

March 25, 2018

Palm Sunday

Let us keep our eyes fixed upon Jesus!

Mark 11:1-10    Isaiah 50:4-7    Psalm 22:8-9,17-20,23-24    Philipians 2:6-11    Mark 14:1 to 15:47

Isaiah confirms that God is his help and has given him a well-trained tongue so that encouraging words can be spoken to the weary. For his part, Isaiah has not rebelled and even though he is abused by many, he is not disgraced nor put to shame.

The Psalmist describes how people scoff him, mock him, and surround him like a pack of dogs. He petitions the Lord to be close and to protect him from the evildoers. In turn he will glorify the Lord and encourage others to do the same by proclaiming his praise in the midst of the assembly.

Christ Jesus is in the form of God but did not deem this something to be grasped at. He emptied himself and became obedient even to the point of accepting death on the cross. Now he is exalted by God and has the Name above all names.

Jesus is greeted with palms as he enters the city. Later he receives an act of kindness from a woman who anoints him and then he sends his disciples to prepare for the Passover meal. After the Last Supper he prays at Gethsemane, is arrested, mocked, crowned with thorns, carries the cross and is crucified.



The Father is most merciful,  
And yet the Son was called to suffer greatly.  
The Holy Spirit comforts us in our times of despair.

The prophet Isaiah was called to speak comforting words to the weary. In his case the weary are the exiled in Babylon who feel great despair and abandonment. And yet he too was persecuted, spit upon, and even struck, just like Jesus, but he knew that he was following God's will and he would not be defeated. The psalmist is scoffed at and mocked but he too seeks the Lord's help. Jesus suffered greatly but was not without hope as he emptied himself of his own will and was obedient to the Father's unto his dying breath.

Two other men crucified, one on either side of Jesus, heard the jeers and taunts directed at Jesus. According to Luke's Gospel one of them had a change of attitude before too long as he surely noted that Jesus hurled no curses or threats upon those who ridiculed and insulted him, not even a bitter word in response. No doubt he wondered how a person in such a situation could be the Messiah and yet he turned his head and said, "Jesus, when you come into your kingdom, remember me!" Jesus must have seen in this expression of good-will a germ of faith and responded with "this day you will be with me in paradise."

Compassionate women in Jerusalem usually prepared a drugged wine to alleviate the pain of those crucified, but Jesus refused take it. He wished to be in full possession of his senses even to his dying breath when he voiced the first sentence of the twenty-third Psalm. This Psalm speaks of the victory of righteousness over all the earth and this belief must have comforted him in his last moments when he uttered a great cry. Even a Roman centurion, noticing the deep shadow which suddenly covered the region, was overcome as he noted, "this surely was a son of god!", most likely to his mind meaning a heroic person descended from the gods.

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