

Palm Sunday  
First Trinity Lutheran Church  
April 1, 2012

### **The Message of the Cross**

A little boy was sick on Palm Sunday and stayed home from church with his mother. His father returned from church holding a palm branch. The little boy was curious and asked, "Why do you have that palm branch, dad?" His dad answered, "You see, when Jesus came into town, everyone waved Palm Branches to honor him, and so we got Palm Branches today." The little boy replied, "Aw Shucks! The one Sunday I miss is the Sunday that Jesus shows up!"

There are a lot of words for us to digest this morning. We started outside with the story of Jesus triumphant enter into Jerusalem, the celebration of the Passover with this disciples, Jesus prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane, His arrest and trail, Peter's denial, and finally the crucifixion. With all these words coming at us this morning I am not going to preach a very long sermon but I would like to highlight a few points.

In our Sunday morning Adult Bible study we have been taking about David Lose's Study series called Making Sense of the Cross. He makes the point that throughout the Gospels the disciples really don't understand who Jesus really was and what was the meaning and purpose of His crucifixion and death. It took them many years to figure it out and even when the Gospels were written some 40 to 90 years after Jesus' death and resurrection they were still trying to figure out what all this meant.

Let me give you some quick examples:

In Mark Chapter 4 Jesus tells the disciples that he spoke to them in parables because the secret of the Kingdom of God was given to them that is given to the disciples. Yet they do not understand the parables and they ask Jesus over and over

again to interpret the parables for them. In verse 40 of that same chapter 4 of Mark's Gospel the disciples are in a boat and great storm comes up as Jesus calms the storm the question comes up who he is. Peter then declares that he is the Christ. So we would think that they understand who Jesus is yet later on in chapter 8 Jesus says that he must suffer and die, but Peter again says that the Son of Man must never suffer and die, and quickly Jesus rebukes him. The rebuke is so strong Peter is referred to as Satan. There are other examples in the Gospels that indicate the disciples not understanding who Jesus is and the final one comes in today's Passion story when Peter denies that he even knows Jesus.

In Mark's Gospel no human ever calls Jesus the Son of God except for one and this declaration becomes the central focus point of his Gospel. The one person, who declares that Jesus is the Son of God, is the very person who crucified Jesus. He was a Gentile, a Roman soldier, the centurion who after Jesus dies says, "Truly this man was God's son."

God plan of allowing His son to die a violent death is a message to us. Today violence surrounds us everywhere. Certainly the violence of war in the Middle East has our attention. War is awful and all wars because they are awful have unintended consequences like the killing of 17 Afghan civilians a few weeks ago. Violence in our world causes us to have stress that spills over into our private lives and into our work life. Stress causes us to do inappropriate things and sometimes act in strange ways like the pilot who snapped this past week while flying a plane. The plane had to make an emergency landing by the co-pilot and the pilot was taken to the hospital. Violence in our neighborhoods causes some to take security into their own hands which can bring

horrible unintended consequences like the one in Florida where an seventeen year old boy Trayvon Martin was killed. In a very real way we have all misunderstood who Jesus is and why he died on the cross. Our violent world even two thousand years after Jesus death is evidence that we either still don't know or have significant memory lapses as to why Jesus died on the cross.

I am going to suggest this: If God through Jesus shows us his love for us by sacrificing his life can we not show love and compassion to one another in how we treat each other. Can justice and mercy live together or must everything be an eye for an eye. The cross and the resurrection enables us to be free to love, free to forgive and free to care for others. Why should we love, and forgive, and care for others. The answer is really simple, because we have been loved, forgiven, and been taken care of by God himself. Amen

**Thomas J Knoll**