

Palm Sunday C, 2013

Text: Luke 22:1-23:56

Title: Highs and Lows

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Jesus' last week had its ups and its downs, its highs and its lows.

There were the highs of Sunday morning, palm branches and shouts of praise, and also on Thursday evening, a celebration meal with the disciples.

Then there were the lows of Thursday night- betrayal and arrest in the garden, trial and denial at the High Priest's house, and then on Friday more torture and beatings, the long walk out of the city and finally death by crucifixion.

Jesus knew that all this would happen. He knew every step that He would take that week. He knew every up and every down, every high and every low.

None of this happened by chance. It's not like Jesus just had a bad week. Or, Jesus was in the wrong place at the wrong time. Or, if the Pontius Pilate and the Jews had made different choices, it would have ended up differently.

Jesus chose this path. Every high and every low.

He went this way because it was His Father's will. And this is what the prophets said would happen. He placed His life in His Father's hands. He trusted that He knew best.

"The Son of Man goes as has been determined" and "This Scripture must be fulfilled in me: And 'He was numbered with the transgressors,'" and "Father, Your will be done," and "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit."

Jesus knew all these things would happen, and He still went through with all of it to fulfill Scripture and the will of His heavenly Father.

Even though He knew what would happen, Jesus did not go through all of this like a robot: automatic and unfeeling. Jesus was human and felt all the emotions of that turbulent week.

He felt the joy and the exhilaration of the crowd as He rode into Jerusalem and they hailed Him as their king.

He felt the bittersweet moments of His last meal with His disciples.

He felt the betrayal in the garden by one of His closest friends.

He felt the rejection by His own people.

He felt the abandonment by His disciples.

He felt the anguish of knowing those who were weeping for Him should have been weeping for themselves.

He felt the sting of each nail and every thorn.

He felt the pain of the insults and abuse heaped upon Him.

Until He died and He felt no more.

Jesus knew what a roller-coaster ride this week would be. And yet He went through it all for you.

The disciples should have known what would happen this week, too. At least three times Jesus told them that He was going to Jerusalem to die.

But they seem caught by the surprise of it. Not understanding what Palm Sunday was all about.

Arguing about who was the greatest.

Selling out their Lord to the highest bidder.

Denying to even know who He is.

The disciples are taken off guard. They don't understand what's happening and why. By the end of the week there's nothing left to do but bury Jesus and hide in fear. They go through the ups and the downs not realizing what will happen next. Not trusting that everything will work out in the end.

Your life has its ups and downs, too. You have had your moments of glory and celebration. You have had your tender moments with your loved ones. And you have had your times of betrayal and pain.

There is nothing that you've experienced that Jesus hasn't experienced, too. He knows the ups and downs of life, the highest of highs and the lowest of lows.

For Jesus, it all began with the highest of highs, "who being in very nature God." Can't get much higher than that. God Himself.

But then, "he made himself nothing, taking on the form of a servant." And what's even lower than nothing? "becoming obedient unto death, even death on a cross." No lower than that. Nothing lower than the cross.

But the story of Jesus does not end on a low. There's a new week just around the corner. As low as things go this week, next Sunday will begin the upward swing. Resurrection from the dead, new life, and then exaltation to God's right hand, glory and honor once more.

You will have your lows in this life, but they will not be as low as Jesus' low. Jesus died once and for all. As low as things get for you here, they will not be as low as the cross.

Just as Jesus' highs and lows were in His Father's hands, so your highs and lows are in His hands. We may not understand every rise and fall in the road, but Jesus has already walked this path for us, and He leads us in the path that He has already walked.

And so you know that your life will not end on a low, either. There will be a high, an eternal upswing, as Jesus raises you to be with him and share in His glory.