

Palm Sunday

Psalm 31:3-16

Matthew 20:29-21:11

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Holy Spirit Lutheran Church, Edmonton

April 5, 2020

3rd Sunday of Social Distancing

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!

It was a party like none other, a day of celebration for which the people yearned – Rome was such an oppressive presence all the time, that when a tiny crack appeared, a moment, the people latched on to it with enthusiasm. The palm branches came out, the coats we cast off in celebration, children born on parents' shoulders, shouts of joy – and none of it could be stifled. I guess, once you get a crowd going...

Our streets look nothing of the sort these days. There is not a lot of celebrating going on, if any. It's challenging to make sense of this pandemic at all. As I speak with people of our congregation, one moment people alright, the next they are afraid, one moment they are thankful and the next they are angry. In one prayer we wonder where God has disappeared to, and in the next we are filled with gratitude for our faith. My best advice? Roll with it – the questions, the emotions, the theology, the prayers – these are all threads of the new fabric that is being woven. Something old is being cast off, and something new is breaking in. We are excited and curious at the same time as being exhausted and afraid.

In Psalm 31 we hear, “*Now take pity on me, Yahweh, for I'm in trouble again. I cried so much that I'm exhausted— and not only my eyes, but my mind and body as well.*”

I'm not sure about you, but that describes me the last couple of weeks! The Psalm is talking about a time when David (who later became the King of Israel) was being pursued by King Saul. Once tightknit, like a father and son, Saul had become deeply jealous of David and preferred that he would be dead. David ran for his life. It was an abrupt change of course in their friendship, leaving David wondering what had gone wrong.

Interestingly however, even in the midst of being chased down by a crazy and jealous old friend, David not only tells it like it is, but he frames his questions and fears with words of trust in God:

You are my rock.
Into your hand I commit my spirit.
I put my trust in you.
My times are in your hand.

David knows that no matter how bad things get, even if Saul persists, that his life is in God, that God loves him.

You and I both know that all is not right in the world today. We're caught in a moment that will forever change us. If we were biblical writers, we would tell this story, writing our own psalms, giving voice to this experience, to our nightmares and our dreams. We would dust off the promises that we learned in our confirmation days and remember our baptism. We would chose to ground this experience, and our very lives, on the bedrock of good news that we have heard so many times. All those prayers we have prayed, all the hymns we have sung, all the words that have been preached, all the loving work you have undertaken – all the everyday, regular ways we are the church – provides for us today a solid foundation from which we may bear any crisis, big or small. That foundation is the love of God that cannot be shaken, it cannot be taken away, it cannot be infected, and it cannot die.

So, open our eyes Lord, that we may see! Open our hearts to continue to heal the sick, return sight to the blind and set the captive free. Revive our trust in the ancient stories of Christ. Renew our faith that Jesus, King of the Jews, is King of this time.

Together we proclaim: Blessed is Christ, who comes in the name of the Lord! Amen.