in my office I set my sights upon often, which states, "God didn't promise days without pain, laughter without sorrow, nor sun without rain, but God did promise strength for the day, comfort for the tears and light for the way.

Beloved brothers and sisters in Christ, we gather, we worship, we pray, we rejoice, and our hearts grow heavy as we contemplate the passion of our Lord and we are met, by the Triune God, whose love is freely given and poured out for all. Come, see, hear, taste, and experience that love this week and trust in that love to ease the ups, downs, twists, and turns of the roller coaster of life we are all on.

**You are loved!**