

Fourth Sunday of Lent

READ

Matthew 21:1-11
Isaiah 50:4-7
Psalm 22:8-9, 17-18, 19-20, 23-24
Philippians 2:6-11
Matthew 26:14-27

REFLECTION

The interaction between Jesus and Judas at the Last Supper is haunting. Jesus knows there is a betrayer at hand, present at the table and sharing in the meal. Even so, Judas continues his ruse of ignorance and innocence to the point of publicly proclaiming that he would never be the one to turn on Jesus. Judas must have done a good job of keeping his betrayal plans secret. Surely if the others gathered at the table would have known about the disloyalty in advance, they would have done something to Judas to prevent the betrayal. Maybe they would have locked him up in a room so he could not carry out his plan. Maybe they would have killed him. Either way, it seems that the disciples did not know what was about to unfold.

Much differently, and not unexpectedly, Jesus knows exactly what is going on. While Judas could hide his traitorous side from his fellow brothers and sisters, it is impossible for Judas to hide any part of himself from God. The same is true for us. God knows everything about us. God knows our comings and goings. God knows our strengths and our weakness. God knows our successes and failures.

ACTION

When do we hide our true selves from others? When do we try to hide our true selves from God? Of course, we do not reveal everything about ourselves to every person we meet; that would be imprudent. However, if we never reveal our true selves to anyone, we miss opportunities to grow in relationship with God through others. Consider your daily opportunities to be honest with God and others, and make an effort not to hide your true self. Be the incredible person God created you to be.

"You are mine...Because you are precious in my eyes / and honored, and I love you." – Isaiah 43:1,4

REFLECT ON THE WORD

"Hosanna to the Son of David; / blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord; / hosanna in the highest!" (Matthew 21:9). These words were joyful and fervent ones, shouted by Jesus' followers as he entered the city of Jerusalem. The author of Matthew saw these moments as fulfillments of the Old Testament prophetic writing. In Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem we see these prophetic words being fulfilled. Jerusalem rejoices over Jesus, and we hear cries of joy and devotion to the Lord.

How do you show the Lord joy and devotion?

In this prophetic fulfillment, we hear about Jesus riding into Jerusalem on a donkey. Instead of a saddle, the disciples spread their cloaks over the animal. The people lay their cloaks and palms on the ground in front of the processing Jesus. As you know, we receive blessed palms on Palm Sunday in remembrance of people placing palms on the path before Jesus, a gesture that honored the Lord. A donkey is not a noble, gallant, impressive animal. They are and were common animals that people used for hard labor. Instead of riding a war or military horse that would show power and prestige, the Lord rode atop a common donkey. He was not a military Messiah, he was and is a Messiah who saved his people from their sins.

The prophetic fulfillment is important for a number of reasons. Firstly, the fulfillment showed the people of that time exactly who the disciples believed Jesus to be. The Jewish residents in Jerusalem would certainly understand the reference to Zechariah. Secondly, the Gospel accounts were written long after the life, death, and Resurrection of Jesus Christ, and by including the Zechariah reference in the Gospel, the author made clear to the reader that Jesus of Nazareth was indeed the Messiah for whom Israel had waited for so long. These two reasons give way to the clear understanding that Jesus Christ was the fulfillment of all that Israel had been promised. Every prophet, every hope, every prayer, and every life was lived in hope of this one person, Jesus the Christ, coming from heaven to save his people. The culmination of the people's centuries of hope and faith came to rest on the life, death, and Resurrection of this one man.

Like the people of Jerusalem, we are called to rejoice in the coming of our Lord Jesus. We only have palms on Palm Sunday, but what the ancient disciples did with their palms, we must do with our hearts.

Have you humbled your hearts before God, recognizing your sins and shortcomings this Lent?

Have you looked at your inaction and turned it to action by showing Christ-like goodness and kindness to others?

As we prepare for the Resurrection of the Lord, prepare your heart and recall that soon we too can joyfully sing about the Lord's victory.

ACT ON THE WORD

Remembering Jesus' Entry to Jerusalem

When Jesus entered Jerusalem, it was to the joyful shouts of those who loved him, trusted him, and believed in his teachings and his word. These people were some of the earliest believers in Christ. Choose specific actions this week that echo Christ's teachings, and offer them to God this Holy Week as you remember Jesus' entrance into Jerusalem.

Lord Jesus Christ, we have begun to follow you on the journey that will lead us to the heart of your saving mysteries.

During these holy days, may we come to know you better than ever before, as our brother and friend, our teacher and our master, our Lord and Savior.

You live and reign for ever and ever.

Amen.