

Saint Thomas and Saint Thomas of the Air Church
Passion Sunday
March 26, 2023
rmcneely+

Before Abraham was, I am.

This Fifth Sunday in Lent marks a departure in our Lenten journey to the Cross.

You have noticed the veils
But will soon experience the harsh crack of the Klaker.
Did the Church, get your attention?

Today we enter PassionTide that will take us to Easter,
to Resurrection Sunday.

We have spent the last 28 days of Lent
In introspection
As we journey through our lives to root out every spec of sin.
But now we pack up that sin and consider another journey
A journey to the Cross
Taken by our Saviour.

And the enormous price He paid for those sins comes into focus.
As we walk with Him to Calvary,
To Crucifixion.
It is a 14 day walk that defeated evil and changed the world.
It is a 14 day walk that will end in absolution and eternal life.
The last 14 days of His mission for our salvation.

We call it; His Passion
But we are immediately confused.
Its another one of those semantic puzzles.
To our 21st Century ears, “passion” is a strong or
compelling emotion

We think positively of a person with a passion for art
 A lover,
 Or a political cause.

We admire and maybe mildly envy people with passion.

Find an older dictionary and you get a completely different notion.

We get the word *passion* from the Latin *passio*

Which means “suffering”.

And all of a sudden PassionTide begins to make sense.

The focus is on His suffering: the price of our redemption.

Some equate the crack of the klacker
 with the sound of the hammer as it

Drove the nails into our Lord’s hands and feet.

The veils enhance our sense of loss as we are separated from Jesus

At the moment of His death.

They point us to Easter and the miracle of his resurrection
 and to the day all veils are removed.

With our sins firmly in mind

And with the knowledge of what Jesus endured to remit them

We walk step by step with Him

Inexorably to Calvary, to the Cross.

Here at St Thomas, we are immersed in these 14 days.

Next week we are in Jerusalem

Singing “Glory, Laud and Honor”

As we receive blessed palms

And symbolically lay them in the way

As we cheer and welcome our Lord to His Victory.

On Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday evenings at 6

We celebrate a solemn, almost monastic Holy Communion

By weeks end we will have heard all 4 Gospels of His
 Passion.

On Thursday we take a seat at the table in Jerusalem for the Last Supper

For the institution of the Communion
 For the mandate: Do This In Remembrance of Me.
 On the night in which He is betrayed.

In preparation for the Crucifixion

The altar is stripped
 The leaving only the empty tabernacle open
 And the pre-sanctified Body of Christ
 guarded by the glow of the red sanctuary lamp
 at the altar of repose
 For the communion at the Crucifixion the next day.

Return the next day at noon on Friday

And walk with Him to His death
 Pause at each of the 14 Stations of the Cross
 As we relive those last moments.

Pray the prophesy of Hosea

Hear the words of Archbishop Provence on the 7 meditations
 Venerate the Cross
 Pray the ancient collects
 Receive Him in Communion of the pre-sanctified.

And it all begins today; Passion Sunday.

It begins with St John's account of one of the final confrontations with the Pharisees.

Jesus is in the temple at Jerusalem

The Pharisees taunt Him

Bating Him to do or say something they can use
 to put Him to death for blasphemy.

His hour is come and Jesus does not disappoint them.

You can almost see Him pointing His finger at them
And tells them they are not of God

That they are liars

Things reach a climax as Jesus tells them

“Before Abraham was, I am.”

That did it.

The Jews gathered stones to hurl at Him

But as John tells us

Jesus hid Himself

And went out of the temple.

Leaving the Pharisees enraged.

We cannot comprehend the rage.

Unless we, like them know something of the Bible.

Remember the time that Moses encountered God in the burning bush? It was aflame but retained greenery and life.

Moses heard and responded to the voice of God in the bush.

God appointed Moses to lead the Jews to freedom from Egypt.

Moses relented but asked God to tell him his name

So Moses could better convince the Jews that he spoke

With the authority of God.

God responded with the name too holy for any Jew to speak

Many to this day will not say the name: Yahweh.

The name translates into English as I AM.

When Jesus said: “before Abraham was, I AM”

He said the forbidden Hebrew word,

Yahweh

the name of God, I AM.

Not only had He said the forbidden word

But he confounded them with the confused time tense

Implying that Jesus existed before and after Abraham.

Only God could live in a timeless world
 And the Pharisees were beyond angry.
 Such “blasphemy” in the eyes of the Pharisees was
 punishable by stoning.

By the end of the following week
 Jesus would lie dead in his mother’s arms.
 Suffering an agonizing and humiliating death.
 A substitutionary sacrifice.
 Jesus took the horrific punishment
 And gave His life
 For our sins.

PassionTide takes us to His side
 To relive the passion
 To explore its role in our lives.

Substitutionary Sacrifice
 It has been there all along
 In the Old Testament
 In the life and culture of the Jews.

A penitent then could pay for his/her sins and obtain forgiveness
 By sacrificing something else.
 It was an elaborate system of laws and regulations.
 For each sin there was an animal
 An innocent animal to trade for forgiveness.
 The greater the sin the greater the sacrifice.
 It has been in place for centuries.
 If forgiveness was to have value and meaning
 There had to be a cost,
 A sacrifice.
 Without blood could forgiveness be worth anything?
 Was the price in blood equal to the harm of the sin?

The sinner paid a price
 But not a personal price
 Not the sinner's blood
 But the blood of an innocent animal as a substitute.
 Substitutionary sacrifice.

Those who knew him,
 Those we call the Apostles and disciples
 Would mourn His death.
 But early Christians soon saw the parallel:
 His innocent death was the price He willingly
 paid for our sins.
 The greatest substitutionary sacrifice of all time.
 His passion was the price
 But this time not just forgiveness
 But absolution.

His suffering blotted out what we had done and not done
 And it is as if
 Our sins had never happened.
 Gone, obliterated.
 As if erased from time for all time.

He defeated evil and opened the doorway to our eternal life.

Such was the plan of God
 Such was the love of God
 To substitute His son for our sins.
 But the price was the Passion Jesus must endure.

These last 14 days of PassionTide are the crescendo
 Of His life
 His ministry
 We walk these last days with Him
 Step by step
 To Calvary.

To absolution
To eternal life.