

Mark 11:1-11
April 9, '17
Palm Sunday

“SAVE US!”

IF YOU’VE BEEN WITH US THROUGHOUT LENT THIS YEAR, YOU MAY HAVE NOTICED SOMETHING WITH OUR SCRIPTURE READING THIS MORNING.

WE ARE CONCLUDING EXACTLY WHERE WE BEGAN.

HOLY WEEK BEGINS WITH THE PALM SUNDAY ENTRANCE OF JESUS INTO JERUSALEM.

THAT ENTRANCE CONCLUDES WITH THESE WORDS OF MARK: *“THEN HE ENTERED JERUSALEM AND WENT INTO THE TEMPLE; AND WHEN HE HAD LOOKED AROUND AT EVERYTHING, AS IT WAS ALREADY LATE, HE WENT OUT TO BETHANY WITH THE TWELVE.”*

THAT’S WHERE WE BEGAN THIS LENTEN JOURNEY WITH MARK SIX WEEKS AGO.

SINCE WE HAVE NOW COME FULL CIRCLE WITH OUR SCRIPTURE READINGS DURING LENT, IT SEEMS ONLY FITTING TO ALSO DO THE SAME WITH THE SERMON ITSELF.

HERE'S HOW THE SERMON ON THE FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT BEGAN:

“EVERY SPRING, WE TALK ABOUT A PROBLEM WE HAVE IN THE CHURCH.

IT'S NOT JUST THIS CHURCH.

IT'S A PROBLEM THAT EXISTS IN VIRTUALLY EVERY CHURCH & IT'S A DIFFICULT PROBLEM TO OVERCOME.

IT'S THE PROBLEM OF IGNORING A SIGNIFICANT PORTION OF THE BIBLE BECAUSE OF THE WAY WE OBSERVE HOLY WEEK.

I'VE SAID IT SO OFTEN YOU CAN PROBABLY MOUTH THE WORDS ALONG WITH ME AS I SAY THEM.

WE MOVE SO QUICKLY FROM THE “HOSANNA’S” OF PALM SUNDAY TO THE “HE IS RISEN’S” OF EASTER THAT WE GIVE NO THOUGHT TO ALL THAT LIES BETWEEN THE TWO.”

I SUGGESTED THAT WE WERE GOING TO ADDRESS THAT PROBLEM BY LOOKING CLOSELY AT HOLY WEEK DURING LENT – FOCUSING ON EVENTS IN THE LIFE OF JESUS ON EACH OF THE DAYS OF THAT MOMENTOUS WEEK.

YOU MAY, AT SOME POINT, HAVE CONCLUDED THAT I HAVE BEEN RATHER OBSESSED BY THIS AVOIDANCE OF HOLY WEEK WITHIN THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH, BUT WHEN YOU THINK ABOUT IT, WHAT I HAVE HAD US DO IS PERHAPS EVEN WORSE!

THINK ABOUT IT.

WE FOCUSED ON MONDAY OF HOLY WEEK, THEN TUESDAY, THEN WEDNESDAY & LAST WEEK WE SET OUR SIGHTS ON THURSDAY.

TODAY, WE'RE GOING BACK TO THE SUNDAY THAT BEGAN HOLY WEEK – PALM SUNDAY.

LATER THIS WEEK, WE'LL TAKE ANOTHER LOOK AT THURSDAY IN OUR MAUNDY THURSDAY SERVICE & NEXT SUNDAY WE'LL CELEBRATE THE RESURRECTION ON EASTER.

DO YOU NOTICE ANYTHING MISSING HERE!?

DO YOU NOTICE A DAY NOT ADDRESSED THAT INCLUDES MORE IN THE LIFE OF JESUS THAN ANY OTHER DAY?!

THAT DAY, OF COURSE, IS THE DAY WE CALL GOOD FRIDAY – THE DAY OF THE CRUCIFIXION – THE

**DAY, MORE THAN ANY OTHER, THAT IS THE REASON
NOT TO AVOID HOLY WEEK!**

**WHILE WE HAVE TRADITIONALLY CALLED THIS
DAY “PALM SUNDAY,” THERE HAS BEEN A MOVEMENT
OVER THE PAST COUPLE OF DECADES TO RE-NAME IT
“PASSION SUNDAY” FOR THIS PRECISE REASON – THE
TENDENCY TO AVOID GOOD FRIDAY.**

**THE LECTIONARY SCRIPTURE READING FOR
MARK’S GOSPEL, WHEN A CHURCH CHOOSES TO
LABEL THIS “PASSION SUNDAY,” IS MARK 14:26-15:47.**

THAT’S A LOOONG PASSAGE!

**IT TAKES MORE THAN THE LENGTH OF AN
AVERAGE SERMON TO READ.**

**I’M RELUCTANT TO MAKE THAT CHANGE – TO
LABEL THIS “PASSION SUNDAY” INSTEAD OF PALM
SUNDAY.**

**I WOULD SURMISE THAT MANY – IF NOT MOST –
OF YOU WOULD AGREE WITH ME.**

**I'M NOT READY TO SIMPLY DO AWAY WITH THE
FESTIVE ATMOSPHERE OF THIS DAY, WITH THE
CHILDREN PROCESSING & THE PALMS GRACING THE
FRONT OF THE SANCTUARY.**

**SO HERE'S MY SUGGESTION – AT LEAST FOR THIS
YEAR.**

**TO GET ME OFF THE HOOK FOR LEADING US INTO
VIRTUALLY AVOIDING GOOD FRIDAY ENTIRELY,
READ THAT SECTION OF MARK'S GOSPEL THAT WE
WILL HAVE LEFT OUT DURING LENT – MARK 14:26-
15:47 – FROM THE END OF THE LORD'S SUPPER WHEN
JESUS & THE DISCIPLES DEPART FOR GETHSEMANE IN
CHAPTER 14, THROUGH THE ENTIRETY OF MARK 15.**

**DO IT SOMETIME THIS WEEK OR WHEN YOU'RE
HERE THURSDAY NIGHT OR FRIDAY FOR THE PRAYER
VIGIL.**

THERE – FEEL BETTER NOW.

**AND SINCE WE ALL ARE, IN FACT, GOING TO BE
FOCUSING ON GOOD FRIDAY IN SOME FASHION, LET'S
GO BACK TO PALM SUNDAY.**

**IF THERE IS A SINGLE WORD THAT WE ASSOCIATE
WITH PALM SUNDAY, IT'S THE WORD "HOSANNA."**

IT'S NOT AN EVERYDAY WORD, IS IT?

**WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME YOU USED THE WORD
"HOSANNA" IN A CONVERSATION?**

**WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME YOU UTTERED THE
WORD OR HEARD THE WORD?**

**I WOULD IMAGINE IT WAS LAST PALM SUNDAY &
THE TIME BEFORE THAT WAS THE PREVIOUS PALM
SUNDAY.**

**“HOSANNA” JUST ISN’T A WORD WE USE VERY
OFTEN.**

**IT’S A CONTRACTION OF TWO HEBREW WORDS &
IN HEBREW – THE LANGUAGE OF THE OLD
TESTAMENT – IT’S PRONOUNCED “HOSANNA.”**

**IN GREEK, THE LANGUAGE OF THE NEW
TESTAMENT, IT’S PRONOUNCED “HOSANNA.”**

**AND, OF COURSE, IN ENGLISH, IT’S PRONOUNCED
“HOSANNA.”**

**SO IF YOU’RE EVER ASKED IF YOU SPEAK GREEK
OR HEBREW, YOU CAN SAY, “*YEAH, A LITTLE.*”**

THE BIGGER QUESTION, OF COURSE, IS – WHAT DOES THIS WEIRD WORD THAT’S PRONOUNCED THE SAME IN ANY LANGUAGE MEAN?

BASICALLY, IT MEANS “*SAVE US.*”

WHEN JESUS ENTERED JERUSALEM, THAT’S SOMETHING THAT WOULD HAVE BEEN FIRMLY IN THE MINDS OF THE JEWISH PILGRIMS ARRIVING FOR THE PASSOVER OBSERVANCE.

THEY WERE REMEMBERING THEIR DELIVERANCE FROM CAPTIVITY IN EGYPT – THE NIGHT THEY WERE SAVED.

THEY WERE REMEMBERING THE NIGHT THE ANGEL OF DEATH “PASSED OVER” THEIR HOMES BEFORE THEY FLED THEIR CAPTORS.

THE CONNECTION BETWEEN THE EGYPTIAN OPPRESSORS OF THEIR ANCESTORS & THE ROMANS

WHO WERE OPPRESSING *THEM* IN THE FIRST CENTURY, WOULD HAVE BEEN CLEARLY IN THEIR MINDS.

AS JESUS RODE INTO JERUSALEM, THAT'S WHAT THEY WERE LOOKING FOR – THE MILITARY LEADER WHO WOULD LEAD THE REBELLION AGAINST THE ROMANS & RETURN THE RULE OF THEIR HOMELAND TO *THEM*.

THEY WANTED SOMEONE TO SAVE THEM.

AND THAT, OF COURSE, CORRESPONDS TO THE REASON THE ROMAN AUTHORITIES WANTED TO *EXECUTE* HIM.

THEY SAW HIM AS SOMEONE TRYING TO TAKE OVER THE KINGDOM.

OF COURSE, IN THE END, BOTH HIS FOLLOWERS AND THE ROMAN AUTHORITIES WERE HALF RIGHT.

HE WAS GOING TO SAVE THEM – BUT NOT IN THE MANNER THEY ANTICIPATED.

AND ON THE OTHER SIDE, HE WAS USHERING IN A NEW KINGDOM – BUT NOT THE KIND OF KINGDOM ANYONE COULD UNDERSTAND.

WHEN WE LOOK AT THE WORD “HOSANNA” & TRY TO GRASP ITS MEANING, IT RAISES A QUESTION AS TO WHAT IT MEANS TO US ON THIS SIDE OF EASTER.

WHEN WE SAY “HOSANNA” OR WHEN WE SAY TO JESUS “SAVE US” OR, MORE PERSONALLY, “SAVE *ME*,” WE’RE NOT LOOKING FOR SOMEONE TO OVERTHROW THE POLITICAL RULERS OF THE DAY.

WE CALL JESUS OUR “SAVIOR,” BUT WHAT DO WE REALLY MEAN BY THAT?

BEING A HOCKEY FAN, I REMEMBER SEEING A POSTER MANY YEARS AGO THAT WOULD PROBABLY

WIN THE TITLE OF “*THE MOST IRREVERENT POSTER I WISH I HAD THE NERVE TO HANG IN MY OFFICE.*”

AT THE TOP, IT READ “*JESUS SAVES*” AND ON THE BOTTOM – “*BUT GRETZKY SCORES ON THE REBOUND!*”

YES, IT’S COMPLETELY IRREVERENT, BUT I THINK IT RAISES A LEGITIMATE QUESTION – ONE THAT WE DON’T OFTEN GIVE MUCH CONSIDERATION.

IF JESUS IS OUR SAVIOR, WHAT IS HE SAVING US “*FROM?*”

A PASTOR ASKED A GROUP OF YOUNG PEOPLE THAT QUESTION & THE PRIMARY ANSWER HE RECEIVED WAS “*HELL.*”

JESUS SAVES US FROM HELL.

HE QUICKLY DREW THE CONCLUSION THAT THE REASON THAT WAS THE ANSWER THEY OFFERED IS SIMPLY BECAUSE HE WAS THE PASTOR & THEY

FIGURED THAT'S WHAT THEY WERE SUPPOSED TO SAY.

HE SAID, *"IT'S SIMILAR TO WHAT HAPPENS WHEN I GO TO SEE MY DOCTOR, AND HE ASKS, 'SO, HAVE YOU BEEN EXERCISING?'* AND I KNOW WHAT HE WANTS ME TO SAY."

THAT ANSWER – *"JESUS SAVES US FROM HELL"* - WAS OBVIOUSLY NOT THE ANSWER ANYONE WAVING A PALM BRANCH IN JERUSALEM THAT DAY WOULD HAVE GIVEN.

THEY WANTED JESUS TO SAVE THEM FROM THE ROMANS.

SO, WHAT ANSWER WOULD YOU GIVE?

IF YOU DIG DEEP INSIDE OF YOURSELF, WHAT IS IT – MORE THAN ANYTHING ELSE – THAT YOU WANT JESUS TO SAVE YOU FROM?

**WHEN YOU WAVE YOUR PROVERBIAL PALM
BRANCH & BOLDLY CRY OUT “HOSANNA” AS JESUS
ENTERS YOUR LIFE, CAN YOU VERBALIZE THE
DEEPEST NEED THAT EATS AWAY AT YOUR SOUL?**

**CAN YOU DARE TO IMAGINE WHAT IT IS THAT
YOU REALLY WANT JESUS TO SAVE YOU FROM?**

SAVE ME FROM ANGER.

SAVE ME FROM BROKEN RELATIONSHIPS.

SAVE ME FROM FAILURE.

SAVE ME FROM DISEASE.

SAVE ME FROM SORROW.

SAVE ME FROM POVERTY.

SAVE ME FROM ADDICTION.

SAVE ME FROM DEPRESSION.

**SAVE ME FROM MY FEARS, FROM MY
SELFISHNESS, FROM MY LONELINESS.**

**AND THEN, IF WE TRULY BELIEVE IN JESUS
CHRIST AS THE SON OF GOD – IF WE BELIEVE HE IS, IN
FACT, OUR “SAVIOR,” WE HAVE TO ASK ANOTHER
QUESTION.**

“HOW DOES THAT HAPPEN?”

**HOW IS IT THAT JESUS CAN SAVE US FROM ANY
ONE OF THESE AFFLICTIONS OR ANY OTHERS THAT
BESET US?**

**I THINK THAT’S WHERE WE CAN TRULY CONNECT
PALM SUNDAY TO GOOD FRIDAY.**

**HE DOESN’T SAVE US THROUGH HIS MILITARY
POWER BUT RATHER THROUGH HIS DIVINE
HUMILITY.**

**HE GOES TO THE CROSS, AND IN DOING SO, WE
FIND THAT HE’S PRESENT WITH US IN EVERY CROSS
WE MUST BEAR OURSELVES.**

**HE STEPS INTO THE MESSIEST PARTS OF LIFE
WITH US & ENDURES IT ALL.**

**SO, MAYBE THE QUESTION ISN'T REALLY "*WHAT
DOES JESUS SAVE US FROM*" AS MUCH AS IT IS "*WHAT
DOES JESUS SAVE US FOR?*"**

**HE SAVES US FOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO LIVE
ABUNDANTLY.**

**HE SAVES US FOR THE CHALLENGE TO LIVE IN
SERVICE TO OTHERS.**

**HE SAVES US FOR THE RESPONSIBILITY OF BEING
THERE FOR OTHERS AS WE HAVE FOUND *HIM* BEING
THERE FOR US.**

**YOU CONNECT PALM SUNDAY TO GOOD FRIDAY
WHEN YOU UNDERSTAND THAT JESUS ACCOMPANIES
YOU TO YOUR OWN GOLGOTHA.**

HE JOINS YOU AT YOUR OWN CALVARY.

**HE'S HANGING WITH YOU ON YOUR OWN CROSS
OF PAIN, GRIEF & DISCOURAGEMENT.**

**PERHAPS THAT'S WHY IT'S GOOD TO END OUR
LENTEN SERIES AND BEGIN OUR OBSERVANCE OF
HOLY WEEK WITH PALMS IN OUR HANDS &
"HOSANNAS" ON OUR LIPS.**

**IT'S GOOD TO POINT FROM SUNDAY TO FRIDAY &
CRY OUT "SAVE US," FOR WE KNOW THAT IS
PRECISELY WHAT JESUS DID.**

**HE DID IT FOR YOU – IN YOUR OWN PERSONAL
PLACE OF PAIN & HEARTBREAK.**

**SO PERHAPS THAT INITIAL ANSWER WE
CONSIDERED IS REALLY THE BEST ONE AFTER ALL.**

***"WHAT DOES JESUS SAVE US FROM? HE SAVES US
FROM HELL"* FOR HE HANGS ON THE CROSS TO
DELIVER US FROM WHATEVER HELL WE EXPERIENCE**

**– WHETHER IT’S A SELF-INFLICTED HELL OR ONE
THAT HAS BEEN FORCED UPON US.**

**HE’S THERE TO SAVE US FROM WHATEVER IT IS &
THEN HE SAVES US FOR SOMETHING FAR GREATER
THAN WE POSSIBLY IMAGINE. AMEN.**

*The Reverend Dr. Dennis R. Davenport
Eastminster Presbyterian Church
Evansville, Indiana*