

March 16, 2008

The Truth

During our Wednesday night Lenten services we have taken a prophetic journey through the Old Testament. We saw how Jesus fulfilled prophecies, about the coming or Promised Messiah. He was the Messiah, promised in Genesis to Adam and Eve, who would crush Satan and his work. He was the descendent of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Judah, Jesse and King David. He was born of a virgin, in Bethlehem, kings came to him, and they brought gold, frankincense and myrrh. As a result of these kings's trip and their gifts Herod killed all young boys two years old and younger and there was great sorrow in the region. Jesus then embarked on a ministry that was marked by miracles, parables and powerful teaching. A friend for thirty pieces of silver, which was then used to purchase the potter's field, betrayed him. His disciples scattered and fled; he was flogged, hit, spit on and mocked. He was crucified, prayed for his enemies, not a bone in his body was broken, and he was given vinegar for thirst, offered wine gall, executed with criminals and buried in a rich man's tomb. All in accordance with the prophecies each one of these things had been foretold. Today we continue with this theme because today, Palm Sunday is another day or event that was prophesied.

Zechariah spoke of Jesus in 520 B.C. saying, "Say to the daughter of Zion see your king comes to you gentle and riding on a donkey on a colt the foal of a donkey." Again this is unique and it is totally contrary to what the people expected of the Messiah or "the Christ". People had begun to make their own version of what the Messiah would be like. They figured he would be a king over throw the Romans and all other kingdoms and establish world rule from Jerusalem. Such a king would ride into a town on a horse, which was powerful, and a sign of victory. God knew this is what would happen he knew the people would be expecting a powerful king. So he made this prophecy to give a clear signal of the Messiah. He would enter Jerusalem in a gentle manner, on a lowly donkey, which was a sign of peace. The people recognized him as the Promised Messiah as they waived palm branches. Waiving palm branches was also another sign of victory much like a horse. Not only did they waive palm branches they put their coats on the ground in front of him; this is a sign of royal homage so they're honoring him as the king. And they also sang his praises, "Hosanna to the Son of David." Hosanna, that's a Hebrew word it means, "The Lord saves." Son of David again, its a reference to the Messiah

based on the prophecy the Messiah would come from the lineage of David. When these people are saying, "Hosanna to the Son of David", they are saying, "The Lord saves through the Son of David the Messiah."

The Pharisees clearly understood what the people were saying and what Jesus was doing in coming in on this donkey. We see in Luke 19 that they tell Jesus to stop the people and to rebuke his disciples and rebuke is a very strong term. It's beyond a reprimand if you rebuke someone you set yourself apart from them and you strongly criticize what they have done. We've seen some of this going on in the presidential nomination process. Feraccon endorsed Obama, which Barack rejected. Hilary Clinton asked him to go a step further to denounce or rebuke Feracom, which Obama did. He has now asked Hilary to do the same with Geraldine Ferreira. What the nominees today and the Pharisees back then were asking for they were asking for Jesus or for these individuals in the political realm to basically say stop it you are terribly wrong! Now that's a big statement. Jesus didn't do this. In fact he says in Luke 19 that if he did the rocks would cry out. Why? Because what the people said was the truth it was the truth of God. It was the truth and fulfillment the truth that God had promised to them thousands of years before. Very simply Jesus was and is the truth of God. Our journey to this event on Palm Sunday began back on February 3rd as Jesus was transfigured and met with Moses and Elijah. Following that event Jesus set his eyes on Jerusalem and focused on the week that is before us right now.

It's a week we call Holy Week a week that has a definite purpose. Let's quickly take a look at what happened during this week that we are about to embark on. On Monday Jesus went to the temple and cleared the temple of the unrighteous merchants and moneychangers. These were people who were there to profit off of the devotion of God's people. Jesus said to them, "You have made my Father's house a den of thieves." Then on Tuesday and Wednesday he preached in the temple and on the Mount of Olives. This is when he told some famous parables such as the parable of the talents the parable of the tenants, the parable of the wedding feast and the parable of the two sons. This is also when he answered very tough questions that were thrown at him questions about paying taxes to Cesar, about marriage, about the resurrection and about the end times. This is when the widow gave her last two mites and Jesus commended her for giving everything she had out of her love for God. Why? Because she was giving in the same way that God was giving. She was giving in the same way as Jesus would give. He would give everything out of love for us.

On Thursday Christ celebrated the Passover with his disciples he taught them. This is when Jesus said, "I am the way and the truth and the life no one comes to the Father except through me." This is also the night when he was arrested when he was out on trial which was illegal because it was night; this is the night that he was roughed up as he was passed from the high priests house to Pilate to Herod and back to Pilate. On Friday he was taken to Pilate one last night who questioned him. The discourse between the two is remarkable. Listen to what is said here John 18:33, "Pilate then went back inside the palace summoned Jesus and asked him, 'are you the king of the Jews?' 'Is that your own idea?' Jesus asked, 'or did others talk to you about me?' 'Am I a Jew?' Pilate replied, 'It was your people and your chief priests that handed you over to me what is it that you have done?' Jesus said, 'My kingdom is not of this world if it were my servants wouldn't fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews but now my kingdom is from another place.' 'You are a king then', said Pilate. Jesus answered, 'you are right in saying I am a king in fact for this reason I was born and for this I came into the world to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me.' 'What is truth?' Pilate asked." What is truth? The truth was standing right in front of Pilate. The truth that was obvious is you knew the scriptures and the prophecies and truth that became obvious within a matter of hours.

This is where our gospel comes in today. When we read it this morning you were probably thinking that is not Palm Sunday but it is one of the readings for Palm Sunday. You see as the people came to Jesus on Palm Sunday these people had all heard the Old Testament prophecies, they had seen Jesus in action and the result was that when they saw him they praised him as the Messiah. They proclaimed it on Palm Sunday at the end of the week on Good Friday there was a small group of people who also saw Jesus. They didn't know the scriptures but they saw him being whipped, beaten, mocked and crucified all of this without a charge against him. They saw him at this time praying for their souls and for the souls of all those who were against Jesus praying for their forgiveness. They saw him die the death of a criminal who were they? The Roman soldiers. What did they think?

In our Gospel this morning in Matthew 27-54 we hear it very clearly, "Surely he was the Son of God." This is the truth this is what Jesus came to testify to. This is the truth we celebrate this week this is the truth that gives us hope and Might I say this is the truth that gives us a reason to live. The truth the Romans saw it in 24 short hours the truth do you see Him as the truth today? And finally, Will you continue to study and grow in God's

word? Will you strive to nourish your heart and mind with it? Will you do God's will as it is revealed to you in the holy scriptures and will you commit yourself to serving God and His body here at this church and here in this community through faithful church attendance, and the volunteering of your time, talents and treasures? May God give you the strength to say I do and may he breath his spirit into you. May you be inspired because you have undergone Spiritual CPR.