

Palm Sunday Musings

[Matthew 21:1-11](#)

[Philippians 2:5-11](#)

[Matthew 26:14- 27:66](#)

I often don't preach at all on Palm Sunday, letting the readings speak for themselves, but these are strange times which call for different responses.

Even though we couldn't get together and parade around the parking lot, we have just enjoyed remembering the triumphal ride into Jerusalem – with Jesus apparently at the height of his popularity – everything going well. Yet in a few minutes as we hear again the Passion Gospel – Matthew's account of Jesus' trial and crucifixion – we will be stunned anew by the hatred and vitriol which spilled out against him. There is nothing more terrible than humanity's attempt to kill God.

And there is nothing more awesome than God's willingness to let us try. A willingness grounded in unlimited love, but expressed through the obedience of one limited human.

We will soon hear that described in the ancient hymn that we sometimes use as our own statement of faith –

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.

Did you hear that first line? Let the same mind be in you...

We are in a strange liminal time, poised between the days before the coronavirus and the time after. Here in this county we have not felt the full fury of the pandemic. Perhaps that is yet to come, perhaps not. We don't know. Yesterday San Luis Obispo saw the first death from the virus, and we hear terrible reports from many of the big cities and from other countries. It is as though we are between the triumphal procession when the economy seemed to be going well, most of us were feeling secure and illness seemed a long way

away, and the crucifixion. We are looking forward into the possibility of sickness, even death; we are looking forward into the passion which may be for others and may be for us.

This will be a defining time for our lives, one which we will look back on as a marker. But right now it just is.

and that is difficult. So let us ask to be filled with the mind of Christ who was obedient to the point of death, not because of some misplaced desire for martyrdom but because that was God's way, the way of love. Right now, out of love for one another we are making the sacrifice of sheltering at home. Right now, out of love for one another we are looking to source masks so that we can keep others safe in the event that we ourselves are infectious. Right now we are giving up some of our freedoms, some of our rights so that others may live.

It is not easy. For some of us it is harder than others. For those who live alone and had plans to travel or who long just to have dinner with a friends, for grandparents unable to hug their grandchildren, it is especially difficult. This is a time of sacrifice.

This Holy Week we travel the way with Jesus in a way we have never done before. And we can choose to do this with grace or with anger and resentment.

Let us choose grace. Let us ask to be given, and let us do the hard work of cultivating, the mind of Christ. After all, we are his disciples. Christ gave himself for us out of love, not out of a sense of duty or of being forced against his will. We are making this sacrifice out of love.

And we are loved. Each and every one of us is loved unconditionally and overwhelmingly by the one who is love. And we have much to be grateful for. You might want to type into the comments some of the things you are grateful for. This morning I am grateful for the house finches – the boy birds are bright red and singing amazing songs at the top of their voices. I am grateful for the technology which makes it possible for us to gather like this, and our understanding of the mystical body of Christ so that we know we are one, even when separated by 6 feet or more. I am grateful for our annual pilgrimage to the cross and the reminder that through our baptism we die and we are resurrected with Christ.

So as we go about our lives this week, acting like the hermits who are part of our spiritual heritage, let us do so with a profound sense of gratitude and also open eyes which acknowledge the pain and the suffering. For both are surrounded and underpinned by the incredible love of God.