

BIBLE STUDY
April 4, 2022

PALM SUNDAY OF THE LORD'S PASSION

Isaiah 50: 4-7

Luke 23: 26-56

Philippians 2: 6-11

1. Isaiah 50: 4-7

- In the second Isaiah (40-55), there are four Servant Songs which speak of a mysterious person or community of persons whom God is sending to save his people. The Spirit is poured out upon the Servant; he is gentle and humble; he suffers for the people's salvation. This passage is the third of the Servant Songs. The whole song comprises vv. 4-11.
- V. 4: The Servant has received from the Lord the ability to speak a word of hope to a weary people. Each new day, the Lord speaks to him, and he hears him as a disciple does.
- V. 5: The Servant did not resist the call of the Lord.
- V. 6: He suffered because of the word that he was given to speak. He was physically abused and humiliated.
- V. 7: God is his strength even during abuse. He has steeled himself against the mistreatment.
- V. 8: God will vindicate him so who will dare to oppose him?
- V. 9: God is on his side and helps him so who will speak against him. His enemies are like clothes eaten by moths.
- V. 10: The Servant gives the people a choice: either walk by the light of the Lord---even if all is darkness and they cannot see the light—in trust that God will vindicate them
- V. 11: Or walk by their own false light and perish.

2. Luke 23: 26-56

- **The Way of the Cross, Vv 26-32:** Simon of Cyrene, an African man, is forced to help Jesus carry his cross. He becomes a model of discipleship. Jesus said, "Deny yourself, take up your cross and follow me." Tis is hat Simon does. Simon is a "point of entry" for us. We can identify with Simon and imagine ourselves helping to carry Jesus' cross. That is what we do every day.
- The women of Jerusalem represent those who did not follow the religious authorities in calling for Jesus' death. They weep for the injustice that Jesus is suffering and are powerless to do anything to reverse it. Jesus, who had wept over Jerusalem because it did not recognize its visitation, warns them that worse days are coming. Jesus may be pointing to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD. If you think it is bad now, just wait.
- Two criminals are also led out with him to be crucified.
- **The Crucifixion Vv. 33-34** Luke does not go into detail of the horrors of crucifixion. He simply states that they crucified him. That he was crucified

between two thieves and that his clothes were divided among the soldiers fulfills Psalm 22. Jesus forgives his murderers. He practices what he has preached throughout his ministry.

- Luke distinguishes the response of “the people” who just stand and watch, and the soldiers and religious leaders who mock Jesus. The leaders mock him saying that he should save himself if he is the Messiah. The irony is that Jesus is saving himself and them by his staying on the cross. The soldiers also mock him with the title, King of the Jews.
- One of the criminals desperately seeks to be saved but in a mocking way. The other sincerely asks Jesus to save him. After the term “save” has been mocked by others, the good thief presents a model of true salvation. He rebukes the first criminal for his mockery of Jesus. He admits his guilt and takes responsibility for his crime. He acknowledges the innocence of Jesus. He humbly asks to be admitted to his Kingdom, acknowledging Jesus as a King and the reality of his kingdom as not of this earth. Jesus grants his request and proclaims that it will be today. Remember that he told Zacchaeus that salvation had come to his house “today.” Now is the time for conversion and salvation. This is another point of insertion. We can identify with the good thief in our own desire for conversion and salvation.
- **The Death of Jesus: Vv. 44-49** Darkness descends upon the scene. The eclipse of the sun gives an apocalyptic aura—the final struggle between good and evil. The darkness suggests that evil is winning. The temple veil being torn represents the restoration of the relationship between God and humanity. The temple veil separated the holy of holies from the public spaces of the temple. Jesus’ death restores us to God’s friendship. The death of Jesus is already bringing about change. Salvation is happening.
- The actual moment of the death of Jesus is presented in a calm manner that is not at all like the final moments of one who is crucified. Luke wants us to focus on the deeper meaning of Jesus’ death. Although his death is brought about by human evil, it is accomplishing the divine liberation of God’s people surpassing even the Exodus of old. Jesus dies in peace and communion with his Father just as he lived his life. Just as at Nazareth, Jesus “passed through” the crowd who wanted to throw him off the cliff, Jesus now is passing through from death to life.
- The Roman centurion witnesses to the innocence of Jesus. It is the fifth sentence of innocence. Three by Pilate, one from Herod repeated by Pilate and now the centurion. The Gentiles proclaim the innocence of Jesus.
- The people begin a process of conversion by beating their breasts. They realize that they have seen the power of God in their midst.
- Jesus’ acquaintances—family and friends—are present at a distance. Jesus did not die alone. They were with him to the end. They are a point of insertion. Can we identify with them, being present to Jesus in his suffering and death?

- **The Burial of Jesus: Vv. 50-56** Joseph of Arimathea provides for a decent and respectful burial of Jesus according to Jewish burial customs. He reminds us of Elizabeth and Zacharia, Simeon and Ana, who were awaiting the Kingdom of God. Along with Simon, the women of Jerusalem, the good thief, the acquaintances of Jesus, Joseph represents those who welcomed Jesus.
- The women who followed Jesus through his ministry are present now at his burial and they anoint and wrap his body. They are the link between Jesus' death and resurrection. They witnessed his death, they saw where he was buried, they will witness that the very same tomb is now empty. They also observed the sabbath rest.

3. Phil 2: 6-11

- This is probably an early Christian hymn that Paul quotes
- V. 6: Though he was in the form of God: this may refer to Jesus' pre-existence; it also sets up a comparison between Adam and Jesus. Both were created in the image and likeness of God, but Jesus did try to hold onto equality with God as Adam did.
- V. 7: Rather Jesus emptied himself and took the form of a slave. He was seen to be in human form---his Incarnation.
- V. 8: He obeyed his Father's will in all things even to dying on the Cross. This verse reflects the language of the Servant songs of Isaiah, especially 53:12
- V. 9: Because of his obedience, God the Father raised him up and gave him the name above all names. God the Father vindicates Jesus and reveals his identity as Son of God
- The name above every name is the language of Isaiah 45:23