

Isaiah 50:4-9a; Philippians 2:5-11; Mark 15:1-39

Grace to you and peace from God who is who was and who is to come, Amen.

For those of us who come regularly to Saturday night you might remember a couple of weeks ago when Vicar Cheri was here, and she quoted from the musical *Jesus Christ Superstar*. Now I have to admit that I am one of those people who was of the age when it first came out back in the early 70's. When she began quoting those lyrics, I began singing along in my head, and it took me a couple of stanzas before I suddenly realized 'I am not paying attention to Vicar Cheri, I need to stop doing this' and then she quoted some more and once again I was off in my own little *Jesus Christ Superstar* world.

At the risk of causing some of you to do the same, let me quote from one of the songs. It is a song from *Jesus Christ Superstar* of Jesus' triumph entry into Jerusalem when the people are gathered and he is coming into town and they're singing:

"Ho-sanna, Hey-Sanna, Sanna Sanna Ho, sanna Hey, Sanna Ho, sanna
Hey JC, JC won't you smile at me?
Sanna Ho-sanna Hey
Superstar."

(Okay, everybody stop singing). In the musical, that's what the people sang as Jesus enters Jerusalem. They're excited, they're expectant, they're anticipating a change in the status quo. For those of us who know the musical, you might remember that Caiaphas then chimes in trying to calm the hoopla, to which Jesus responds:

"Why waste your breath moaning at the crowd?
Nothing can be done to stop the shouting.
If every tongue were still, the noise would still continue.
The rocks and stones themselves would start to sing."

The people were expecting a leader. They were waiting for a military man, the ultimate politician. The people, in Jerusalem at least, were looking for someone to come along and kick some Roman butt. They've heard about the way that Jesus questioned the religious authority; they've heard about the way that he healed; they've learned about his compassion for John the Baptizer, who by this point has long been since beheaded. John the Baptizer who the people loved dearly and understand to be a prophet.

Now in some ways, Jesus lives up to their expectations. He clears out the temple, he continues to teach and heal and confront the religious authorities. But he's NOT leading a head on assault on the occupying foreign army. And that lack of immediate action is part of what causes the crowds, the general population of Jerusalem, to turn on him, to become disgruntled with him, and will soon be crying out for the release not of Jesus, but of Barabbas.

In Mark's gospel, the two snippets that we heard tonight, from Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem in chapter 11 with the waving of palms as we heard a few moments ago, the next several chapters Jesus goes about cursing a fig tree, cleaning out the temple, discussing about the cursed fig tree. He has his authority questioned, he teaches some parables, one about the wicked tenants. He answers some general questions about the resurrection. He's asked for and replies about what is the greatest commandment. He denounces the scribes, the religious authorities who are too caught up in following the Letter of the Law, but totally ignoring the Spirit of the Law. He talks about things that are to come, the destruction of Solomon's temple; the persecution of believers; the coming of the Son of Man (which is code for "The Savior") and he reminds people to keep a lookout.

In Chapter 14, we have that story where Jesus is anointed by an unknown woman with expensive oil. Oil that is often used in that day to cover up the smell of a decaying corpse. Jesus shares a final meal with his disciples. Judas agrees to, and then does, betray Jesus to the religious authorities. Peter is warned and then goes about denying his friendship with Jesus. Jesus prays in a local park where he is arrested and handed over to go through a mockery of a trial. All that is what is going on between the beginning of Chapter 11 and what we heard tonight in Chapter 15.

I started out talking about that musical *Jesus Christ, Superstar*. As I have gotten older and stronger in my faith, and read a whole lot more of scripture, I realized that there were some problems with that musical, some from a historical point of view, and some from a theological point of view. But the one thing about the musical that I do want to point out to us tonight is that when he entered Jerusalem, when he did all of those things that I just mentioned; when he was on trial and as he hung there on the cross, throughout all of Mark's gospel, Jesus is never referred to as "Christ" until after the resurrection. Andrew Lloyd Weber got that wrong. To the folk in Jerusalem, Jesus was at first, they anticipated revolutionary and then simply, a failed insurgent.

And so we end our story tonight with this Jesus, this son of Mary and Joseph, this Jesus who has been betrayed by his friend Judas, denied by his follower Peter, we leave him alone, naked, beaten, and scorned. We leave him on a blood stained cross and we leave him wondering to ourselves: What do we do Now?

Amen.

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