

*Journey to the Cross*  
*April 5, 2009*  
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*Mark 14:1-11 Triumphant Entry*

*Mark 15:1-39 Jesus' Trial, Suffering, Crucifixion and Death*

Palm Sunday is a great day. It's lots of fun. We wave palm leaves and hear wonderfully uplifting songs. And really, it's pretty exciting to see how God used this time when Jerusalem was filled with Hebrew Pilgrims who were already there to celebrate Passover. The crowd received Jesus as King. The nation of Israel was living under Roman occupation. They wanted a Savior. They waived palm branches, spread cloaks on the ground and shouted Hosanna, which literally means SAVE US! It must have been quite a sight! And, today, we like to go right along with that. We have a great reason to celebrate. **WE** know that Christ **IS** King. We love the idea of a parade in honor of our savior, right?

However, it wasn't long after that parade through Jerusalem that Israel turned on Jesus. In five short days they went from shouting, Hosanna, Save Us to Crucify him, Kill him!

So, let's hear the rest of the story...but this time I'd like you to listen a little differently than you may have done before. Instead of following along in your bible use your bulletin insert to hold the place in Mark I'm reading. Set your bible aside, get comfortable and, if you're willing, close your eyes to listen. While you're listening put yourself into the scenes...perhaps you'll be one of the soldiers or the man forced to help carry Jesus' cross, one of his disciples, one of the chief priests, or simply one of the many observers in the crowd. From the Gospel of Mark Chapter 15...hear, breathe, experience the word of the Lord...Mark 15:1-39

...Celebrating Palm Sunday is great but another way to think of today is Passion Sunday. Today marks the beginning of the week, the beginning of the journey to the Passion of Christ: the trial, suffering and death of Jesus. This is the week we walk through Maundy Thursday, the remembrance of the Last Supper. Here at First Pres we're blessed to have Rob Wertheim from Jews for Jesus present Christ in the Passover, a Seder demonstration this Thursday at 6pm.

Today **WE** will remember the last supper because we will celebrate Holy Communion. Jesus gathered his disciples together in that upper room almost 2000 years ago to share one last Passover meal. You remember Passover and you'll learn more about it this Thursday from Rob. Passover celebrates and remembers when God told Moses while the Israelites were slaves in Egypt to put Lamb's blood over their door posts so they would be saved from the plague that killed first born children and animals. Jesus and the disciples were celebrating a feast that commemorated God's provision, using Lamb's blood that saved His people. Doesn't that sound familiar? Lamb's blood? Saving God's people? Jesus, the Lamb of God, died that bloody death on the cross to save you...to save me...to save the world.

This week we journey through Good Friday. You are invited to an ecumenical Good Friday service, the remembrance of Christ's crucifixion. It will be at All Saints Episcopal starting at Noon this Friday. It is the day we remember Christ's death. It is a dark day. You probably remember Mel Gibson's movie, Passion of the Christ. It is a very hard movie to watch. It is disturbing. While fully divine, Jesus was fully human. He felt those lashings and those nails just like we would. I really believe that what Jesus suffered that day was every bit as horrible as the movie portrayed and probably more. You know, I don't think I've been to a Good Friday

service in the last 25 years where I haven't wept. The whole concept of what Jesus suffered for me, for us, is overwhelming. So, why do we call it GOOD Friday? Why, because we know the end of the story. We know about the empty tomb that Mary found Sunday morning. We know that Jesus rises from the grave.

But if we know the end of the story, why put ourselves through the REST of the story? I think it's important to take the journey from the joy of Palm Sunday through the pain, through the reality of Christ's suffering during Holy Week. Oh, it would be so much easier to jump right from the high of that parade through Jerusalem to the good news of Easter morning. But if we do that do we truly honor what Jesus did for us? If we don't go through the hard times, acknowledging the pain and suffering of our Lord, how can we truly value His gift of life after death...His gift of redemption...His gift of Salvation?

Let us pray. God of Grace we praise you for the redemption you provided for us with the gift of your Son, Jesus Christ. Christ, our King, we thank you for enduring your brutal death on the cross that we might have life in you. Holy Spirit we ask you to help us experience the valleys of this week and make us mindful of the cost of our salvation. In the name of the Father, the Son and Holy Spirit. Amen