**Palm Sunday 2020**

The Triumphal Entry – John 12

12 The next day the large crowd that had come to the feast heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem. 13 So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, crying out, “Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!” 14 And Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, just as it is written, 15 “Fear not, daughter of Zion; behold, your king is coming, sitting on a donkey’s colt!” 16 His disciples did not understand these things at first, but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things had been written about him and had been done to him. 17 The crowd that had been with him when he called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to bear witness. 18 The reason why the crowd went to meet him was that they heard he had done this sign. 19 So the Pharisees said to one another, “You see that you are gaining nothing. Look, the world has gone after him.”

**Sunday of the Passion**

Jesus Before Pilate – Matthew 27

11 Now Jesus stood before the governor, and the governor asked him, “Are you the King of the Jews?” Jesus said, “You have said so.” 12 But when he was accused by the chief priests and elders, he gave no answer. 13 Then Pilate said to him, “Do you not hear how many things they testify against you?” 14 But he gave him no answer, not even to a single charge, so that the governor was greatly amazed.

The Crowd Chooses Barabbas

15 Now at the feast the governor was accustomed to release for the crowd any one prisoner whom they wanted. 16 And they had then a notorious prisoner called Barabbas. 17 So when they had gathered, Pilate said to them, “Whom do you want me to release for you: Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ?” 18 For he knew that it was out of envy that they had delivered him up. 19 Besides, while he was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent word to him, “Have nothing to do with that righteous man, for I have suffered much because of him today in a dream.” 20 Now the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowd to ask for Barabbas and destroy Jesus. 21 The governor again said to them, “Which of the two do you want me to release for you?” And they said, “Barabbas.” 22 Pilate said to them, “Then what shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?” They all said, “Let him be crucified!” 23 And he said, “Why? What evil has he done?” But they shouted all the more, “Let him be crucified!”

Pilate Delivers Jesus to Be Crucified

24 So when Pilate saw that he was gaining nothing, but rather that a riot was beginning, he took water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying, “I am innocent of this man’s blood; see to it yourselves.” 25 And all the people answered, “His blood be on us and on our children!” 26 Then he released for them Barabbas, and having scourged Jesus, delivered him to be crucified.

Jesus Is Mocked

27 Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the governor’s headquarters, and they gathered the whole battalion before him. 28 And they stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, 29 and twisting together a crown of thorns, they put it on his head and put a reed in his right hand. And kneeling before him, they mocked him, saying, “Hail, King of the Jews!” 30 And they spit on him and took the reed and struck him on the head. 31 And when they had mocked him, they stripped him of the robe and put his own clothes on him and led him away to crucify him.

The Crucifixion

32 As they went out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name. They compelled this man to carry his cross. 33 And when they came to a place called Golgotha (which means Place of a Skull), 34 they offered him wine to drink, mixed with gall, but when he tasted it, he would not drink it. 35 And when they had crucified him, they divided his garments among them by casting lots. 36 Then they sat down and kept watch over him there. 37 And over his head they put the charge against him, which read, “This is Jesus, the King of the Jews.” 38 Then two robbers were crucified with him, one on the right and one on the left. 39 And those who passed by derided him, wagging their heads 40 and saying, “You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save yourself! If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross.” 41 So also the chief priests, with the scribes and elders, mocked him, saying, 42 “He saved others; he cannot save himself. He is the King of Israel; let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him. 43 He trusts in God; let God deliver him now, if he desires him. For he said, ‘I am the Son of God.’ ” 44 And the robbers who were crucified with him also reviled him in the same way.

The Death of Jesus

45 Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour. 46 And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, “Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?” that is, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” 47 And some of the bystanders, hearing it, said, “This man is calling Elijah.” 48 And one of them at once ran and took a sponge, filled it with sour wine, and put it on a reed and gave it to him to drink. 49 But the others said, “Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to save him.” 50 And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice and yielded up his spirit.

51 And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. And the earth shook, and the rocks were split. 52 The tombs also were opened. And many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised, 53 and coming out of the tombs after his resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many. 54 When the centurion and those who were with him, keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were filled with awe and said, “Truly this was the Son of God!”

55 There were also many women there, looking on from a distance, who had followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering to him, 56 among whom were Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James and Joseph and the mother of the sons of Zebedee.

Jesus Is Buried

57 When it was evening, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who also was a disciple of Jesus. 58 He went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate ordered it to be given to him. 59 And Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a clean linen shroud 60 and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had cut in the rock. And he rolled a great stone to the entrance of the tomb and went away. 61 Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were there, sitting opposite the tomb.

The Guard at the Tomb

62 The next day, that is, after the day of Preparation, the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered before Pilate 63 and said, “Sir, we remember how that impostor said, while he was still alive, ‘After three days I will rise.’ 64 Therefore order the tomb to be made secure until the third day, lest his disciples go and steal him away and tell the people, ‘He has risen from the dead,’ and the last fraud will be worse than the first.” 65 Pilate said to them, “You have a guard of soldiers. Go, make it as secure as you can.” 66 So they went and made the tomb secure by sealing the stone and setting a guard.

**Where did the palms go?**

Palm Sunday is much different this year without God’s family gathering, without young and old singing hosannas and with no palms. The corona virus has robbed us of many things and made the future less optimistic.

The palms were ordered and they are here but no one is holding them because of self-isolation. The church is eerily quiet.

The Scriptures also reflect a somber mood as the joy of Palm Sunday moves to the Sunday of our Lord’s Passion. The suffering of Christ beginning at His revealing of a betrayer among the disciples and ending at His burial in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea with Roman guards posted there to make it secure.

So the joy is diminished both by the corona virus and the hearing of Christ’s suffering. How can these not turn our thoughts toward the cause? In the quietness we may meditate on why. Why would God bring or allow this virus and why would God bring His Son into this world to suffer so?

Death comes to roughly 10 percent of patients infected with corona virus. Sooner or later death comes to all. Death came to Christ Jesus differently. He raised Lazarus from the dead. It was the last straw for his jealous enemies because so many believed in Him. Jesus died while still on the cross as he was forsaken by the Father. He suffered eternal death there on the cross while still living. Speaking in Aramaic Psalm 22 he laments: My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

Jesus never broke faith with the Father. He was sinless. He is life itself and Resurrection. So why was He forsaken and why did He have to die? He was drinking the bitter cup the Father gave him to save us. Jesus died because the Father loved the world. By the cross of Jesus, through his sinless death, God loved His world so that all who believe in Him will never die.

Jesus wanted to die for you that you may never be separated from God even in a time of self-isolation. He died victorious and shouted with a loud voice and yielded his spirit. In this way he died your death and gives you His life.

Now what about the virus? We do not know whether God sent it to us or allowed it to infect so many around the world. If you reflect on your sin and why you must die, than we cannot cry why me, why should I or others be infected?

Truth is that we have seldom thought about our life as lived with and before God. The corona virus has made us pause and bemoan that we cannot live life the way we used to or the way we want to, but that is not how God sees it. Our sin and its result of death have not allowed us to live the way God intended, which is without sin and in perfect love.

Christ has changed our sorrow into joy. Even now, His suffering and death was for our sake and that all who believe in Him, will never die. So can we still have joy at a time like this? Can we still sing hosannas without Holy Communion? And where have the palms gone?

Listen to Revelation 7: **a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, 10 and crying out with a loud voice, “Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!”**

Does that sound sad to you? Does it describe a defeated Lamb or the victorious Saviour who has finally done away with your sin and death? The palms are in the hands of his beloved who shout songs of victory in the unending joy of eternal life. Thanks be to God and to the Lamb to whom belong salvation and our thanks forever!