

PALM / PASSION SUNDAY 10-04-2022 *The Reverend Lorna Green*

Luke 19:28-40 (*Palm Gospel*)

Psalms 31:9-18; Philippians 2:5-11; Luke 22.14 - 23. 56 (*Passion Gospel*)

Philippians 2.5-11

*Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus,
who, though he was in the form of God,
did not regard equality with God
as something to be exploited,
but emptied himself,
taking the form of a slave,
being born in human likeness.*

*And being found in human form,
he humbled himself
and became obedient to the point of death—
even death on a cross.*

*Therefore God also highly exalted him
and gave him the name
that is above every name,
so that at the name of Jesus
every knee should bend,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
and every tongue should confess
that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.*

What happened? How did everything go so badly wrong, in the space of less than a week? One day people were joyfully welcoming Jesus into Jerusalem as if he was their new king- and days later the crowd was baying for blood and demanding his execution.

How can we understand this whole tragic story, and make sense of it all? Why did Jesus die? Why did the best person who ever lived end up being publicly humiliated, deserted by his closest friends, then dying a horrible death?

The scribes and Pharisees were scornful of his humble origins as someone from Galilee. They asked questions like: “Where did he get all this? How does he know this stuff? Who does he think he is, anyway?” But a bit of envy or professional jealousy doesn’t explain the vicious anger and hatred directed at Jesus. Surely he wasn’t that much of a threat? Why did he have to die?

Through the centuries ever since, people have tried to understand and explain what all this is about.

Sadly, there are probably as many explanations as there are Christian denominations.

Maybe instead of asking, “Why did Jesus die?” we need to ask “What did he die *for*?”

Even this might not be the right question. If we ask, “**Who** did he die for?” then we are getting closer to the truth.

The answer to this question is clear: he died for us. He died for you and me. When he was eating his last meal, he said to those at the table with him: "This is my body, which is given for you." Given for Judas, who would betray him; for Peter, who would deny him; and for all the others who would desert him. If he died for them, he also died for us.

The short piece from the letter to the Philippians set for today is written like a hymn, and is like Paul's summary of all this. Jesus emptied himself, humbled himself, and became one of us; and then he saw it through to the end, and died. He saw it coming; it was an unsurprising end for someone who spent no energy protecting himself. Jesus submitted to death the same way he had submitted to everything else that made him fully human.

God exalted him because of his self-denying service for others, with no thought of reward, to the point of death.

Jesus died for all of us; flawed, damaged, and sinful as we are. We may not have a clear and concise answer to the question of why he died, but we can answer the question of for whom did he die. He died for us- because he loves us.

That's what Luke wants us to know as he tells us the difficult story of these terrible events. He wants us to know that God, in Jesus, loves us enough to die for us. He wants to show us that Jesus, even in the midst of pain and suffering, asked that his executioners be forgiven.

He shows us Jesus reassuring the frightened criminal hanging nearby that he too will soon be in Paradise with God.

Today we do not focus on what we believe about Jesus, but on what he did, and what we are able to do *because* of what he did. We can have the same mind in us that was in Christ Jesus; we are capable of the same kind of self-emptying and obedience, not only as individuals but as the church.

On Maundy Thursday we will remember that last evening when Jesus shared supper with his friends; and on Good Friday we will remember how he gave up his life for us. We will remember that without Good Friday there would be no Easter Sunday: without the death there would be no resurrection. On Easter Day we will celebrate the joy of new life and new beginnings, but we must not forget what it cost.

As we pray for the world and the church let us also pray that our lives will reflect God's great, all-encompassing love.

The Lord be with you.

Notices:

Maundy Thursday: Holy communion, optional foot-washing,

Good Friday: quiet communion using elements consecrated previous evening: no celebration.

Saturday: church is liturgically silent

Easter Sunday: Dawn 6am, breakfast; 9:30