

Palm and Passion Reflections for: Trinity Lutheran Church, Manilla; March 24, 2024

Text: Readings from the Passion (by children of Trinity)

Message: "A Holy Week Journey with Children"

Jesus said, "Unless you become like little children you will never enter the kingdom of heaven."

I invite you this morning to "become like little children" who join Jesus on His Holy Week journey.

THE JOURNEY DOWN THE STREET OF JERUSALEM: Object – Palm Branch

"Can we go to the parade?" the children ask. The children had heard about a Sunday parade down the streets of Jerusalem. Supposedly a king was coming to the city.

The children stand with the crowd holding their palm branches. They join the crowd shouting "Hosanna! Hosanna!"

However the children (and many in the crowd) are perplexed. The king had come down the street not on a stately white horse. He had not come on a grandly decorated chariot with an escort of Roman soldiers. He had come on a donkey. Kings did not ride donkeys!

Jesus did not come to be king over any earthly kingdom. He had said "My kingdom is not of this world." Jesus who truly was King of all creation, rode humbly into Jerusalem. He was riding into the city so that later in the week He would be nailed to the cross to pay for the sins of the world so that we too could be part of His kingdom now and forever.

Our palm branches remind us to praise Jesus, the King.

THE JOURNEY TO THE UPPER ROOM: Object - Towel

We watch Jesus as He greets the disciples who join Him in the Upper Room in Jerusalem. They are there to celebrate the Passover together. Jesus was observing every law that His heavenly Father had commanded for the children of Israel. Jesus would eat the Passover meal with the disciples for the last time, and He would leave them (and us) with the new meal that we call The Lord's Supper.

However, the first thing Jesus does is wash their feet. Just as your parents say, "Wash your hands before we eat," families in Jesus time would also say, "Wash your feet before we eat." They wore sandals instead of shoes and, they walked on dusty paths. Usually it was the servants' job to wash the feet of guests.

Jesus, almighty God and Lord of all, kneels down and washes the disciples' feet. Jesus reminds us to not be concerned about being noticed or important. Jesus asks us to do what He did—to help others, especially those that we might consider not worthy of our help.

You have received a towel, reminding you of what Jesus did for His disciples. How can you use your towel to help others? (Wash the hands of a brother or sister? Dust your room? Wash some dishes?)

THE JOURNEY TO THE BETRAYAL: Object - Coins

We like money. Judas liked money. The Bible tells us that Judas was the keeper of the funds for Jesus and His disciples. Judas, one of Jesus 12 disciples; Judas, who had heard Jesus'

teachings and Jesus' warnings, Judas is willing to help Jesus' enemies arrest Him all for 30 pieces of money.

You have been given a bag of coins. They are not real. You won't be able to buy candy or a toy with them. The coins are a reminder of what Judas did—he betrayed His Lord and Master.

Fortunately, we don't sell out of friendship with Jesus, but we confess that there are many times we make other things more important than Jesus. There are times where we may betray a friend or classmate in school or in the neighborhood. We may say we're friends, but then we act like we don't know them or we may even say or do things to hurt them.

Jesus loved Judas. Jesus would have forgiven Judas. Jesus went to the cross for Judas.

Unfortunately Judas left Jesus forever. May we always be faithful to our Friend and Savior, Jesus.

THE JOURNEY TO THE GARDEN OF GETHSEMANE: Object - Flower

Where and when do you pray? We may pray at the family table before meals. We may pray in bed before we go to sleep. Maybe we have other times and places we like to pray. Jesus had His prayer places and one of them was the Garden of Gethsemane. The flower reminds us of a garden.

After meeting with the disciples in the Upper Room Jesus went to one of His favorite prayer places. He took three friends with Him but they fell asleep. In the quiet of the Garden Jesus

prays to His Father. Jesus knew that He had to suffer and die for the sins of the world. He prayed for strength to keep going to the cross.

As we journey to the cross this week, find a time and place to pray. Offer a “thank you” prayer to Jesus for going from the Garden to the cross. Pray that we continue to be faithful to Jesus on our life journey.

THE JOURNEY TO JESUS’ TRIAL: Object - Whip

We just heard “they scourged Him.” You have received an object that reminds us of a whip. The Roman soldiers whipped Jesus. Jesus went from the Garden to a trial before the Jewish High Priest. In that setting they told lies about Jesus. The Pharisees and other leaders didn’t like what Jesus had to say about their sins and their traditions.

They wanted Jesus put to death. However, only the Roman governor could sentence Jesus to death. Pilate knew Jesus was innocent, but he was unwilling to release Jesus. Pilate thought that perhaps just beating Jesus would satisfy the crowd.

Giving into the crowd’s demands to crucify Jesus, Pilate condemns Jesus. When we say the Apostles’ Creed, we confess, “He was crucified under Pontius Pilate.” Pilate sentenced Jesus, but it was for our sins that our Heavenly Father, sentenced His Son to suffer for us.

THE JOURNEY TO GOLGATHA: Object - Cross

Jesus was treated like the worst of criminals. He was sentenced to be crucified on a cross. To add insult to the sentence, Jesus had to carry His own cross. By this time Jesus had not slept for hours (and maybe days). Jesus had been whipped and beaten. Jesus, the Son of God, had become man to suffer and die for us. Being fully human, He experienced every wound, and He bled every drop of blood. Jesus carried the full weight of the cross.

When Jesus fell to the ground due to the weight of the cross, the soldiers grabbed a stranger who was watching Jesus' walk to the cross. The stranger, Simon of Cyrene, carries Jesus' cross.

Simon did not realize the importance of the assignment. He was part of the plan to get Jesus to Golgotha, the hill outside of Jerusalem where Jesus would be crucified. Fortunately, we don't have to carry Jesus' or any other cross.

Because Jesus took the cross and took all of our sins with Him, we ask, "What do you want me to do for you Jesus?" Is there anyone I need to tell about your cross? Is there someone you are asking me to help with their problems? May the cross remind us of what Jesus did and guide us to do things for others in Jesus' name.

THE JOURNEY TO THE CRUCIFIXION: Object – Nails

What do we use nails for? Nails are used to build houses and many other things. A nail might hold a picture on the wall. Nails might be welded together to make a piece of art. Nails are good things.

We can't imagine a nail being hammered through a person's hands and feet to hold them to a cross. That's what happened to Jesus. It was the Roman soldiers who carried out Pilate's command to put Jesus on a cross. When Jesus was nailed to the cross all of our sins were nailed with Him. Every sin that had ever been done in the history of the world; every sin that has been done since the first Good Friday, every sin that you and I have done or will do was nailed to the cross.

May your nail remind you of Jesus being nailed to the cross and that you are forgiven because Jesus was crucified for you.

THE JOURNEY TO JOSEPH'S TOMB: Object – Rock

Jesus died on the cross for the sins of the world. A kind man by the name of Joseph who loved Jesus, asked for permission to take Jesus down from the cross and to have His dead body put in His tomb. A "tomb" was a cave that families had to "bury" their loved ones. Since Jesus' family had no tomb, He was put in Joseph's tomb.

Jesus' body was lovingly and carefully wrapped in some burial cloths. The burial was done quickly because everything had to be done before it got dark. Joseph's last act was to roll a stone in front of the tomb. Your rock reminds you of the stone that was put in front of Jesus' burial place. Lots of things had happened in one week. It had started with a parade on Sunday and had ended in a tomb. It's a sad story. You have 8 objects to remember the story (and maybe share it with others.) Guess what! It's not the end of the story. Come next Sunday for a special surprise!