

Palm/Passion Sunday-April 14th, 2019
Baltic and East Nidaros Lutheran Church

GOSPEL: Luke 19:28-40 & Luke 23: 1-49

“He Stirs Up the People by Teaching”

Sermon by Vicar Randall J. Questad

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.



This past Monday was a Palm Sunday kind of day. When I got done with class, I came back to Baltic. As I drove into the town from the east, still being a little annoyed with the inconvenience of not being able to get to town from the west because of the road closing, my mind wasn't thinking about that inconvenience because of the beauty of the day. Most of the snow had already melted and with temperatures in the upper 60's in the afternoon I could find little to complain about.

As I came into town, I noticed the large crowd of people also enjoying the beauty of the day at the Junior High track meet that was happening at the Baltic school. This too reminded me of what the atmosphere must have been like when Jesus entered Jerusalem riding on the colt from the first reading for today. People were cheering Jesus on as he passed by. Maybe it was as warm as it was on Monday, since they willingly gave up their coats and spread them on the road as he rode along. It was like Jesus had taken first place in all the events at a track meet and it was only him that they were praising. The whole day was about praising Jesus. They cheered him on saying, "Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest heaven!"

The name of this Sunday even makes you feel good. Palm Sunday. It was only three weeks ago that Kim and I enjoyed the warmth of Arizona and the beauty of Palm trees around us. This is the kind of day we would like every day to be. Palm Sunday days.

But as you well know. They are not. Palm branches dry up and wither and become ashes. While we enjoyed the palm trees in Arizona, I probably don't need to remind you about the unprecedented flooding that was happening here in SD. South Dakota was experiencing a Passion Sunday kind of day. Many of you were carrying crosses or removing carpeting from wet basements rather than waving palm branches.

And this week quickly turned from a Palm Sunday kind of day on Monday to a Passion Sunday kind by Wednesday evening this week.

In fact, by Wednesday morning things had started to change. The morning weather forecast was reason enough to be cautious or fearful of what was to come. Then I opening my computer to check emails that morning and another unexpected problem had appeared. I couldn't access my emails because of the blue screen telling me there was an operating system failure. I did what little I know what to do to attempt to fix the problem. But, all of my efforts failed so I headed to Best Buy to get acquainted with the Geek Squad for the first time. My computer was as fine as a Palm Sunday on Tuesday, but on Wednesday whatever used to work fine now had failed me.

And whatever fond memories I had of Monday afternoon or Arizona a few weeks ago, all disappeared as the threatening freezing rain and snow became a reality. Schools hoping to not lose any more days this school year because of weather got out early and never returned this week. By Wednesday evening, our power failed for a couple of hours. But we were hopeful when it came on again when we went to bed. But that was a false hope when it soon failed again and stayed off for the next couple of days. During the night, it was dark and it was cold. It was no longer a Palm Sunday kind of day like Monday. It was a Passion Sunday kind of day. A sleepless night spent fearful of the uncertainties of the next day.

On the first Palm Sunday, people were impressed with Jesus. A large group of people gathered in Jerusalem to cheer him on as he passed by. Luke describes the day like an announcer would at a perfect weather kind of day at a track meet by saying the whole multitude of people began praising God joyfully with a loud voice for all the deeds of power that they had seen Jesus do. They liked watching Jesus do miracles of all kinds. Jesus was in first place in all events of their lives.

When Jesus entered Jerusalem as he was about to face his "Passion Sunday", Pilate was like the multitude in that he was very glad to see Jesus because he too wanted to see Jesus perform some sign. But it wasn't the signs and miracles that Jesus performed that bothered the people.

They all decided to take Jesus from the colt and put him on a cross **because of his teaching**. It was the words of Jesus, not his works that sent him to the cross.

What words of Jesus seem to be so offensive that people are willing to put him to death? It is the words and it is the same reason why I was not happy with my computer or the weather this week. I was powerless. There was nothing that I could do to fix my computer. There was nothing that I could do to get the power to come back on at our house. I had to rely totally on the help of someone else.

Jesus had taught people that he was the only way to the Father. No one comes to the Father except through me. Jesus had taught the people that stood by watching the woman caught in adultery that her sins were forgiven and whoever was without sin could cast the first stone. Jesus taught that it was God who hardened Pharaoh's heart, not the devil which kept the Israelites in slavery longer. Jesus taught that David never would have been able to realize his sin himself if it wasn't for a preacher pointing out his sinfulness. Jesus taught that God is still angered when people sin. Jesus taught that we are not only to love God, but we are also to fear God. Jesus taught that only he could raise people from death to new life with his words and not by the good deeds of the deceased. Jesus taught that you are powerless without his word.

Jesus didn't teach that there is a part A and a part B to the third petition of the Lord's prayer. It doesn't begin with your will being done and when your will can't get things done, then we pray that Thy will be done to help us along when we can't fix things ourselves. We are powerless and all we have is Thy will. But it is Thy will that can do anything--even on days that seem like Passion Sundays to us.

I will confess that this week was pretty draining for me. I was reminded of how powerless I am, even in my preaching without the work of the Holy Spirit to open the ears of people to hear God's word. But

then I was reminded that Jesus' teaching that stirred up people is the same teaching that gives hope like no one or nothing else can do.

Listen again to what Isaiah said about the teachings of Jesus. "The Lord God has given me the tongue of a teacher, that I may know how to sustain the weary with a word. Morning by morning he wakens--wakens my ear to listen as those who are thought. The Lord God has opened my ear, and I was not rebellious.

This week presented many inconveniences for me. But I was surrounded by many others who experienced much greater problems. Uncertainties greater than failed computers or the lack of electrical power to make my life easier. Uncertainties that can only be comforted with God who is in control of all our days. Palm Sundays and Passion Sundays.

On Maundy Thursday this week, you will hear Jesus teach his disciples that they will all betray him which includes you. On Good Friday, you will hear that Jesus will suffer and die because of your betrayal of him. But on Easter Morning, you will know that God has overcome sin and death itself. God is in control and we are not.

It is this teaching of Jesus that stirs up faith where it belongs. Not in ourselves, but in Christ Alone. Amen.