

PALM SUNDAY 2017

Welcome & Announcements

Rebecca intro: The Apostle Peter wrote, “God paid for your sins with the precious blood of Christ, the sinless, spotless Lamb of God. God chose Him for this purpose long before the world began, but now He was sent to the earth for all to see. And He did this for you.” As we enter Holy Week, we are reminded that Jesus’ suffering and death was predicted hundreds of years before he was even born. The prophet Isaiah speaks about the Suffering Servant who would come to redeem God’s people. We read, “He was despised and rejected; a man of suffering and acquainted with grief. Surely he has borne our infirmities and carried our diseases. He was wounded for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the punishment that made us whole, and by his wounds we are healed.” Yes, Jesus Christ, the Light of the World, would be condemned to die. (*Extinguish the final Lenten candle*) The story of the last few hours of Jesus life here on earth is often referred to as the Passion of Christ – the word, “passion,” coming from a Latin word meaning suffering. And today, we will go from the celebration of the crowds on Sunday, to the condemnation by the crowds on Friday, to the suffering and death of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Julie: Our journey begins on what we now call Palm Sunday. The crowd was anxiously waiting for Jesus to arrive. They believe he was the Messiah – the one sent by the Lord. They fully expected him to be their Savior – but saving them not from their sins, rather saving them from the Roman government. He would surely be the one to lead them into battle and bring them to victory. And so, as Jesus entered Jerusalem, the words of the prophet Zechariah were fulfilled, “Shout in triumph, O people of Jerusalem! Look, your king is coming to you. Triumphant and victorious is he, humble and riding on a donkey.”

Introit – Choir

Rebecca: (*Luke 19:28-40*) As Jesus came to the towns of Bethphage and Bethany on the Mount of Olives, he sent two disciples ahead. “Go into that village over there,” he told them. “As you enter it, you will see a young donkey tied there that no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here. If anyone asks, ‘Why are you untying that colt?’ just say, ‘The Lord needs it.’” So they went and found the colt, just as Jesus had said. And sure enough, as they were untying it, the owners asked them, “Why are you untying that colt?” The disciples simply replied, “The Lord needs it.” So they brought the colt to Jesus and threw

their garments over it for him to ride on. As he rode along, the crowds spread out their garments on the road ahead of him. All of his followers began to shout and sing as they walked along, praising God for all the wonderful miracles they had seen. “Hosanna! Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! But some of the Pharisees among the crowd said, “Teacher, rebuke your followers for saying things like that!” Jesus replied, “If they kept quiet, the stones along the road would burst into cheers!”

Hymn: Hosanna, Loud Hosanna 278 *Piano plays one time while children process in with palms and choir follows. Congregation then stands to sing all three verses, as children process with palms.*

Julie: The thrill of Jesus’ triumphal entrance didn’t last long. Over the next few days, Jesus angered the religious leaders. He exposed their hypocrisy, condemned their practices and threatened their authority and way of life. Tension was growing. So the chief priests met together and planned to put Jesus to death. They would send their temple guards to capture and arrest Jesus, but exactly how and when to do this? And who could help them in this plot?

Rebecca: (*Luke 22:1-6*) The Festival of Unleavened Bread, which is also called Passover, was approaching. The leading priests and teachers of religious law were plotting how to kill Jesus. Then Satan entered into Judas Iscariot, who was one of the twelve disciples, and he went to the leading priests and captains of the Temple guard to discuss the best way to betray Jesus to them. They were delighted, and they promised to give him thirty pieces of silver. So he agreed and began looking for an opportunity to betray Jesus so they could arrest him when the crowds weren’t around.

Julie: During the week, Jesus went to the home of Simon, the leper. As they were eating, a woman came in with an alabaster jar of expensive ointment. She broke the jar and poured the ointment on Jesus. His disciples were indignant, “Why this waste! It could have been sold and the money given to the poor.” But Jesus said, “Leave her alone. She has done a beautiful thing to me. When she poured this ointment on my body, she did it to prepare me for burial.” No one understood the meaning of Jesus’ words at the time. But this breaking of a jar and the ointment being spilled out on Jesus, was a premonition to Jesus’ body being broken and spilled out for you and me.

Choir – Broken and Spilled Out

Rebecca: On that Thursday evening, Jesus wanted to celebrate Passover with his disciples. This is an annual meal and gathering celebrated by Jews everywhere in which they tell the story of their freedom from slavery in Egypt. In the Old Testament Book of Exodus we read that God finally had enough of trying to convince Pharaoh to let the Israelites go. And God's final ultimatum was that the firstborn of all the households in Egypt and the firstborn of the livestock would die. However, as God swept through Egypt with the plague of death, there was a way that the Israelites would be saved. By killing a lamb and putting its blood on the doorposts outside their home. When God saw the blood of sacrificed lamb on the doorpost, He would "pass over" that place, and the people inside would be saved.

Julie: (*Exodus 12: selected verses*) The Lord gave the following instructions to Moses and Aaron: "Each family must choose a lamb or a young goat for a sacrifice. The animal must be a one-year-old male, either a sheep or a goat, with no defects. They must slaughter their lamb at twilight. They are to take the blood and smear it on the sides and top of the doorframes of their houses. That same night they must roast the meat over a fire and eat it along with bitter salad greens and bread made without yeast. This is the Lord's Passover. On that night I will pass through the land of Egypt and I will execute judgment against all the gods of Egypt, for I am the Lord! But the blood on your doorposts will serve as a sign. When I see the blood, I will pass over your home. This plague of death will not touch you when I strike the land of Egypt."

Rebecca: With the institution of the Last Supper, Jesus now becomes the sacrificial lamb, whose blood saves us...from sin and death. As they shared their meal together, Jesus, took bread, broke it, as his body was to be broken and said, "Take, eat, this is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of what I have done." He then took the cup, gave thanks to God, gave it to his disciples and said, "This is my blood of the new covenant, poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of your sins. Do this as often as you drink it, in remembrance of what I have done." We celebrate Holy Communion as a meal commemorating our freedom, our freedom from sin, and freedom to live in grace and forgiveness.

Hymn: Lamb of God TFWS 2113

Holy Communion

Julie: After the meal, around 11:00 pm, Jesus led his disciples across the Kidron valley to the Mount of Olives, where Jesus often went to pray. On the way, Jesus warned his disciples that later that night something would happen and they would all desert him. Peter, convinced of his own courage and faith, reprimanded Jesus, “Even if everyone else deserts you, I never will!” Jesus gets more specific: “Before the cock crows twice, you will deny three times that you even know me.” But Peter was insistent, “No, I will never desert you.” Once at the Mount of Olives, they went to a grove of olive trees, called the Garden of Gethsemane. Jesus took his three closet friends, Peter, James and John and told them he was deeply troubled and grieved, and could they just stay awake and pray for him. But tragically, they could not. They fell asleep not just once, not twice, but three times. So Jesus was left alone in his anguish, as he prayed to God to be let go of the awful burden he was about to carry – the sins of humankind placed on him, the injustice of evil condemning him, and the pain and suffering of the cross facing him. Luke tells us he was in such agony of spirit that his sweat became like drops of blood falling on the ground. Yet through it all, Jesus surrendered to the will of God.

Rebecca: The Garden of Gethsemane Rosanna Eleanor Leprohon

The place is fair and tranquil, Judaea’s cloudless sky
Smiles down on distant mountain, on glade and valley nigh,
And odorous winds bring fragrance from palm-tops darkly green,
And olive trees whose branches wave softly o’er the scene.

Ah! here, one solemn evening, in ages long gone by,
A mourner knelt and sorrowed beneath the starlit sky,
And He whose drops of anguish bedewed the sacred sod
Was Lord of earth and heaven, our Savior and our God!

Hark to the mournful whispers from olive leaf and bough!
They fanned His aching temples, His damp and grief-struck brow;
Hark! how the soft winds murmur with low and grieving tone!
They heard His words of anguish, they heard each sigh and moan.

Alone in deepest agony, while tired apostles slept;
No one to share His vigil—weep with Him as He wept;
Before Him, clearly rising, the Cross, the dying pain,
And sins of hosts unnumbered whose souls He dies to gain.

O Garden of Gethsemane! “when pressed and sore afraid,”
May I in spirit enter beneath thine olive shade,
And, great though be my anguish, still, like that God-like One,
Submissive say: “Oh Father! Thy will, not mine, be done!”

Julie: Suddenly a large crowd from the temple guards, yielding clubs and swords came to arrest Jesus. Just as it had been planned, Judas went right to Jesus saying, “Rabbi!” and he kissed him. Immediately the soldiers grabbed him and as they did so, Peter, in anger and defense, took his sword and cut off the right ear of Malchus, the slave of Caiaphas, the high priest. Jesus said, “No more of this!” And he reached out and healed Malchus’ ear. “Am I not to drink the cup that the Father has given me?” They led Jesus to the home of the high priest, Caiaphas, where, in the dark of the night the religious leaders had gathered secretly to determine Jesus’ fate. As he was bound and led away, all his disciples...his closest friends, deserted him and fled.

Rebecca: They arrived at Caiaphas’ home, where the members of the Jewish Council waited. By this time a crowd had begun to gather in the courtyard outside, wondering what was going on. Peter had followed Jesus at a distance, and quietly entered the courtyard. Jesus, standing before the religious authorities, listened as many people gave false testimony against him. Because the witnesses couldn’t agree, Caiaphas asked him directly, “Are you the Messiah, the Son of God?” Jesus said, “I am,” which is the same name God used for himself - I AM - when Moses asked his name thousands of years earlier. And then Jesus quoted from the prophet Daniel, who described the coming of God’s Messiah, “You will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of the Power; and coming with the clouds of heaven.” They needed to hear no more. Jesus had just claimed himself to be both God and the Messiah. Some of these “religious” people begin to spit on him, strike him, and even beat him. They convicted him of blasphemy, and first thing in the morning, they would take him to Pilate, the Roman governor condemning him on the grounds of treason – calling himself a messiah – a “king of the Jews.” This, they knew, would result in Jesus’ death.

Julie: In the meantime, Peter was outside waiting by a fire, along with various servants and soldiers who were warming themselves in the cold night air by a fire. One servant girl said to him, “Weren’t you with Jesus, the Galilean?” “I don’t know what you’re talking about,” said Peter. Soon another girl saw him and said, “This man was with Jesus.” But again, Peter said, “I do not know the man.” Later, a third time, one of the bystanders pointed to Peter saying, “This man is a Galilean, he must know him.” Then Peter began to swear and he exclaimed, “I do not know him!” Immediately, the crow of a rooster sounded through the courtyard. Peter remembered Jesus’ words, and he broke down and cried bitterly.

Rebecca: When Judas heard what to happen to Jesus, he repented and wanted to return the money. But Caiaphas wouldn't take it back – it was now blood money. Why did Judas betray Jesus? While we will never know for sure, it has been suggested that Judas tried to force Jesus to action, anticipating that he would lead the revolution the Jews so longed for. But whatever the case, Judas was filled with such grief and remorse, he went out and hanged himself. A casualty of his own decision.

Julie: The Jewish High Council wanted Jesus dead, but only the Roman government had the power to execute someone. They knew that blasphemy would not mean anything to a Roman official, but if Jesus claimed to be the Messiah, a king, it could be construed that Jesus wanted to start an insurrection. And that was punishable by crucifixion. So at 7:00 on Friday morning, Jesus was hauled off to the Antonia Fortress, the home and military compound of Pontius Pilate, Roman governor. There, the religious authorities accused him, “This man has been leading our people astray by telling them not to pay their taxes to the Roman government, and by claiming he is the Messiah, a king.” Pilate asked him, “Are you the king of the Jews?” Jesus replied, “You say so.” Pilate turned to the leading priests and to the crowd and said, “I find nothing wrong with this man!” Pilate wanted to let Jesus go, but they were insistent. So to satisfy their lust for blood, Pilate offered the crowd a choice between Jesus and a notorious murderer, Barabbas. Certain that the crowd would release Jesus, Pilate asked, “Who shall I release for you?” “Barabbas!” shouted the crowd. “What shall I do with Jesus?” They said, “Crucify him! Crucify him!”

Rebecca: Yes, the crowd that welcomed him on Sunday now condemned him. For his message was not “let's rise up and fight the Romans and end this oppression.” His message was “love your neighbor, pray for your enemies, go the extra mile.’ But no one wanted to hear this. So when the two men stood before the crowd – they chose the one symbolizing power, hate, and sin, over the one symbolizing love, peace, and goodness.

Julie: As Pilate pondered all this, his wife sent him a message begging that he have nothing to do with Jesus, as she had a terrible nightmare about him. However, the angry crowds were creating such chaos, that Pilate acquiesced to their demands, washed his hands of the decision, and handed Jesus over to be beaten and then crucified. It was the Roman custom to flog someone prior to crucifixion, to inflict as much pain as possible, while still keep them alive. Jesus was taken, stripped of his clothes and bound to a post where he would endure a horrible Roman flogging. Whips laced with fish hooks, glass, and metal

tore into and ripped his skin and muscle and bone. From there he was led by guards into the courtyard of the Governor's palace, where they were joined by hundreds of other soldiers, who jammed a crown of thorns on his head, threw a purple robe on him, spit at him and mocked him, until they had had enough of their sport. And around 9:00 that morning, they led him to be crucified.

Hymn: O Sacred Head, Now Wounded (vs. 1,2) 286

Rebecca: It was about 1/3 of mile to the hill where Jesus was to be crucified. We sometimes call it Calvary, from the Latin word, *Calvaria*, meaning "skull", or Golgotha, the Aramaic equivalent. Jesus, carrying the crossbeam of the cross, weighing close to one hundred pounds, and having just endured such torture, began to stumble and struggle as he climbed the hill to his death. A bystander, a foreigner from Africa, Simon, was pressed into service, to carry the cross for Jesus.

Julie: Once there, the soldiers hammered Jesus to the cross, with nails through his hands and feet, and he was lifted up for all to see. The only charge against him, "King of the Jews." Jesus, who had endured so much pain and humiliation, who had seen the evil of humanity at its worst, looks down from the cross at the soldiers gambling for his clothes, the priests with their smug looks, the crowd shouting out, "If you are the Son of God, save yourself." And with love and mercy that is beyond our understanding, prays to God, "Father, forgive them. For they do not know what they are doing." Two criminals who had also been charged were crucified at the same time. One mocked him along with the crowd, but the other, with humble repentance said, "We deserve to die, but this man is innocent. Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." And Jesus, looking at the man, assured him, "Today, you will be with me in paradise." Even this sinner experienced grace and mercy and was now welcomed into the kingdom.

Rebecca: One person who had to endure the pain of watching all this was Jesus' mother, Mary. And Jesus, wanted to make sure that his mother would be cared for after his death. So he said to his disciple, John. "Here is your mother," and to Mary, "Here is your son." At noon, the sky suddenly turned dark, and stayed that way until 3:00 that afternoon. Jesus, feeling like we all do when God sometimes seem silent, cried out with a loud voice, "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?" A little later, with blood and fluids having drained from his body, he said, "I thirst." Later, as his breathing became more difficult, and with his life slowly ebbing away, Jesus said, "It is finished." His mission was accomplished. God's plan for the salvation of the world was complete. Then, Jesus, with a loud voice called out, "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit." And he breathed his last.

Julie: Suddenly, the earth shook and rocks split, and the curtain in the temple that separated the people from the holy place of God was ripped in two. God's people would be separated from him no more. The Roman officer and other soldiers were terrified at the earthquake, and they said, "Surely this man truly was the Son of God."

Hymn: O Love Divine, What Hast thou Done (vs. 1,2) pg. 287

Rebecca: After this, Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus, asked Pilate for Jesus' body. Nicodemus also, who had first come to Jesus by night, came bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes. They took the body of Jesus, and wrapped it in linen cloths with the spices, as was the burial custom of the Jews. In the place where he was crucified, there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb where no one had ever been buried. So they laid Jesus there, and rolled a great stone across the entrance and left. Mary Magdalene and the other Mary and women who had followed him, saw where he was laid. Then, because it was now the Sabbath, they rested as required by the law.

Hymn: When I Survey the Wondrous Cross pg. 298