

Palm Sunday
Luke 19:28-40; Philippians 2:5-11; Psalm 31:9-16; Luke 22:39-23:53
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David H. Teschner

Palm Sunday quickly turns to all too quickly to Passion Sunday, which makes it Paradox Sunday. Cries of Hosanna, welcoming the Prince of Peace into Jerusalem, turn to cries of crucify him outside the city walls. His disciples and supporters lay down their garments for his entry. Excessive laying down of insults marks his exit. He is lifted onto a colt one day only to be lifted onto a cross by week's end. The triumphant one is trampled upon.

We know this old story too well, thankfully. We know in the words of the Psalmist that God ultimately will "make your face to shine upon your servant, and in your loving-kindness save me." (Psalm 31:16) God will save Jesus but not before a crucifixion. We join Jesus in his prayer that the Father might remove this cup of suffering.

The narrative of what Jesus must undergo to complete his mission and show us the Way to the Kingdom of God is in Luke's gospel this year. The deeper meaning or theological explanations are found elsewhere.

A few weeks ago, we heard from 2 Corinthians, "For our sake God made Jesus to be sin who knew no sin, so that we might become the righteousness of God." (5:21) In 1 Corinthians, Paul also wrote, "...that Christ died for our sins..." (15:03)

Earlier today we heard from Philippians, that "Jesus, though he was in the form of God, ...emptied himself, taking the form of a slave..." (2:6, 7) I would argue that these all explain Jesus' actions in Luke's passion narrative.

Voluntarily relinquishing his rights and privileges as Son of Man and Son of God, he empties himself to accept, absorb, redeem, forgive our frailty, weakness, inhumanity, cruelty, ignorance, dominance, blindness – in other words, our sin. Jesus took it all to the cross. He took the disciples' failure to stay awake with him in prayer. He took Judas' betrayal. He took the disciples' abandonment and Peter's flat-out denial of him. He took being falsely accused. He took mocking and beating. He took cries that he be done away with. He took being exchanged in death for an insurrectionist and murderer. He took Pilate's caving to pressure from the powerful in his own faith. He took pain and humiliation from every quarter, finally stripped of all his humanity -- emptied so the worst of human nature could be put on him.

His only response to all the heaping on of sin: "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do." "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do."

Who can be so forgiving? Who can take so much without breaking bad with bitterness or threats of vengeance? Only one – God. "He made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that

we might become the righteousness of God.” Jesus did his part; let us do ours and become less full of self, more willing to forgive, more open to the Spirit – “the righteousness of God.” Amen.