

Palm Sunday C, 2010

Text: John 12:20-43

Title: A Busy Week

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Holy Week is a busy time.

It's a busy time for all of us, not just the pastor- the choir and the altar guild and the confirmation folks, and the elders and the ushers and the acolytes and everyone else- it's a busy week.

With everything going on here- with the services and the music and the meals and the Bible Classes and private confession, even hiding a few eggs, it's easy to lose our focus.

So before we take the plunge into Holy Week, let's stop, catch our breath, and see how to handle the week ahead.

It's not just a busy week for us, but it's busy for Jesus, too.

Just look at His schedule for this morning- a parade through the gates of Jerusalem, a visit from the Greek pilgrims, speaking with the crowds, a voice from heaven, miraculous signs, it makes you tired just talking about it.

And we're just getting started. The gospel of John has 21 chapters. The first 11 deal with the first 30 or so years of Jesus' life. The last 10 deal with the last week of His life here on earth.

There's a lot going on in the next few days.

There's so many folks to keep track of- the disciples, Jesus' family, the crowds, the Pharisees, the priest, the soldiers, Pilate, Herod- it's literally a cast of thousands.

But our focus, of course, is on Jesus.

When you focus on Jesus, where do you fit in? Where do you find yourself?

These are some of the stories you know best- Palm Sunday, the Last Supper, Jesus arrest, trial and crucifixion, and the resurrection, what do you do with these stories? Where do you fit in?

Do you find yourself in the crowd, singing Jesus' praises one moment, and calling for His death the next?

Do you find yourself with His disciples, listening to Jesus, being fed by Jesus, but then falling asleep and running away.

Do you find yourself with Jesus' family- there at the foot of the cross, watching in horror as Jesus dies?

Jesus Himself tells you where you should be. "Whoever serves me must follow me." "Where I am, there my servant also will be." And "When I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw all men to myself."

Where is Jesus? He is His way to the cross. In a few short days He will be there.

Where are you to be? Thinking along with Jesus, following along with Jesus, being there with Jesus, lifted up there with Jesus.

Your place this holy week is not with the crowds, who mocked Jesus. Your place is not with the disciples, who abandoned Jesus. Your place is not with Jesus' mother, standing helplessly at the foot of the cross. Your place is on the cross, dying with Jesus.

Jesus calls you to follow Him. Not just follow Him into Jerusalem with the crowd. Not just follow Him to the upper room and Gethsemane with the disciples. Not just follow Him to the foot of the cross with His mother, but all the way to the cross itself, to His death and to yours.

When Jesus calls you to follow Him, it is to follow Him to the cross.

Jesus says, "The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life."

Eternal life is only to be found in dying to this world, in making yourself nothing.

Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness, and being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross!

Your attitude, your way of thinking, the way that you view yourself should be the same as Jesus Christ, who was God, and yet made Himself nothing.

This week Jesus calls you to die- to die to yourself, to die to this world, to die along with Him.

You are a seed. As long as you remain above ground, you aren't doing anyone any good. You're just a single seed. But when you die, you will produce many seeds.

Jesus came to die. His life would have been meaningless without His death. His hour has now come. This is the hour of His glory- God's kind of glory, not man's kind.

His glory comes in His death, and yours does, too. Man's glory, fame, and popularity will do you no good.

The only way for you to have new life is to put to death the old one- to die to sin and selfishness.

You died first in your baptism, as you were buried with Christ at the font, and given a new life.

The old person in you keeps coming back to life; we breathe life back into him each day, and so he needs to be drowned over and over through repentance. So come to confession this week and die once more. Put to death all the sin and selfishness in you.

Jesus calls you to die to yourself, that He might give you new life. But new life only comes once the old, dead life is done away with. Easter only comes after Good Friday.

But Easter will come. If you find yourself on the cross with Jesus Christ on Friday, you will find yourself alive with Him on Easter. He will take you with Him through death to new life. "The man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life."

Jesus came that you might have a new life with Him. Eternal life starts now, as Jesus sets you free from the sin and death of this world.

Because you have died with Christ on the cross, you now live with Him. You are changed, made new, made more alive in Him every day.

In this world, every day seems to bring you closer and closer to death. In Christ, every day you are made more and more alive. He gives you His Spirit, flowing through your lungs. He gives you His blood, which courses through your veins. He gives you His very flesh, joining you with His risen body.

Eternal life is now yours. Come to the table to be joined to Christ, participate here in His death and resurrection. Here is Jesus, for you, the same Jesus who entered Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, going all the way to the cross not just for you, but with you.

It's a busy week ahead of us. We're tempted to sit back and watch things happen, or to be too busy with our own things to notice where Jesus is going.

But Jesus calls you follow Him. He calls you to go with Him, through the streets of Jerusalem, up to the upper room, across to the garden of Gethsemane, back through Jerusalem to Calvary, to the cross, to die. And then He takes you with Him through death and the grave to the life and light and joy of Easter morning. So come along, lose you life on a Friday, and find it again next Sunday.