

Scripture Readings and Sermon

April 10, 2022 by Rev. Mark Brechin

Commentary on Philippians 2:5–11

This early hymn of the church also served as an early statement of faith. Christians profess that Jesus is fully divine and fully human. This claim of Jesus' full divinity means that Jesus was not created by God but was through the Trinity in fact God. As Philippians says he was in the "form of God" and equal with God. And yet, in the midst of his full divinity, Jesus was also fully human "in human form" and subject to a human death. This is the mystery of the "incarnation" where we claim that God is with us in Jesus. God experienced the extent of human suffering on the cross. God who is infinite experienced mortal suffering in Jesus. Once God was done with this human form, God did not discard the humanity of Jesus but raised the human form to heaven in the mystery of the "ascension". The woundedness of humanity in the marks of the nails is now part of God in Jesus. It is through Jesus' humanity that all of humanity may enter into God's glory. This is why the name of Jesus is so revered. Not because the name has power but because the who is named has opened the gates of heaven through his life, death, and resurrection. This sacrificial act is remembered during Passion week.

Philippians 2:6 “did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited”

Do you know anyone who exploits their position?

Maybe they expect special treatment or recognition?

Have you ever exploited your position? (I'm the customer! I got here first! Etc...)

Do we exploit our relationship with God because of Christ? (self-righteousness)

Have you ever caught yourself judging others implying that you are better?

What does it mean that Jesus humbled himself?

Where is Jesus actions calling the church and us to go?

Commentary on Luke 19:28-40

Much of Luke's telling of Jesus' entrance into Jerusalem is the same as Matthew and Mark. What is unique to Luke is the absence of palm branches, the words the people use, and the conversation between Jesus and the Pharisees. There is very little said about the absence of palm branches by scholars. One rabbinical source states that the waving of palm branches is a way of glorifying God since the sound of the wind through branches pronounces the divine name. The people in Luke, however, do not use such a subtle method. They clearly proclaim "glory in the highest heaven." The praise of the people points to the very thing that Jesus will be accused of - being the King of the Jews. In the other gospels, the people cry out Hosanna or "Save us!" to the "Son of David". This could have a political meaning or it could refer to Jesus' reputation for various miracles of healing. It is also argued that this phrase was common leading up to Passover which is a remembrance of God's saving the people from slavery in Egypt. Luke's version, however, makes it clear that Jesus is being welcomed as a king. The people then repeat the same words used by the angels at Jesus' birth, "Peace in heaven, and glory in the highest heaven!" This may explain Jesus' response to the Pharisees. The people, the host of angels, and even creation proclaim Jesus' Lordship.

Luke 19:40 “He answered, 'I tell you, if these were silent, the stones would shout out.'”

Where do you go to be closer to God?

Why do more people find God in nature than the church?

Could it be that the church no longer proclaims God but instead itself?

Do we proclaim Jesus or our own agendas and morality?

What if the people of God joined with the stones in praise?

Notice how the shouts of praise do not point to us but to the one on the donkey.

Commentary on Luke 22:39-23:25

The story of Jesus' last night in Luke 22:14-62 is very similar to Matthew and Mark with a few exceptions which will now be explored. These exceptions are Jesus sweating blood in the garden (43-44), Jesus witnessing Peter's betrayal, and the role of Herod and kingship in the trial (2, 4-16). When dealing with the story of Jesus sweating blood, it is important to remember that the writings contained in the New Testament did not come to us today as a single collection of complete books. It was only after the realization that Jesus was not immediately returning that people started to write the witness accounts down. These accounts could vary between churches and many were lost during Roman persecution. What is now called the New Testament is based off of collected fragments and partial writings that for a majority tell the same account. The story of Jesus sweating blood, however, is only included in half the reliable sources and therefore is not always included in modern translations. The inclusion of the account points to Jesus' humanity and struggle to the point of needing aid from angels and bursting blood vessels resulting in sweating blood. The next exception for Luke is Jesus witnessing Peter's betrayal. This look of Jesus to Peter intensifies Peter's betrayal. The final exception deals with the accusation of Jesus rejecting Caesar's tax and claiming kingship through the title of Messiah/Christ. For Pilate, this becomes a jurisdictional matter under which Herod actually has authority. For Herod, the claim to kingship only matters if Jesus shows some sign of divine selection. Once Jesus decides not to "perform" for Herod, Herod puts a robe on him as a sign of what Herod views as a false claim. For Pilate, the matter is settled if not for the crowd.

Luke 22:51 But Jesus said, "No more of this!" And he touched his ear and healed him.

How would you have reacted when they came for Jesus?

Would you have cut off the ear of the servant or gone straight for Judas?

What does Jesus' reaction say about the natural response of fight or flight?

Can we offer healing and love even during the very act of betrayal?

When do you hear Jesus yell out, "No more of this!"?

How would the tensions and conflicts of the world change if we listened to Jesus?

Reflection on Luke 19:28-40, Luke 22:39-23:25, Philippians 2:5-11

Sermon "Walking through the Dark"

The story of passion week is second only to Christmas as the most known story of Jesus. And yet, each of the gospel writers add their own unique perspective on that last week of Jesus. In the Gospel of John, Jesus washes the disciples feet as a demonstration of servanthood. In the reading from Luke, Jesus tells Simon Peter that being a servant means strengthening the other disciples when Jesus is gone. Jesus knows that Peter will deny him but this is not the same as losing faith. When Peter has found his strength after weeping over his denial, he must share that strength and hope with the others. The disciples will need that strength when Judas betrays not only Jesus but their trust. It is a time of darkness, when Jesus willingly puts out his light so that people can walk by the light of grace given to them through the Holy Spirit.

That light, however, has not yet come and the disciples are still responding to fear by fighting or fleeing. Before waiting for Jesus to answer their questions about the use of swords, the disciples cut off the ear of a servant. After Jesus rejects the fight response, most flee but Peter stays only to hide behind his denials of knowing Jesus in the courtyard. This same response can be seen in the "leaders" of the people who attack Jesus physically and verbally as well as the official leaders who deny that Jesus poses a threat. Holy Week reminds us that we are all to some point blinded by fear and stumble in the darkness. When we find ourselves in the dark, do we strengthen one another in hope and faith or do we add to the confusion? When the darkness seems to be in control, do we give in to fear or do we

remember that at our darkest, Jesus' love was at its brightest? Holy Week and Good Friday are not the end of the story but only the path we must all take. Remember, Easter is COMING!