

Stretching Toward Sunday

Thoughts, readings and reflections
based on this week's lectionary readings

April 14, 2019
Liturgy of the Palms, Year C

The readings this week:

- Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29
- Luke 19:28-40

[Click here to read this week's Scriptures](#)

Palm Sunday Procession

On Palm Sunday the Combined Lutheran and Episcopal Congregations processed through the community. Led by the old and young who carried palms, the congregations stopped at various sites to offer prayers: The refurbished municipal building was the first site. The youth program, health center and Registry of Motor Vehicles had recently re-opened. The two congregations had pressured the city and the state to renovate and restore these vital services to the community. The new senior housing in the old high school was the second stop. At these sites we offered prayers of thanksgiving.

As we progressed we started to follow the way of sorrow: the drug house that destroyed the life of one of our children, was now boarded. The boy's mother and sister processed with us. We stopped at the home of a single mother of twins whose husband recently died. The young mother walked with us as we pushed the red headed boys, Rory and Ryan, in the stroller.

Our last stop was the house of a young Black couple whose little girl died suddenly of what was later determined to be a hereditary illness passed down through the family for generations. The father was a student at the Boston University law school and the mother a nurse. The two were open wounds as we planned the girl's memorial. The service is a blur now. It was accompanied with news that the social worker at the hospital had begun to investigate the father for child abuse.

The procession was, in part, to remember the child. We carried her picture, like an icon. After a brief and thorough investigation it was determined the family was not responsible for the child's sudden death. Yet the scars on the spirit of the young couple were etched in their faces, the corners of eyes and mouth. We would not blind ourselves to the vulnerability of our brothers and sisters fierce and fragile souls.

We stopped at the little girl's apartment on our way back to the church. Her parents walked with us.

It was a good place to stop and pray.

We returned to the church a little chilled and out of breath. The old timers had been driven, or pushed in wheel chairs,

from site to site, and we all walked into the church singing hymns and waving branches of palm, having witnessed the victories and defeats of life in our little village in the city.

The way of sorrow, our Via Dolorosa, is not only some path where Jesus walked in Jerusalem. It is here and now, and so is the way to victory and resurrection. Two roads are traveled here and, it seems to me, they are the same road.

~ [Stories from a Priestly Life](#)



our souls as branches

Let us run to accompany him as he hastens toward his passion, and imitate those who met him then, not by covering his path with garments, olive branches or palms, but by doing all we can to prostrate ourselves before him by being humble and by trying to live as he would wish. Then we shall be able to receive the Word at his coming, and God, whom no limits can contain, will be within us.

... So let us spread before his feet, not garments or soulless olive branches, which delight the eye for a few hours and then wither, but ourselves, clothed in his grace, or rather, clothed completely in him. We who have been baptized into Christ must ourselves be the garments that we spread before him.... Let our souls take the place of the welcoming branches as we join today in the children's holy song: "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Blessed is the king of Israel."

~ Andrew of Crete (c.650-712, 726, or 740)

Sermon 9 for Palm Sunday

quoted from Readings for the Daily Office from the Early Church, J.Robert Wright,

via Suzanne Guthrie, [At the Edge of Enclosure](#)

Reflecting on the Word



Psalm Reading: [Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29](#)

Think of all the things and relationships in your life that have passed on or proven temporary. Contrast that with the most enduring love relationship you know, or with the times that come to mind when you hum that ditty "Happy Days Are Here Again." How does that relationship or those days compare with the enduring love of God? What has the Lord done for the king and/or representatively for the people? As an Israelite prompted to give thanks on the occasion of this psalm, what redemptive occasions in the life of your people come to mind? What is the significance of the stone-turned-capstone, which is being celebrated on this festive day? The early church applied verse 22 to Jesus. How is Jesus like this stone-turned-capstone? For what events in your life are you particularly grateful to God? How did God prove to be your helper, your strength or your salvation? *Quiet Time Bible Study, InterVarsity Press*

Jesus presents some street theater,
the new life enacted among us.
People love it for the moment,
but the Powers will have him killed, and he knows it.
He has a week to live.
How's he going to create a kingdom?
One week. How's he going to change the world?

He comes on a donkey. He talks. He heals.
No power, no strategy. Really, not even a kingdom.

No plan but this: just love people, and forgive them.
Share a meal. Wash their feet.
Love them and forgive them.
And trust God with the rest.

That's it. No other power, no plan.
Just love and trust God, who takes our love
and heals the world with it.

This is Jesus' faith:
Do what you can. Do it with love.
Bless and heal and forgive along the way.
And trust that's good enough for God.
It was good enough for Jesus.

Facing your trials, dealing with conflict,
confronting injustice, small as you are:
do what you can, do it with love,
bless and heal and forgive, and trust God.

That alone will change the world.
That alone will save. Watch.

~ Steve Garnaas-Holmes [Unfolding Light](#)

Praying Toward Sunday

God of the cross, tottering down the streets of
Jerusalem on a donkey,
You are not the savior we expect.
Your power doesn't look like the power we want our
God to have. Your wisdom makes no sense to us.

We are happy to join the crowd, waving branches,
but not so sure we want to follow you through this
Holy Week:
into the temple courts
into the upper room
into the Garden of Gethsemane
to the high priest's house,
to the assembly of elders,
to Pilate,
to Herod,
to the place of The Skull,
to the foot of the cross.

We need you to go with us on this journey.
Grant us clear vision,
Courageous hearts,
Persistent steps.

Even though we know what this week will bring, we
sing:
Hosanna, hosanna.
Save us, we beseech you! Amen.

~ Joanna Harader, [Spacious Faith](#)

Gospel Reading: [Luke 19:28-40](#)

Imagine you were telling about the Cross to someone who hasn't heard it before. If you took the theological or "churchy" language out your description (words like redemption, atonement, sin, etc.), how would you describe what happened and why it's important to you? What did Jesus represent to each of the characters he encountered in this passage, and what (if anything) did they want from him? How did Jesus respond to each one? How might he have responded differently, and what does his chosen response tell us? Which of the things that the characters in these passages wanted from Jesus do we still want? In what ways does the act of Jesus's death on the cross remind you that you are never alone? What can you do this Holy Week to more actively embrace the example of God's love? What will you do this Holy Week to remind yourself about the sacrifice that God made for humanity? In what ways can the observance of Holy Week help people understand that they are valuable in God's sight? How might we invite others, who do not share our faith and experiences, come to understand the personal significance of the events of Holy Week? [Faith Element](#)