



Rev. Fred Heard – Palm Sunday, 2007

Here we are. Another Palm Sunday and I think I have preached on Palm Sunday during each of the four years I have been here. And so you might be thinking that it is easy because I can just reach in my file and pull out a homily from the past. I don't do that. I have come to realize, as a priest, that what I might say on one Palm Sunday might not be fitting on another. My preaching professor told us in seminary that we should pray over the gospel until we could see the words begin to move and float above the page. What she was saying was that the scriptures have a compelling ability to address where we are today and only in prayer can we hope to begin to reach those needs.



During this past year, I have had the unique opportunity to watch as the search committee has done their work. I have observed the vestry as they have grappled with their issues. I watched Mother Anne take hold as our interim and now I have witnessed Father Mike's arrival. While a confidant of all, I have had no central role in any of this process. I have plugged along and accomplished what I set out to do. I have touched those who need pastoral care. I have opened my heart to our Trinity children. I have been a presence as your continuing priest and find myself in many meetings these days as the resident Episcopal historian...with one leg in the past and the other in the future. There has also been the arrival of a new bishop in our diocese and also a new Presiding Bishop at the national level.

Through it all, Jesus has been here. This morning our Hosannas should be affirmations of our faith in and discipleship with Jesus...and they should reflect that the church continues in changing times and even in times of strife and in some cases, outright brokenness.

In years past I have talked about the tendency to "sanitize" holy week and make it less bloody. Today, I ask you which Jesus has been with you at

Trinity and in your lives? Jesus in Blue Jeans, Malibu Jesus, Jesus CEO, Jesus of the da Vinci Code?, or the Jesus of the gospels? If it is the Jesus of good news, some will ask if Jesus' ride on the donkey into Jerusalem is still relevant in the 21st century? The answer is simple: Jesus of the gospels is good news for the poor and not good news for establishment ways. Jesus preaches compassion and forgiveness and vulnerability and service and economic and social justice and peace and non violence. This describes Jesus' first passion—his ethic of life and his passion for life led to the passion of his suffering.

There is sometimes a filter in our understanding of the gospel. Something keeps us from hearing the gospel in all of its simple and powerful truth. What is uncomfortable about Jesus is that he is always right. As Jesus enters into Jerusalem, he sets a powerful example of compassionate attention, personal sacrifice, and intentional commitment to the least of our brothers and sisters. In our 21st century world, there is a plastic Jesus.' This Jesus is convenient. He comes in a box. A plastic Jesus with the head that bobbles is not a challenge to all our desires.



But yet, once again in 2007, we are invited to share the paschal mystery, to be wounded is to be blessed. The light gets in through our wounds. We sing Hosanna to the Servant King, we affirm that all of our beliefs, values, and decisions emerge from our devotion to him, and to him alone.

Soon these joyous Palm Sunday Hosannas will change to cries of "Crucify him." But you know that really isn't so strange because it is often a picture of how we live our lives. Love and piety on Sunday and as the week goes on, the last Sunday is forgotten. To follow Jesus faithfully is to be stretched and to be made uncomfortable with the limits we set for ourselves or have learned from our culture.

W.H. Auden says it well, "We would rather be ruined than changed. We would rather die in our dread than climb the cross of the moment and see our illusions die."

This Palm Sunday we are called to live for ourselves, our families, and for our neighbors, near and far, known and unknown.

Walk the way of the cross and as you do so, you will be following Jesus faithfully and you will be transformed by Jesus and in so doing, you will transform our world through your loving, wounded, vulnerable presence.

As we prepare for Holy Week, let us love Jesus without limits. He will give us the strength to continue the journey so that we might return again and again to a love which knows no bounds and we will surely be transformed into his servants in all that we are and all that we do. AMEN