

LENT: IN FAITH WE JOURNEY WITH JESUS

Sunday of the Passion

Palm Sunday

April 1, 2007

Procession with Palms:

Luke 19:28-40

Liturgy of the Passion:

Isaiah 50:4-9a

Psalms 31:9-16

Philippians 2:5-11

Luke 22:14—23:56 or Luke 23:1-49

In God's Hands

Psalm 31 is closely associated with Passion Sunday inasmuch as it is a plea for protection (verse 1) from those who are plotting murder (v. 13). Verses 9-13 form the lament portion of the psalm, grieving the overwhelming difficulties of life and praying for God's intervention. Verse 14 then introduces an expression of trust, and verses 15 and 16 are pleas once again for deliverance from the persecutors. The references to whispering and terror (verse 13) parallel the lament of Jeremiah (20:10); and in a pattern similar to Jeremiah's prayer (20:7-18), the psalm alternates petitions for the LORD's help with expressions of trust. Just as Jeremiah turns his cause over to God (20:12), so, too, does the psalmist declare trust in God with the words "my life is in your hands" (verse 15, *CEV*).

Jesus knew that his life was in his Father's hands. His prayer in the garden affirmed his willingness to do his Father's will (Luke 22:42). His entry into Jerusalem would bring about the culmination of his mission. In Luke's Gospel, 9:51 marks a turning point: "Not long before it was time for Jesus to be taken up to heaven, he made up his mind to go to Jerusalem" (*CEV*), the city over which its destruction he cried (Luke 19:41-44), and the place where he said prophets are killed (Luke 13:33). His resolve to go to Jerusalem is a journey from which he cannot be deterred, even by those who warn him of danger (Luke 13:31). The words from today's reading in Isaiah are echoed in Jesus' trust in God: "So I refuse to give up, because I know God will never let me down" (50:7b, *CEV*).

As Jesus rode into Jerusalem and crowds shouted their praises (Luke 19:38), he knew that, days later, other crowds would be shouting for his death by crucifixion. The words from Psalm 31 are haunting: "My enemies insult me. ... People meet me on the street, and they turn and run" (verse 11, *CEV*).

On this Palm Sunday, as we shout our “Hosannas,” will we choose to remain faithful to the One who sacrificed his life for us? Or will we enjoy the celebration for a while and then, when faced with hard times and testing, be like those who choose to turn and run? May we resolve to live our lives in service to God and one another, ready to offer ourselves as “a living sacrifice, pure and pleasing” (Romans 12:1, *CEV*). May our prayer be the words of the psalmist: “But I trust you, LORD, and I claim you as my God” (31:14, *CEV*). Our lives are in God’s hands.

This week’s Reflection was prepared by Barbara Bernstengel, who serves on the staff of the American Bible Society as Director of the Education Unit in the Nida Institute for Biblical Scholarship.

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This week we remember to pray for the work of the Bible Societies in: Denmark – With thanks to God that the New Testament has been recorded onto CD, and with prayers for the progress of Denmark’s HIV/AIDS projects in Africa, and with prayers for guidance in reaching the people of Greenland and the Faroe Islands with Scriptures; **Netherlands** – With thanks to God for the completion of the Youth Bible, for those who have joined the youth Bible-A-Month Club, and for the success of Bible Week, and with prayers for the ability to reach young people with the *Lifetrailer* project; **Iceland** – With thanks to God for the completion of the new Icelandic Bible, and with prayers for increased knowledge and use of the Bible and for the new programs designed to encourage Bible reading..

Activity Corner: Relive the Passion Story
Supplies needed: Bible, bookmark

Throughout Holy Week, read (or re-read) the story of Jesus’ Passion as recorded in Luke’s Gospel. Invite a different members of your household to read the assigned passage each day, or consider reading the passages dramatically by assigning parts to members of your household (narrator, Jesus, donkey owner, disciples, Pharisees, Judas, Peter, John, servant girl, Pilate, high priest, chief priests/teachers, two criminals, Roman officer) and having everyone together reading the words of the crowd.

Sunday	Luke 19:28-48
Monday	Luke 20:1-19
Tuesday	Luke 22:1-34
Wednesday	Luke 22:35-71
Thursday	Luke 23:1-25
Friday	Luke 23:26-49
Saturday	Luke 23:50-56