

Palm Sunday—Year B
Mark 11:1-11
Isaiah 50:4-9a
Psalm 31:9-16
Philippians 2:5-11
Mark 14:1-15:47

We are so not ready for **Holy Week**. We have had to cancel Choir practice the last two Wednesdays and yesterday's make-up rehearsal due to snow. I wasn't even sure if any of us would get in today to have services. Many churches called off church for today *yesterday*. We're crashing into this week, and it feels way of control.

And that is exactly the point.

If we think we can get on top of this week, and have things all under control and **nailed down**, all in good order prepared to **execute it** with perfection; *we are sorely, sorely mistaken.*

This week takes us to our knees and reminds that *none of this* is under our control. The **crowds** will do what the **crowds** do—sticking their finger up and testing the prevailing winds—**shouts of “Hosanna!”** *turn* to **cries of “Crucify him!”** on a dime. The **beloved Teacher falls from the pedestal** *crushing* hope on the way down, *soothing* that broken heart with **30 pieces of silver**. **Refusals to desert Jesus and promises to die for him** *turn* to **denials**. **Cruelty and insults and mocking and taunting and lying** *take the field* promising to relieve all the **pain** that is swirling, and yet, only increase that **pain** in the process. **Cowardice and courage** walk hand-in-hand. **That woman who anointed Jesus' feet** couldn't be controlled. **The women who look from a distance and just won't leave** can't be controlled. **The women who keep vigil** when it's all done, and everyone else has left, can't be controlled.

It's all beyond our control.

This week will barrel on inevitably toward **Good Friday**, and for all our efforts to **nail** everything down, ***the only thing that will be nailed down this week is Jesus***. Every aspect of our broken, limited, all-too-ready-to-sell-Love-down-river-if-it-will-give-us-a-sense-of-control human existence, every aspect of our broken human existence comes together this week, and, collectively, ***we will nail Jesus down***. We will touch every last **forsaken** place of our human experience, **and so will Jesus**, and *in his journey*, **God will reveal to us the unfathomable, immeasurable depths of God's love and presence**. The **psalmist** is right, **“Where can I go then from your Spirit; where can I flee from your presence?”**—the answer, **“Nowhere”**—no matter where the **psalmist** goes from **heaven** to the **grave**, **God is there**.

In the midst of *hate*, **God is there**. In the midst of *suffering*, **God is there**. In the midst of *state-sponsored executions*, **God is there**. In the midst of *horrific violence* and *innocent life* taken, **God is there**. In the midst of *untimely death*, **God is there**. In the midst of our most *intense shadow*, **God is there**. At the heart of our most *beautiful, steadfast courage*, **God is there**. In the midst of our *grief and sorrow*, **God is there**. As we *wait inside that tomb or sit vigil across the great divide of death*, **God is waiting with us, stirring the deeper currents of life, yearning to roll that stone away and call us into a life beyond our imagining.**

*If we stay present to it, this week will crucify us; it will take us the brink and to our breaking point. Will we yield to the out-of-control nature of this week and let it sweep us along and let die whatever it is in us that needs to die? Will we let go and give ourselves over to the **cross**? Will we trust that God will hold us when we are stretched out, crying uncle? When we are crying out to God, “**Why have you forsaken me?**” will we trust that God will find us in our desolate tombs of death and wait with us until...*

Until...

Well, we have to take the journey this week to understand what lies on the other side of that the tomb. There is no jumping over this week and parachuting into Easter. Well, you can do that, but you’ll only experience a great celebration of a holiday and miss the exquisite and costly mystery of dying and rising, of death and birth, that can change your life forever.

If you’re a control freak, and honestly, most of us have at least some of that energy in us, if you need control, this week is going to be really, really uncomfortable, but let the snow, and the winds, and the sleet, and the freezing rain, and all the twists and turns carry you into this heart of darkness. And know that, in the end, God’s heart is big enough to hold it all. Amen.

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