

Sermons and Sermon - Lectionary Resources
Palm / Passion Sunday - Year B

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The following is a more or less complete liturgy and sermon for the upcoming Sunday. Hymn numbers, designated as VU are found in the United Church of Canada Hymnal "Voices United". SFPG is "Songs For A Gospel People", also available from the UCC.

The Liturgy is by Richard J. Fairchild. The Homily is by Bob Henderson, St. James' Episcopal Church, Central Gulf Coast, Mon, Mar 17, 1997; as sent to Ecunet - Sermonshop Sermons

PALM-PASSION SUNDAY WORSHIP SERVICE

PRAISING WITH PALMS

* WORDS OF WELCOME AND CALL TO WORSHIP

L: Good Morning

P: **Good Morning**

L: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God,
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

P: **And also with you.**

* ANNOUNCEMENTS

A warm welcome to all of you this morning. Today is the Sixth Sunday in Lent. Today we celebrate the entry of Jesus into Jerusalem at the beginning of what is now called Holy Week . Following the ancient tradition of the Christian Church we follow the events of the week in this worship service, beginning with the Palm Processional and ending with the reading of the Gospel narrative of the trial and the crucifixion of our Lord. Children will be invited to go out to classes after our Palm Sunday songs and readings . After we will have a reading of the entire passion story as it is found in the Gospel According to Mark with appropriate songs. Time permitting I will say a few words - but otherwise we will continue in prayer. May God bless you in through his word and in your meditations.....

Other announcements as necessary....

* HYMN: Tell Me The Stories of Jesus

- VU 357

CALL TO WORSHIP:

L The Lord be with you.

P **And also with you.**

L Today we recall the events of the first Holy Week so many years ago.

P **We remember how it started with Jesus entering the Holy City and we recall how it ended with his death outside Jerusalem's gates.**

L: This is how it began:

--- (A READING FROM MARK 11:1-10) ---

When they were approaching Jerusalem, at Bethphage and Bethany, near the Mount of Olives, Jesus called two of his disciples and said to them, "Go into the village ahead of you, and immediately as you enter it, you will find tied there a colt that has never been ridden; untie it and bring it to me. If anyone says to you, 'Why are you doing this?' just say this, 'The Lord needs it and will send it back here immediately.'"

They went away and found a colt tied near a door, outside in the street. As they were untying it, some bystanders said to them, "What are you doing, untying the colt?" They told them what Jesus had said; and the bystanders allowed them to take it. Then they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks on it; and he sat on it. Many people spread their cloaks on the road, and others spread leafy branches that they had cut in the fields. 9 Then those who went ahead and those who followed were shouting, "Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the coming kingdom of our ancestor David! Hosanna in the highest heaven!"

ANTHEM: He Came Riding On A Donkey (VU 124)

* THE BENEDICTUS (PLEASE STAND)

L Lord God, as did the people of Jerusalem before us, we cry to you, saying:

P **Hosanna - blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord. Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David! Hosanna in the highest!**

* UNISON PRAYER OF INVOCATION:

L Let us pray.

P **Help us, O Lord, to welcome your blessed Son into our midst with the same joy and hope that the people of Jerusalem received him with so long ago. May he abide with us and we with him. Help us to praise and adore both Him and You, not just for a single day, but for ever and ever -- Amen.**

* PALM SUNDAY DOXOLOGY (Tune: Praise God From Whom...)

***Praise to our God, wave high the palm
Praise to Christ Jesus God's own Son,***

***Praise to the Spirit we now sing
For in our hearts hosannas ring.***

PALM - PASSION LITANY

- L The people welcomed Jesus into their midst. Their hosannas rang out, they called upon him as a saviour, a mighty king.
- P **They hoped that the he would cast the oppressors out of their land and bring the nation glory and honour.**
- L It was a special moment - a time of celebration, a time of anticipation, a time when people felt that they would receive a new life.
- P **It was to offer us this that Jesus came. But God's ways are not our ways, nor are his thoughts our thoughts.**
- L Our worship today recognizes this fact and we rejoice in it.
- P **Blessed be the one who comes in the name of the Lord.**

HYMN: The Day He Came Riding Into Town
(tune - When Johnny Comes Marching Home)

The day he came riding into town (hurrah! hurrah!),
His people tore the branches down (hurrah! hurrah!).
They cheered his name with voices loud,
And everyone joined the chanting crowd,
"May the king be blessed; he comes in the name of God!"

The day he came riding into town (hurrah! hurrah!),
He threw the sellers' tables down (hurrah! hurrah!).
"God's house should be a place of prayer
But you've made a haunt of pirates there!"
And he speaks with fire who comes in the name of God!

The day he came riding into town (hurrah! hurrah!),
It caused the men of power to frown (hurrah! hurrah!).
"We have our laws! We have our ways!
We need no king to rule our days!
We denounce his right to come in the name of God!"

The day he came riding into town (hurrah! hurrah!),
He offered love and not a crown (hurrah! hurrah!).
His song of peace could not be heard
For they wanted a throne and not a word,
And the word was "life", new life in the name of God.

(* Children Go To Classes Now)

THE PASSION STORY

Reading: Mark 14:01-10 and MARK 14:11-21

It was two days before the Passover and the festival of Unleavened Bread. The chief priests and the scribes were looking

for a way to arrest Jesus by stealth and kill him; for they said, "Not during the festival, or there may be a riot among the people."

While Jesus was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he sat at the table, a woman came with an alabaster jar of very costly ointment of nard, and she broke open the jar and poured the ointment on his head. But some were there who said to one another in anger, "Why was the ointment wasted in this way? For this ointment could have been sold for more than three hundred denarii, and the money given to the poor." And they scolded her.

But Jesus said, "Let her alone; why do you trouble her? She has performed a good service for me. For you always have the poor with you, and you can show kindness to them whenever you wish; but you will not always have me with you. She has done what she could; she has anointed my body beforehand for its burial. Truly I tell you, wherever the good news is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in remembrance of her."

Then Judas Iscariot, who was one of the twelve, went to the chief priests in order to betray Jesus to them. When they heard it, they were greatly pleased, and promised to give him money. So he began to look for an opportunity to betray him.

On the first day of Unleavened Bread, when the Passover lamb is sacrificed, Jesus' disciples said to him, "Where do you want us to go and make the preparations for you to eat the Passover?" So he sent two of his disciples, saying to them, "Go into the city, and a man carrying a jar of water will meet you; follow him, and wherever he enters, say to the owner of the house, 'The Teacher asks, Where is my guest room where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?' He will show you a large room upstairs, furnished and ready. Make preparations for us there." So the disciples set out and went to the city, and found everything as Jesus had told them; and they prepared the Passover meal.

When it was evening, he came with the twelve. And when they had taken their places and were eating, Jesus said, "Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me, one who is eating with me." The disciples began to be distressed and to say to him one after another, "Surely, not I?" Jesus said to them, "It is one of the twelve, one who is dipping bread into the bowl with me. For the Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that one by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that one not to have been born."

HYMN: Ride On, Ride On In Majesty

- Vu 127

Reading: MARK 14:22-31 and MARK 14:32-42

While they were eating, Jesus took a loaf of bread and after blessing it he broke it, and gave it to his disciples, and said, "Take, this is my body." Then Jesus took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, and all of them drank from it. He said to them, "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many. Truly I tell you, I will never again drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God."

When they had sung the Passover hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. And Jesus said to them, "You will all become deserters; for it is written, 'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.' But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee." Peter said to him, "Even though all become deserters, I will not." Jesus said to him, "Truly I tell you, this day, this very night, before the cock crows twice, you will deny me three times." But Peter said vehemently, "Even though I must die with you, I will not deny you." And all of them said the same.

They went to a place called Gethsemane; and Jesus said to his disciples, "Sit here while I pray." And He took with him Peter and James and John, and began to be distressed and agitated. And said to them, "I am deeply grieved, even to death; remain here, and keep awake." And going a little farther, he threw himself on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. He said, "Abba, Father, for you all things are possible; remove this cup from me; yet, not what I want, but what you want." Then Jesus came and found his disciples sleeping; and he said to Peter, "Simon, are you asleep? Could you not keep awake one hour? Keep awake and pray that you may not come into the time of trial; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." And again Jesus went away and prayed, saying the same words. And once more he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were very heavy; and they did not know what to say to him. He came a third time and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? Enough! The hour has come; the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Get up, let us be going. See, my betrayer is at hand."

HYMN: Go To Dark Gethsemane

- Red 451

Reading: MARK 14:43-65 and MARK 14:66 - 15:21

Immediately, while Jesus was still speaking, Judas, one of the twelve, arrived; and with him there was a crowd with swords and clubs, from the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders. Now the betrayer had given them a sign, saying, "The one I will kiss is the man; arrest him and lead him away under guard." So when he came, he went up to Jesus at once and said, "Rabbi!" and kissed him. Then they laid hands on him and arrested him. But

one of those who stood near drew his sword and struck the slave of the high priest, cutting off his ear. Then Jesus said to them, "Have you come out with swords and clubs to arrest me as though I were a bandit? Day after day I was with you in the temple teaching, and you did not arrest me. But let the scriptures be fulfilled." All of them deserted him and fled.

A certain young man was following Jesus, wearing nothing but a linen cloth. They caught hold of him, but he left the linen cloth and ran off naked.

They took Jesus to the high priest; and all the chief priests, the elders, and the scribes were assembled. Peter had followed him at a distance, right into the courtyard of the high priest; and he was sitting with the guards, warming himself at the fire. Now the chief priests and the whole council were looking for testimony against Jesus to put him to death; but they found none. For many gave false testimony against him, and their testimony did not agree. Some stood up and gave false testimony against him, saying, "We heard him say, 'I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and in three days I will build another, not made with hands.'" But even on this point their testimony did not agree. Then the high priest stood up before them and asked Jesus, "Have you no answer? What is it that they testify against you?" But Jesus was silent and did not answer. Again the high priest asked him, "Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?" Jesus said, "I am; and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of the Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven." Then the high priest tore his clothes and said, "Why do we still need witnesses? You have heard his blasphemy! What is your decision?" All of them condemned Jesus as deserving death. Some began to spit on him, to blindfold him, and to strike him, saying to him, "Prophecy!" The guards also took him and beat him.

While Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant-girls of the high priest came by. When she saw Peter warming himself, she stared at him and said, "You also were with Jesus, the man from Nazareth." But Peter denied it, saying, "I do not know or understand what you are talking about." And he went out into the forecourt. Then the cock crowed. And the servant-girl, on seeing him, began again to say to the bystanders, "This man is one of them." But again Peter denied it. Then after a little while the bystanders again said to Peter, "Certainly you are one of them; for you are a Galilean." But Peter began to curse, and he swore an oath, "I do not know this man you are talking about." At that moment the cock crowed for the second time. Then Peter remembered that Jesus had said to him, "Before the cock crows twice, you will deny me three times." And he broke down and wept."

As soon as it was morning, the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council. They bound Jesus, led him away, and handed him over to Pilate. Pilate asked him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" Jesus answered him, "You say so." Then the chief priests accused him of many things. Pilate asked him again, "Have you no answer? See how many charges they bring against you." But Jesus made no further reply, so that Pilate was amazed.

Now at the festival Pilate used to release a prisoner for them, anyone for whom they asked. Now a man called Barabbas was in prison with the rebels who had committed murder during the insurrection. So the crowd came and began to ask Pilate to do for them according to his custom. Then he answered them, "Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?" For he realized that it was out of jealousy that the chief priests had handed Jesus over to him. But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have him release Barabbas for them instead. Pilate spoke to them again, "Then what do you wish me to do with the man you call the King of the Jews?" They shouted back, "Crucify him!" Pilate asked them, "Why, what evil has he done?" But they shouted all the more, "Crucify him!" So Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd, released Barabbas for them; and after flogging Jesus, he handed him over to be crucified.

Then the soldiers led him into the courtyard of the palace (that is, the governor's headquarters); and they called together the whole cohort. And they clothed Jesus in a purple cloak; and after twisting some thorns into a crown, they put it on him. And they began saluting him, "Hail, King of the Jews!" They struck his head with a reed, spat upon him, and knelt down in homage to him. After mocking him, they stripped him of the purple cloak and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him out to crucify him. They compelled a passer-by, who was coming in from the country, to carry his cross; it was Simon of Cyrene, the father of Alexander and Rufus.

HYMN: Alone Thou Goest Forth

- Red 454

Reading: MARK 15:22-41 and MARK 15:42-47

Then they brought Jesus to the place called Golgotha (which means the place of a skull). And they offered him wine mixed with myrrh; but he did not take it. And they crucified him, and divided his clothes among them, casting lots to decide what each should take.

It was nine o'clock in the morning when they crucified him. The inscription of the charge against him read, "The King of the Jews." With him they crucified two bandits, one on his right and one on his left. Those who passed by derided him, shaking their heads and saying, "Aha! You who would destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself, and come down from the

cross!" In the same way the chief priests, along with the scribes, were also mocking him among themselves and saying, "He saved others; he cannot save himself. Let the Messiah, the King of Israel, come down from the cross now, so that we may see and believe." Those who were crucified with him also taunted him.

When it was noon, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. At three o'clock Jesus cried out with a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?" which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" When some of the bystanders heard it, they said, "Listen, he is calling for Elijah." And someone ran, filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on a stick, and gave it to him to drink, saying, "Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to take him down." Then Jesus gave a loud cry and breathed his last. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. Now when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that in this way he breathed his last, he said, "Truly this man was God's Son!"

There were also women looking on from a distance; among them were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joses, and Salome. These used to follow him and provided for him when he was in Galilee; and there were many other women who had come up with him to Jerusalem.

When evening had come, and since it was the day of Preparation, that is, the day before the Sabbath, Joseph of Arimathea, a respected member of the council, who was also himself waiting expectantly for the kingdom of God, went boldly to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate wondered if he were already dead; and summoning the centurion, he asked him whether Jesus had been dead for some time. When he learned from the centurion that he was dead, he granted the body to Joseph. Then Joseph bought a linen cloth, and taking down the body, wrapped it in the linen cloth, and laid it in a tomb that had been hewn out of the rock. He then rolled a stone against the door of the tomb. Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Jesus saw where the body was laid."

HYMN: Where You There? (Verses 1-5)

- Red 460

Silent Prayer

RESPONDING TO THE LOVE OF GOD

SHARING GOD'S BLESSING: The Offering, Doxology (singing Red #290)
& Responsive Prayer of Dedication

L We thank you Father for Jesus Christ,

P **Who for our sake became poor that we might be rich. We thank you that he gave himself up to death that we might rise to life.**

L Accept our gifts of thanksgiving now O Lord.

P **Use both them and us that they might bring blessings unto your name. We ask it in the name of our crucified redeemer, Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.**

REFLECTION ON THE WORD OF GOD

The following is the file of Bob Henderson, St. James' Episcopal Church, Central Gulf Coast, as sent to sermonshop on Mon, Mar 17, 1997 (Bob_Henderson.parti@ecunet.org) SERMON: Psalm Sunday, Year B, TEXT: Mk 15:21-22 - Simon of Cyrene

It's only about 800 miles as the crow flies, but, because the coast of north Africa curves south, before coming back north, by foot, it's more like 1100.

He may have been rich enough to take a ship, but he probably walked every step of the way from Cyrene to Jerusalem.

If he made good time, 3 miles an hour, across the harsh, dry sandy reaches of north Africa, through Alexandria, across the Nile delta, up through what is now the Suez, to Jerusalem, it probably took Simon of Cyrene two months of walking to get to Jerusalem.

But, because of the uncertainties of travel: the need to wait for a large group to travel with, weather, stops along the way, he probably left in early January, just to be sure he didn't miss Passover in Jerusalem

Passover in Jerusalem! Something every Jew wants, every Jew strives and saves for, to eat the Passover meal in Jerusalem.

And there he was, Simon of Cyrene mingling with the crowd, drinking in the sights, the temple, the pilgrims, the sounds of celebration, the sounds of Passover in Jerusalem.

As the crowd pushed and shoved and jostled in the narrow streets he saw the procession coming. "What this time?", he must have thought as he strained to see over the heads of those around him. Then, as he saw the Roman soldier leading the way, and got a glimpse of the tattered dirty men carrying their crosses, he realized - no temple or Passover procession, only criminals going to execution.

Then, as he turned to leave, just as he turned to go on about his Passover business, Simon of Cyrene felt the tap, saw the flat part of a Roman spear, tapping him on the shoulder, and he froze.

"Why me? Why now, why couldn't they just go on by?"

But he knew he had no choice. Any person, any time, anywhere, could be impressed, drafted to do the Roman's bidding, simply by the tap of a spear on the shoulder.

Can't we all imagine the bitterness, the resentment Simon must have felt. How it must have swelled up inside, how much he must have hated the Romans and that dirty criminal! To have come so far for the event of a life-time, carefully planned so as not to waste a moment, and, suddenly, become a beast of burden for the Romans and this criminal.

Why me, Lord, Why did this have to happen to me? I've saved, I've sacrificed, I've prayed to be here. Why this right now? I don't deserve this!!

Those must have been his thoughts as he shouldered the cross and moved on with the procession on to Golgotha.

Those thoughts are not unique to Simon. We see them reflected on the cross: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

We see Simon's thoughts reflected in us, in our lives, when things big & small don't go right, when there is pain, suffering, grief. Why me? Why now? I don't deserve this! Why have you forsaken me?

Simon's pilgrimage, This Holy Week, This Palm Sunday, all begin with such excitement, such promise -- and suddenly, so quickly, move to such depths of despair we can hardly comprehend it.

And, like we do in our own lives when promise turns to despair, we wonder how and why it happened: We see a man hanging on a cross - and we know - he didn't deserve it.

The despair of the crucifixion reaches out and touches our lives this week, just like it reached out and touched Simon's.

The shadow of the crucifixion - Christ's pain - our failures - our shattered dreams - our dead or dying loved ones - our own death -- reach out and touch us, deeply and profoundly.

That's where we are left on this Passion Sunday - with our despair, with Christ's despair, betrayed, forsaken, broken & alone, waiting....

SILENCE -- AMEN

FAVOURITE HYMN OR ANTHEM: "Ride On, Ride On, The Time Is Right" (VU 126)

PRAYING WITH THE SCRIPTURES: from Philippians 2:5-11

L Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus.

P **Who, being in the form of God,
did not consider equality with God something to be grasped,**

**but made himself nothing,
taking the form of a servant,
being made in human likeness.**

L And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself
and became obedient to death, even death on a cross.

P **Therefore God exalted him to the highest place
and gave him the name that is above every name.
That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
And every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord
to the glory of God the Father.**

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Eternal Father - grant unto us a humility like of Christ Jesus - and grant that we may ever obey and serve him and show love for one another as he has shown love to us. Put in our minds and our hearts his eternal example and guide us in the way of peace..... Lord hear our prayer....

Lord God - help us be ones who care for those who suffer. Make us remember that those who are afflicted are often innocent of wrong doing - and that those who are persecuted are often without sin. Help us to have a heart of compassion, a tongue that utters words of forgiveness, and hands that perform works of healing.... Lord hear our prayer....

Make us ever mindful, O God of the sin that leads to death and of the righteousness that leads to life. And help us place our trust in you and in the one who died that we might live - we ask it in his name, saying, even as he taught us - OUR FATHER.....

* HYMN: O Love That Wilt Not Let Me Go - SFGP 110

* COMMISSIONING (unison): ***In the power of the Holy Spirit, we now go forth into the world - to fulfil our calling as the people of God, the Body of Christ.***

* BENEDICTION

Go in peace, love and care for one another in the name of Christ, - and may God be gracious unto you according the riches of his mercy in Christ Jesus - may his love flow forth abundantly upon you
- and may his eternal faithfulness give you strength for each and every day
- Amen

* THREE-FOLD AMEN AND CHORAL BLESSING: "Go Now In Peace" - SFGP 67