

All Saints Episcopal Church
Steenrijk
Leidenstratt
Willemstad, Curacao
Palm Sunday – Passion Sunday (B)
March 24, 2024
DRAFT
“The Thorn”
by the Rev. Joseph Parrish

Mark 15:1-39

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priests held a consultation with the

elders and scribes and the whole council. They bound Jesus, led him away, and handed him over to Pilate. Pilate asked him, “Are you the King of the Jews?” He answered him, “You say so.” Then the chief priests accused him of many things. Pilate asked him again, “Have you no answer? See how many charges they bring against you.” But Jesus made no further reply, so that Pilate was amazed.

Now at the festival he used to release a prisoner for them, anyone for whom they asked. Now a man called Barabbas

was in prison with the rebels who had committed murder during the insurrection. So the crowd came and began to ask Pilate to do for them according to his custom. Then he answered them, “Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?” For he realized that it was out of jealousy that the chief priests had handed him over. But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have him release Barabbas for them instead. Pilate spoke to them again, “Then what do you wish me to do with the man you call the King

of the Jews?” They shouted back, “Crucify him!” Pilate asked them, “Why, what evil has he done?” But they shouted all the more, “Crucify him!” So Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd, released Barabbas for them; and after flogging Jesus, he handed him over to be crucified.

Then the soldiers led him into the courtyard of the palace (that is, the governor's headquarters); and they called together the whole cohort. And they clothed him in a purple cloak; and after twisting some thorns into a crown,

they put it on him. And they began saluting him, “Hail, King of the Jews!” They struck his head with a reed, spat upon him, and knelt down in homage to him. After mocking him, they stripped him of the purple cloak and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him out to crucify him.

They compelled a passer-by, who was coming in from the country, to carry his cross; it was Simon of Cyrene, the father of Alexander and Rufus.

Then they brought Jesus to the place called Golgotha (which means the place

of a skull). And they offered him wine mixed with myrrh; but he did not take it. And they crucified him, and divided his clothes among them, casting lots to decide what each should take.

It was nine o'clock in the morning when they crucified him. The inscription of the charge against him read, "The King of the Jews." And with him they crucified two bandits, one on his right and one on his left. Those who passed by derided him, shaking their heads and saying, "Aha! You who would destroy the temple and build it in

three days, save yourself, and come down from the cross!” In the same way the chief priests, along with the scribes, were also mocking him among themselves and saying, “He saved others; he cannot save himself. Let the Messiah, the King of Israel, come down from the cross now, so that we may see and believe.” Those who were crucified with him also taunted him.

When it was noon, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. At three o'clock Jesus cried out with a loud voice, “Eloi, Eloi, lema

sabachthani?” which means, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” When some of the bystanders heard it, they said, “Listen, he is calling for Elijah.” And someone ran, filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on a stick, and gave it to him to drink, saying, “Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to take him down.” Then Jesus gave a loud cry and breathed his last.

And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. Now when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that in this way he breathed his

last, he said, “Truly this man was God's Son!”

May we serve you to the end, Dear Lord, as you have loved us to the end.
Amen.

Some Sunday School children were asked at about this time of the year, “Who is God?” Various and sundry answers were given by the children, but one little girl held back, not saying anything. The teacher finally asked her, “Who do you think God is?” And she

reluctantly and softly said, “The one with the thorn in his head.” “The one with the thorn in his head.”

In a way this Sunday should be called ‘whiplash’ Sunday. People come to church in good spirits to get their palms, and then we spring on them the intricate details of the torture to death of the world’s Savior. It seems a poor way to get people to come back next Sunday to hear the really good news of the Resurrection of Christ!

If we turned in our Bibles three pages later after this story, we would see the

angel's annunciation of the birth of the Messiah to Mary in the beginning of the Gospel of Luke. It is indeed a time and place of contrasts.

The palms that were laid before Jesus as he entered the city of Jerusalem seem to echo the triumphal entry of the Maccabees into the Jerusalem Temple in 164 BC after they had cleansed it following its desecration by the Syrian ruler Sun as recorded in 2 Maccabees, Chapter 10. It was a show of how the skilled military might and determination of the Maccabees had overcome the evil

ruler. And here again it seems the fickle crowds were suggesting a reprise, a repeat, of that grand triumph of the Maccabees two centuries earlier, a rebellion now to be carried out, so they thought, by Jesus. However, Jesus rides in on the colt of a donkey perhaps trying to signify to them his intent was not military at all, since a military commander would surely come riding in on a war horse, a horse seasoned in battle. But Jesus is indeed the Prince of Peace, not a warlord, not a general, not a conquering king in the earthly sense of

the word. Jesus is coming into the Holy City to show how God will deal with humanity, not with military might, but with humble gentleness. Yet if one were to read on beyond the Palm Sunday Gospel in Mark, Chapter 11, the next day one would see Jesus casting a curse on an unproductive fig tree, and then pitching out the Temple merchants while overturning and scattering the foreign exchange booths and money managers there. Jesus was indeed purifying the Temple like the Maccabees did, but without first

defeating the invading Romans or having an army to back him up as the Maccabees did. Big problem! Jesus has now stirred up a hornet's nest, the Temple authorities, who were profiting from those money changers and animal dealers. To affect one's enemies' livelihood is to do the final act leading to arrest, on trumped up charges to be sure, but the Temple leaders had a good handle on the swords of the Roman legions. They knew how to play their cards, how to frame Jesus as a traitor to the Empire.

So Jesus suffers as an innocent one, and is beaten and tortured to death, being finally hung to suffocate on a rough cross.

I am told the Quran of Muhammadism does not allow for the possibility of the crucifixion of Jesus.

<https://journal.rts.edu/article/it-was-made-to-appear-like-that-to-them-islams-denial-of-jesus-crucifixion-in-the-quran-and-dogmatic-tradition/>

“Consequently, “the point is that tafsir, [the science of explaining the Qur'an,] not the Qur'an, denies the Crucifixion.

[Reynolds, “Muslim Jesus, 252: Gabriel Said Reynolds, “The Muslim Jesus: Dead or Alive?” Bulletin of SOAS 72/2 (2009), 237]”

Yet a myriad of pieces of evidence do say he was so killed. The cross remains the number one symbol of the universal church. Even non-Christian historical sources affirm such a death for Jesus. Eyewitness accounts abound in the gospels. And such a death was indeed the method of choice for insurrectionists at that time and place, but crucifixion

was finally repealed by the Romans nearly three centuries later as being too cruel, even for traitors.

Jesus was given a trial, but it was rigged from the beginning by the Jerusalem Temple authorities.

If one travels to the Holy Land one can see the possible dungeon where Jesus was held that night as the worldly religious powers plotted his death. They would encourage the Romans to release a scapegoat: Barabbas was apparently the prisoner of note at that time. Pilate was not so happy with the alternative to

Jesus Christ, as Barabbas was a known bandit and terrorist, a man who had led a bloody uprising against Rome. It seems a historical fact that dozens of rebel uprisings had occurred there over the past few years. And perhaps Pilate was recently appointed as Governor of Judea including Jerusalem to quell this unrest; over the next ten years Pilate would prove he was well up to the task, as his executions abounded. But to release a criminal like Barabbas was quite a stretch even for Pilate, and Pilate tried unsuccessfully to overcome the

jealousy of the Temple authorities to get Jesus released instead. Finally the temper of the crowd stirred up by the chief Temple priests forced Pilate's hand to throw Jesus to the wolves of the Roman guard who would beat Jesus nearly to death before he would be allowed to appear carrying his own cross. That Jesus died so quickly was probably the will of the guards who did not likely relish the suffering agony of the crucified, so their torture alone of Jesus was nearly to his death. Today capital punishment is much more

medical and sanitary--a needle of poisons, [or a mask of nitrogen], sudden [or sometime long] spasms of the body, and the prisoner is dead. But in the first century, torture was a long and grand public spectacle, likely because of an imagined deterrent effect against other criminals and terrorists; but of course that didn't work any better in the first century than it does in the twenty-first. The martyrdom syndrome is more powerful by far than execution.

The death of our Lord was the height of folly in the thinking of the

executioners. That we humans could keep the dead Son of God closed up forever in a stone tomb was ridiculous; it didn't hold three days, and out he came, alive again. What is perhaps more amazing was that no fire from heaven descended on the crucifixion spot to kill all those responsible for the unfair execution of the one completely innocent person, but of course that heat is reserved for a more propitious time such as on the Day of Judgment when all hope of redemption is gone for those

who have not followed the Christ and his way.

It took a burley Roman centurion to affirm what had been done, that humans had killed the true Son of God. Others being hung on crosses would curse their death with their last breath, but Jesus only cries to his Heavenly Father in his aloneness on that cruel instrument of torture.

‘Were you there when they crucified my Lord? Were you there when they crucified my Lord? Oh, oh, oh, sometimes it causes me to tremble,

tremble, tremble. Were you there when they crucified my Lord?’

Now is not the time to tremble. Now is the time to set our lives in order, to give up those things as individuals and as a community that cause innocent people to suffer and die. Maybe it is not ignoring the suffering of the hungry, or by not protesting public policies that do not further the strengthening of human life and welfare. Maybe it is in our own homes where we do not show love and compassion for our spouses or our

children or our relatives or our neighbors or even for our enemies.

We too need to have the innocent protected, but indeed we too need to protect ourselves from the coming judgment like that reserved for those who were responsible for killing the Son of God, who perhaps found no more time at their own end to repent and turn their lives to the Living and True God.

Holy Week begins today. It may be the last time we hear the call to turn back and follow Christ. What is our decision? Will we seek the face of the

Lord now? Will we follow him the rest of our life? Will we find the offering of his life has substituted for our sins at the Last Day? I hope and pray so.

Amen.

Description: Jesus passion on the cruel cross is painstakingly rehearsed in Mark's Gospel. The triumph of a new rebellion is expected, but hopes are dashed. The Son of God is not be an earthly ruler but one reigning in heaven over all living and dead.

Tags: Sunday, School, whiplash, Antiochus Epiphanes, rebellion, dungeon, martyrdom, trial, capital punishment, Roman, centurion, Son of God

“On a donkey”

The Palm Gospel according to

Mark 11:1-11a

When they were approaching Jerusalem, at Bethphage and Bethany, near the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples and said to them, ‘Go into the village ahead of you, and immediately as you enter it, you will find tied there a colt that has never been ridden; untie it and bring it. If anyone says to you, “Why are you doing this?” just say this, “The Lord needs it and will

send it back here immediately.”” They went away and found a colt tied near a door, outside in the street. As they were untying it, some of the bystanders said to them, ‘What are you doing, untying the colt?’ They told them what Jesus had said; and they allowed them to take it. Then they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks on it; and he sat on it. Many people spread their cloaks on the road, and others spread leafy branches that they had cut in the fields. Then those who went ahead and those who followed were shouting, ‘Hosanna!

Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the coming kingdom of our ancestor David! Hosanna in the highest heaven!’

Then he entered Jerusalem and went into the temple; and when he had looked around at everything, as it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the twelve.

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The Passion Gospel according to

Mark 15:1-39

As soon as it was morning, the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council. They bound Jesus, led him away, and handed him over to Pilate. Pilate asked him, “Are you the King of the Jews?” He answered him, “You say so.” Then the chief priests accused him of many things. Pilate asked him again, “Have you no answer? See how many charges they bring against you.” But Jesus made no further reply, so that Pilate was amazed.

Now at the festival he used to release a prisoner for them, anyone for whom they asked. Now a man called Barabbas was in prison with the rebels who had committed murder during the insurrection. So the crowd came and began to ask Pilate to do for them according to his custom. Then he answered them, “Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?” For he realized that it was out of jealousy that the chief priests had handed him over. But the chief priests stirred up

the crowd to have him release Barabbas for them instead. Pilate spoke to them again, “Then what do you wish me to do with the man you call the King of the Jews?” They shouted back, “Crucify him!” Pilate asked them, “Why, what evil has he done?” But they shouted all the more, “Crucify him!” So Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd, released Barabbas for them; and after flogging Jesus, he handed him over to be crucified.

Then the soldiers led him into the courtyard of the palace (that is, the governor's headquarters); and they called together the whole cohort. And they clothed him in a purple cloak; and after twisting some thorns into a crown, they put it on him. And they began saluting him, "Hail, King of the Jews!" They struck his head with a reed, spat upon him, and knelt down in homage to him. After mocking him, they stripped him of the purple cloak and put his own

clothes on him. Then they led him out to crucify him.

They compelled a passer-by, who was coming in from the country, to carry his cross; it was Simon of Cyrene, the father of Alexander and Rufus. Then they brought Jesus to the place called Golgotha (which means the place of a skull). And they offered him wine mixed with myrrh; but he did not take it. And they crucified him, and divided his clothes among them, casting lots to decide what each should take.

It was nine o'clock in the morning when they crucified him. The inscription of the charge against him read, "The King of the Jews." And with him they crucified two bandits, one on his right and one on his left. Those who passed by derided him, shaking their heads and saying, "Aha! You who would destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself, and come down from the cross!" In the same way the chief priests, along with the scribes, were also mocking him

among themselves and saying, “He saved others; he cannot save himself. Let the Messiah, the King of Israel, come down from the cross now, so that we may see and believe.” Those who were crucified with him also taunted him.

When it was noon, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. At three o’clock Jesus cried out with a loud voice, “Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?” which means, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” When some

of the bystanders heard it, they said,
“Listen, he is calling for Elijah.”
And someone ran, filled a sponge
with sour wine, put it on a stick, and
gave it to him to drink, saying,
“Wait, let us see whether Elijah will
come to take him down.” Then
Jesus gave a loud cry and breathed
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temple was torn in two, from top to
bottom. Now when the centurion,
who stood facing him, saw that in
this way he breathed his last, he said,
“Truly this man was God’s Son!”

There were also women looking on from a distance; among them were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joses, and Salome. These used to follow him and provided for him when he was in Galilee; and there were many other women who had come up with him to Jerusalem.

When evening had come, and since it was the day of Preparation, that is, the day before the sabbath, Joseph of Arimathea, a respected member of the council, who was also himself

waiting expectantly for the kingdom of God, went boldly to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate wondered if he were already dead; and summoning the centurion, he asked him whether he had been dead for some time. When he learned from the centurion that he was dead, he granted the body to Joseph. Then Joseph bought a linen cloth, and taking down the body, wrapped it in the linen cloth, and laid it in a tomb that had been hewn out of the rock. He then rolled a stone

against the door of the tomb. Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses saw where the body was laid.

Dear Lord, as you have loved us to the end, may we serve you to the end.
Amen.

In the early fifth century a Spanish nun by the name of Egeria made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem and recorded the first eyewitness account of what happened on Palm Sunday:

<http://users.ox.ac.uk/~mikef/durham/egeria.html>

Palm Sunday: Services in the Churches.

1.

Egeria's Diary Section XXX: On the next day, that is, the Lord's Day, which begins the Paschal week, and which they call here the Great Week, when all the customary services from cockcrow until morning have taken place in the Anastasis and at the Cross, they proceed on the morning of the Lord's Day

according to custom to the greater church, which is called the martyrion. It is called the martyrion because it is in Golgotha behind the Cross, where the Lord suffered.

2. When all that is customary has been observed in the great church, and before the dismissal is made, the archdeacon lifts his voice and says first:

"Throughout the whole week, beginning from to-morrow, let us all assemble in the martyrion, that is, in the great church, at the ninth hour." Then he lifts

his voice again, saying: “Let us all be ready to-day in Eleona at the seventh hour.”

3. So when the dismissal has been made in the great church, that is, the martyrium, the bishop is escorted with hymns to the Anastasis, and after all things that are customary on the Lord's Day have been done there, after the dismissal from the martyrium, every one hastens home to eat, that all may be ready at the beginning of the seventh hour in the church in Eleona, on the

Mount of Olives, where is the cave in which the Lord was wont to teach.

Procession with Palms on the Mount of Olives.

Egeria's Diary Section XXXI:

Accordingly at the seventh hour all the people go up to the Mount of Olives, that is, to Eleona, and the bishop with them, to the church, where hymns and antiphons suitable to the day and to the place are said, and lessons in like manner. And when the ninth hour approaches they go up with hymns to

the Imbomon, that is, to the place whence the Lord ascended into heaven, and there they sit down, for all the people are always bidden to sit when the bishop is present; the deacons alone always stand. Hymns and antiphons suitable to the day and to the place are said, interspersed with lections and prayers.

2. And as the eleventh hour approaches, the passage from the Gospel is read, where the children, carrying branches and palms, met the Lord, saying;

Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord, and the bishop immediately rises, and all the people with him, and they all go on foot from the top of the Mount of Olives, all the people going before him with hymns and antiphons, answering one to another: Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord.

3. And all the children in the neighborhood, even those who are too young to walk, are carried by their parents on their shoulders, all of them bearing branches, some of palms and

some of olives, and thus the bishop is escorted in the same manner as the Lord was of old.

4. For all, even those of rank, both matrons and men, accompany the bishop all the way on foot in this manner, making these responses, from the top of the mount to the city, and thence through the whole city to the Anastasis, going very slowly lest the people should be wearied; and thus they arrive at the Anastasis at a late hour. And on arriving, although it is late, lucernare

takes place, with prayer at the Cross;
after which the people are dismissed.

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The observance of Palm Sunday in Jerusalem was witnessed by the pilgrim nun Sister Egeria in about 381-384. During this observance there was a procession of people down the Mount of Olives into Jerusalem. The people waved branches of palms or olive trees as they walked. They sang psalms, including Ps 118, and shouted the antiphon, “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!” The Palm

Sunday observance was generally accepted throughout the Western church by the twelfth century. However, the day was identified in the 1549 BCP as simply “The Sunday next before Easter.” The blessing of branches and the procession were not included. The 1928 BCP added the phrase “commonly called Palm Sunday” to the title of the day. A form for blessing palms was provided by the Book of Offices (in 1960). The 1979 BCP presents the full title for the day, “The Sunday of the Passion: Palm Sunday”. (BCP, p. 270).

<https://www.episcopalchurch.org/library/glossary/palm-sunday-sunday-passion>

>>>>>Here is the brief Sunday homily:

My liturgy Professor at the General Seminary in 1985, Thomas Talley, summarized his research findings about the history of Palm and Passion Sunday as follow: Early on in the fourth and fifth centuries the Bishops of Jerusalem and perhaps even earlier, those local Jerusalem Bishops found they could get a good following of pilgrims and others in Holy Week by using the well-known features of the sacred and rebuilt city

which related to the life of Jesus Christ. And in particular on Palm Sunday a procession was made down from the Mount of Olives, through the Kidron Valley, the valley where Jerusalem's garbage was burned, and up to the site just outside the walls of ancient Jerusalem where Jesus was crucified; a sacred basilica had been erected at that holy place which covered both the Mount of Golgotha, the site of the crucifixion, and the Garden Tomb where the dead body of Jesus had been laid. These two important sites are only a few

hundred feet apart, and both are still inside this ancient basilica, part of which remains today in Jerusalem. This Eastern Church procession became known over time by the Bishop of Rome who had for many centuries observed only the Passion of Christ on the Sunday before Easter; since many Christian pilgrims did not come to church services on Good Friday, this Sunday of the Passion was to prepare them for the miraculous Resurrection on Easter morning.

After centuries of reports from the pilgrims who participated with the Patriarch of Jerusalem in the Palm Sunday procession, the Patriarch of Rome, we now call him the Pope, in the twelfth century after his split with the Patriarch of Constantinople and the other Eastern bishops, the Patriarch of Rome saw fit to add this well-known Eastern Church Palm Sunday feature to his Western Church observance of Passion Sunday on the Sunday before Easter. But the Pope kept the enthusiastic Roman Palm Sunday

procession at bay by making them stop outside the Roman cathedral and knock for entrance to the Holy Passion Sunday service. Then the Palm Sunday revelers were calmed down and entered the very sedate Passion Sunday service inside the Roman cathedral. In time, both parts of Palm and Passion Sunday became united inside the cathedral. And over time the two services were observed inside the cathedral in a manner similar to how we do it in our church today. Some churches will indeed have outdoor processions of Palms that then enter the

church. Then the Palm Sunday Gospel is read, as we have read it just now, and the service continues with a few prayers followed by the readings from the Passion, the Crucifixion, of Christ. Thus, over several centuries this 'two-headed' liturgy was conceived, by popular request, if you will.

So, on this perhaps second most Holy Sunday, we hear the acclamations of those adoring Jesus with Hosannas-- some perhaps thinking he had come only to throw off the bondage of Rome, and others hopeful that he was the long

promised Messiah of God. The world itself is still of those two opinions, some thinking perhaps Jesus has come to save them from the governments that be or ignoring Jesus, and others realizing through faith in him that the Son of God will save us from the time of trial and deliver us from all evil at the Last Day. The Church represents the latter group, and we hope and pray others will find their eternal hope in the One Who Died for Our Sins.

Amen.

<<<<<End of the brief homily

Description:

Jesus comes into Jerusalem in a lowly procession riding on a donkey on Palm Sunday, being adored by many expecting him to throw off the yoke of the Roman Empire. Then he leaves the city, regroups with his disciples, is arrested, and crucified on Good Friday. We now await remembering his rising from the dead on Easter morning.

Tags:

Egeria, nun, Spain, Patriarch, Rome,
Constantinople, Eastern Church,
Western Church, Palm, Sunday,
Passion, crucified, Mark, gospel,
Jerusalem, pilgrims, Pope, Golgotha,
crucifixion, Garden Tomb, procession,
Mount, Olives, Kidron, Valley, garbage,
burned, century, liturgy, basilica, Talley