

Devotion – Week of April 10, 2022 – Sixth Week of Lent

Rev. Jeanne Simpson

We have begun the holiest week in Christendom with Palm Sunday, which quickly turns into Passion Sunday. This week we will walk with Jesus toward the cross, culminating in the reading of the Passion narrative at noon on Good Friday, when Luke says Jesus was crucified. The story of Jesus' arrest and death covers less than 24 hours, but the action is packed with increasing drama and violence. Jesus is arrested while in prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane and is taken to the house of Caiaphas, the High Priest. Then he is taken before the Jewish council, then Pilate, then Herod, and then Pilate again, who tries to set him free. But the crowd wants Barabbas, a rebel, instead. And Jesus' fate is sealed. He is crucified between two criminals, one who asks for forgiveness. And for 3 hours the sky grows darker and darker. When Jesus finally dies, the temple of the curtain is torn in two pieces, and a witness, a centurion announces, "Surely this man was innocent!" Meanwhile, the rabbis are slaughtering the Passover lambs for the final Passover feast at the beginning of Sabbath that evening.

The Passion narrative that we read on Good Friday ends with Jesus' burial in the tomb of a stranger, with the women watching. He must be buried hurriedly, because sundown is coming, and the Sabbath will begin soon. And then we begin the Easter Vigil, praying for Easter morning to come and show us once again that God triumphs after all, and takes his beloved Son back to heaven to sit in majesty.

Henri Nouwen has this to say about Holy Saturday:

On the seventh day of the week of our redemption, when Jesus had fulfilled all he was sent by his Father to do, he rested in the tomb, and the women whose hearts were broken with grief rested as well. Of all the days in history, Holy Saturday – the Saturday during which the body of Jesus lay in the tomb in silence and darkness behind the large stone that was rolled against its entrance – is the day of God's solitude. It is the day on which the whole creation waits in deep inner rest.

So we too will wait on Holy Saturday. We know that God is there, and we know that the results of God's presence in that tomb are already underway, even though we can't see them yet. Good Friday was a day of sadness and Easter Sunday is a day of joy. In between, Holy Saturday is a day to wait and watch.

So I invite you this week to pray as we come to three days that changed the world forever.

Jeanne