

St Thomas Church and Saint Thomas Church of the Air
Palm Sunday
March 24, 2024
rmcneely+

Hosanna to the Son of David
Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord
Oh King of Israel
Hosanna in the Highest

The blessed palms that you hold in your hand are of course
the symbols of the Day.
reminiscent of the palms
laid at Jesus' feet
when He made His triumphal entry to Jerusalem
for the last time.

But they are much more

The palms are a reminder of the blessing God gave to Noah,
his family
and the animals
when they went forth on dry land from the ark:
and God told them to "go forth and multiply"

The palms are reminiscent of the Old Testament story
of the Palms of Elim,
The place where 12 water wells
And 70 date palms sustained the Jews
as they wandered the desert

Where as they left,
they grumbled and complained of Moses
That at least in Egypt there was bread enough to eat.
Saying; they should rebel and return to slavery

Moses told them

At evening they should recognize

God delivered them from slavery

At morning they should rise to see the Glory of God

It was then that God provided manna, the bread of heaven

Not a bad lesson for us too.

In Passiontide, the palms remind us

God gave us true bread from Heaven

in Jesus, the Christ

So take your palms home today, give them to friends and relatives

May they guard your heart and home with peace

May they give us strength to repel the evil of our lives

and be banners,

Signs and reminders

That your real city

Your home and homeland

Your resting place

Is the city of God

That heavenly City; Jerusalem

Through Jesus' passion, death and resurrection

We enter that Heavenly Jerusalem

where He will wipe away all tears from our eyes.

The Church today strives to immerse us in the events of this day

It uses all at its disposal

The palms

The march around the church and

The re-entry symbolizing Our Lord's entry into Jerusalem

To the strains of "Glory, Laud and Honor"

A hymn reserved for this day and this day only.

The liturgy of this day is packed with meaning

and with the richness of Christianity itself.

The Palm Sunday rituals, the blessing of the palms
 And the Palm Sunday Communion

Are rich in the psalms

The 22nd psalm

The plea to God from one in danger at the lions mouth

The psalm from which Jesus quoted from the cross
 shortly before his death.

The 73rd psalm that startlingly prophesied the details of Jesus' crucifixion, His thirst, the vinegar,

St Matthew's Passion, moving, dramatic and climactic

Today's service is

and should be a long one

and there is not the opportunity in this sermon to explore it all.

So permit me to go

To perhaps the most important lesson of the New Testament

To the theme of all of Holy Week

To the Epistle of the Communion Service

Paul writes to his close friends in Philippi

It contains the theme:

Endure the sorrow but

Look forward to the exaltation that follows

Know the humiliation

But look forward to the glory that shone through

The shame.

Paul writes of the limitless generosity of Christ

Of how Jesus, gave to us all that He had

Not just his very life

Not just every ounce of His blood

But how He emptied Himself of everything
 His heart
 His soul.
 He gave us His entire being
 To save us from our sins
 To save us from ourselves.

The Son of God
 Humbled himself to be incarnated a human
 The creator became the created
 And not just a human
 But a servant.
 An obedient servant
 Obedient To the Will of God
 Even unto the humiliation and shame
 Obedient even to an agonizing death upon the cross
 A punishment reserved to the most lowly.

His story became the essence of the Christian Gospel
 Glory comes from shame
 Exaltation comes from humiliation

So here is the take away;
 The very theme of Holy Week
 While we relive the sorrow
 the resurrection is never far from our minds
 And the theme is Triumph; Not tragedy
 As Jesus rode through the Golden Gate of Jerusalem's stone wall
 The Gate prophesied as the gate through which
 The Messiah would enter their lives,
 The people cheered him
 With calls of Hosannah
 Literally meaning: Save us
 With joy
 they called Him Messiah

But in only 5 days time; those same people were crying for His
Crucifixion

We who hold the palms in our hands must ask:
Are we among those who strew them along the way?

Or,

Are we among those who cried for his death only days
Later?

Are we among those who welcome Him?
Or among those who desert Him?

In a few moments

We will sing a song written by people brought here
As slaves

In one of the few American Hymns in our Hymnal

We will ask:

“were you there when they crucified our Lord?
were you there when they nailed Him to the tree?
Were you then when they laid Him in the tomb?

There may not be a dry eye within earshot, certainly not mine
And the answer to each questions is this:

“Sometimes it causes me to tremble
to tremble
to tremble”

Were we there?

Or perhaps a more difficult question

Are we there?

