

Rev. Thomas Emery
“Palm Sunday” John 11:1-45
Salem Presbyterian Church
Sunday, April 13, 2014

Even Jesus’ disciples expected him to exercise his kingship by vanquishing their enemies. The two disciples on the Emmaus road tell the resurrected Jesus, who walks along with them, yet whom they do not recognize, that they had hoped that this Jesus was the one to redeem Israel (Luke 24:21). When Jesus appears to his disciples before his ascension, the disciples are still asking, “Lord, is this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?” (Acts 1:6).

They wanted Jesus to establish an earthly kingdom and to make them his lieutenants. Gee, were they disappointed. They wanted Churchill and they got Gandhi. And so some of the crowd turned away from him and much of the crowd turned against him. It should not be surprising that some of those who sang their sweet hosannas on Palm Sunday were shouting “Crucify him! Crucify him! on Good Friday.

The obvious question is, “would it be any different today?” Would we welcome Christ into our community, into our family, even into our church? It is an unsettling question, but it needs to be asked.

TEACHING POINTS

Teaching Point One: ***Know your mission purpose as a follower of Christ.*** Jesus told his disciples, “Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit” Matthew 28:19).

Teaching Point Two: ***Know that this world and all that it offers will not satisfy you.*** Just as Satan tempted Jesus in the 40 days in the desert offering Him all the kingdoms of the world, we think that the temptations of this world that Satan falsely tells us will satisfy us.

Teaching Point Three: ***Know that giving yourself fully to God is the only way to be fully satisfied.*** We were created for intimate fellowship with God.

THIS WEEK’S MEMORY VERSE

⁴This took place to fulfill the prophecy that said, ⁵“Tell the people of Jerusalem, ‘Look, your King is coming to you. He is humble, riding on a donkey — riding on a donkey’s colt’” (Matthew 21:4-5 NLT).

ACTION POINT

Can we confront our own darkness? Can we confront our need for repentance? Would we welcome Christ into our world? For you see Christ, the real Christ, comes as a disturber, an unsettlor, almost as an anarchist. Think of the things we value: status, power, money and image. How does it all square with this humble figure riding on a donkey? Not very well, does it?

Look at our popular heroes, the action types in the movies. How do the heroes of these movies spend their time: blowing things up, avenging past wrongs, and asserting their dominance over their foes. Again, reconcile these images with that humble figure riding on a donkey.

Do you understand what it means to say Jesus is Lord? It means that we need to examine our lives, examine our goals, examine what it is that we are living for and ask ourselves is it enough?

Is this really the meaning of life? Or is there more? Is there an eternal dimension of life that calls us toward the heroic? Holy week should be the time for increased reflection and subsequent repentance as we measure our lives by our Lord’s life and death.