

ST. JOHN'S AT DIOCESAN CENTER IGLESIA EPISCOPAL DE SAN JUAN

23 E. Airy Street | Norristown PA 19401 | (610) 272-4092



YOU. REMEMBER.

The Rev. Andrew F. Kline

Text of a Sermon preached the Palm Sunday | Passion Sunday
April 10, 2022

ISAIAH 50:4-9A | PSALM 31:9-16

PHILIPPIANS 2:5-11 | LUKE 19:28-50; 22:14-23:56

As St. Luke tells the story, geography is destiny. And destiny comes into view through Jesus' eyes. In those last days, as he set his face toward Jerusalem, he tells them stories of persistent widows looking for lost coins, and the joy of spotting a short little man in a tree, dying to see Jesus. Jesus rejoices as much as Zaccheus as he gives his wealth away. Still, he knows that the rest of the disciples are as blind as the beggar outside Jericho.

So from Jericho, to Bethany, to the mount of Olives, he continues to try and focus their sights. He tells them: there was this man who fell among thieves and was left for dead by the side of the road. Jesus

chuckles. Watch who is about to fall among thieves this time! Just to make it interesting, he sends a few disciples on a little cloak and dagger mission to secure a ride, a better view. On a donkey now, to fulfill a prophesy, from Now from Bethany, to the east side of the mount of Olives, he nears the edge of the hill that is the last that blocks his view of his destination.

He is astonished as people begin to lay their cloaks on the road before him. He smiles at the few who are singing a song of praise. As St. Luke tells it, there are no Hosannas. Luke did some research. Really, those who were there that day and that made its way down the hill side, were quite a disorganized group. And they can't see what Jesus sees.

'Jerusalem, Jerusalem!' "As he came near and saw the city, he began to weep, saying: 'If you, even you, had only recognized on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes.'" It is too late to gather the people together as a mother hen her chicks. There are too many agendas, too many fantasies, too many fears, for there to be anything like conversation, anything like peace.

As the week wore on, he more or less stayed under the radar. The scribes and the pharisees had had a bullseye on his back for a long time. They actually applauded him as he overturned the money tables in the temple. They hated the whole system too. But his little group was too unpredictable. It was one thing to argue with him in the temple courts. It was another thing for him to accuse them of insurrection and blasphemy. Besides, they noticed that one or two of his disciples had some weapons with them. They kept an eye on him. They waited for him to make a mistake. And then one of his disciples surprised them with an offer.

They never did learn where he went to eat the Passover meal. At the meal, Jesus has one more chance to help his disciples see clearly. Here is the rule: In order to see, do not forget. He reinterprets the Passover meal as an invitation to remember. See my body. See my blood. It is shared and poured out for you. Watch where they will take me. Watch who I will end up being with. Listen for what I say - and for what I do not say. You will fall asleep. You will deny me. No matter: remember.

Remember first that Jesus does nothing to deserve death. As the centurion will emphasize, he is innocent. It is almost beside the point if

he is who they think he is. There is no cause, no reason for a rational ruler to want the responsibility of killing him. Nonetheless, in human hands, justice is easily perverted. Two false handshakes, one between Pilate and Herod, and the other between the crowd and Barabbas, is all it takes to produce a scapegoat. Add a show of force, spill a little blood. It satisfies and calms a riotous mob every time. Give the people bread and circuses. But you. Remember how the whole lot of them manufactured their fake peace.

Remember, finally, in the midst of all this, there is at least one person who can see what is going on. As if he had been at table with Jesus the night before, as if he was the one who had spent the most time with him ever, he opens our eyes with a prayer: "Jesus, remember me, when you come into your kingdom."

Jesus lifts his sagging chest and opens a doorway to an unexpected place. To Paradise - not to Sheol or Hades, not to heaven or hell - a door to Paradise. The garden of God restored.

Jesus is overwhelmed. At last, someone, is remembering. It was promised in Scripture all along, a place where nothing will ever separate us from God's love. Jesus sees those who remember. Nothing will ever separate you from me. I go to prepare that place for you. I will return and bring you to myself.

Remember everything that happens here on this day. The only more consequential thing is to never have known it - or to forget it. But if we remember everything - his steadfast obedience, his absolute trust in God, his complete innocence - doors open to a new relationship with God, a new covenant.

Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus. Humble yourself. Empty yourself. Obey where your destiny takes you. In his presence, remember how his power works through you. Don't blame another soul. for your blindness, your hard heart, your carelessness and ignorance. Learn from him what makes for peace.

I watched an elderly woman in Ukraine this week say to the camera: "God teaches us to forgive our enemies. You have seen how they killed our families, friends and neighbors in cold blood. I just can't. I hate them.... I hate them!"

Jesus, we will try not to forget you. Jesus, we will try not to forget what you have done for us - for the whole world.

If only we would remember what makes for peace!

Jesus, remember us when you come into your kingdom.