

BIBLE STUDY
March 27, 2023

PALM SUNDAY OF THE PASSION OF THE LORD

Isaiah 50: 4-7

Matthew 27: 11-54

Philippians 2: 6-11

1. Isaiah 50: 4-7

- The third of the four Servant Songs that speak of a unknown person or collective body that have been chosen by God to be the instrument of salvation for the nation and for the world. The Spirit has been poured out upon the Servant. He will be gentle and compassionate. The Servant will face rejection and persecution. However, the sufferings of the Servant will be redemptive and will bring salvation.
- The Lord gives the Servant the ability to speak words that will comfort and uplift the people who are losing hope.
- The Lord himself instructs the Servant and the Servant listens.
- The Servant suffers for being the Lord's messenger and he accepts the suffering as redemptive.
- The Servant puts all hope and trust in God. He presented a strong face against those who persecuted him.

2. Matthew 27: 11-54

- Jesus is called the King of the Jews by non-believers. This title had political overtones as a rival of Caesar. It would have been of concern for Pilate. Jesus does not answer Pilate. In the Passion story, although Jesus is on trial, it is really those who interrogate Jesus who are on trial. What will they do? Will they believe in Jesus or not?
- Barabbas means "Son of the Father." The story of Barabbas is full of irony. Barabbas is guilty of insurrection and murder, but he is set free. Jesus is innocent and he is put to death. We, like Barabbas, are guilty of our sins. However, Jesus who is innocent dies in our place.
- Pilate knows that Jesus is innocent and that the leaders have self-serving motives to bring him to Pilate for the death sentence. However, he is weak. He is afraid of opposing the leaders and possibly offending Caesar. He washes his hands.
- The leaders say that they will be responsible for the death of Jesus. His blood will be upon them. This refers only to the leaders of the people at that time. As Christians, we do not hold all Jews of that time or of succeeding generations responsible for the death of Christ. Christ died for us all. He died for our sins.
- Scourging was a punishment routinely administered before crucifixion to weaken the victim and hasten death.

- The soldiers mock Jesus by ridiculing him in the claim that he is a king. The crown of thorns is mockery, not torture. The torture and mockery of Jesus reminds us of the Servant Songs.
- Simon of Cyrene was an African man. This is a point of insertion for each of us into the story. It reminds us that we carry the cross each day. We share in the sufferings of Christ.
- The details of dividing his clothing but not his cloak, giving him wine/myrrh as a drug/vinegar refers to psalm 69. Jesus' death fulfills the prophecies of the Old Testament.
- The taunting of Jesus by the elders and bystanders is the last temptation of Christ. Their jeers are that he should save himself. Ironically he is saving himself by staying on the Cross; it will lead to resurrection. Jesus would lose himself if he came down from the Cross.
- The darkness from 12 noon to 3 PM is a sign of the tremendous battle between good and evil that is taking place as Jesus hangs on the Cross. It is an apocalyptic symbol of the battle between good and evil.
- Jesus cries out in words that seems to indicate that he feels abandoned by God. In reality, Jesus is quoting and praying Psalm 22 which a lament but ends in a prayer of hope and confidence in God's saving power.
- At Jesus' death there are more apocalyptic signs of the battle between good and evil. The split of the temple curtain that divided the holy of holies from the rest of the temple is a sign that the death of Christ has destroyed the separation between God and humanity.
- The Roman centurion, a Gentile, is the one who recognized the identity of Jesus as Son of God. Often in Matthew's Gospel it is the Gentiles who see who Jesus is more than the Jews.

3. Philippians 2: 6-11

- Paul is most likely quoting the words of an early Christian hymn. Christ emptied himself out for us. His love is agape love—self-sacrificing love. His emptying out of himself is called “kenosis” in Greek. We too are called “to give ourself away” in service of our brothers and sisters. Jesus' self-emptying is rewarded with Jesus being lifted (raised from the death) and exalted (given the name above all names).