March 25, 2021

Lectionary Passages:

Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29

Deuteronomy 16:1-8

Philippians 2:1-11

Selected Verses:

O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good;  
    his steadfast love endures forever!

Let Israel say,  
    “His steadfast love endures forever.” – Psalm 118: 1-2

Observe the month of Abib by keeping the Passover to the Lord your God, for in the month of Abib the Lord your God brought you out of Egypt by night. You shall offer the Passover sacrifice to the Lord your God, from the flock and the herd, at the place that the Lord will choose as a dwelling for his name. – Deuteronomy 16: 1-2

If then there is any encouragement in Christ, any consolation from love, any sharing in the Spirit, any compassion and sympathy, make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. – Philippians 2: 1-2

Devotional:

The daily lectionary is based on the Sunday lectionary passages. Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday look back to the previous Sunday passages. Thursday, Friday and Saturday look forward to the coming Sunday passages. Since I am not a lectionary preacher, usually my sermon passages do not align with the daily lectionary. Yet, Lent is a time looking forward to the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. We look within to see our sin and need of a savior; we look to God for forgiveness and guidance. So, while I have been looking at Holy Week from the gospel of Luke during my Lenten sermon series, the topics have been similar.

This Sunday is Palm Sunday, or Passion Sunday. Traditionally, we have the children walk in with palm branches remembering Jesus’ triumphal entry. As I preached on Jesus entering Jerusalem at the start of Lent, I will be focusing on Passion Sunday this weekend. Today’s passages focus more on the passion of Jesus than the triumphal entry.

In the Passover meal, Jesus gave new meaning to the Passover from Deuteronomy. AS the Israelites were called to remember their coming out of Egypt, in Jesus, we remember being brought out of sin and bondage. In the bread and the cup, we remember Jesus being the lamb of God who took away the sins of the world.

In Scripture, there are many titles for Jesus: Messiah, Christ, Lord, Master, Savior, to name a few. Yet, in Philippians 2, Paul gives us an early hymn of the church. Jesus dropped all the titles. Jesus left his heavenly throne and became human. As a side not, today is March 25, or Annunciation Day. Christmas is nine months from today. So, today we remember the day the angel came to Mary in Luke 1:26-38. Jesus became human and dwelt amongst us. Today we celebrate the unexpected pregnancy of Mary. She began preparing for the birth of Jesus.

In the hymn, we are told that Jesus became human, not to lord it over us. He did not come to take the official titles. Instead, the name he chose most often was “Son of Man.” Jesus became one of us. He emptied himself to the point of death, and death on the cross. What happened during Holy Week, and Jesus going to the cross was an act of being obedient to God. It did not happen by accident. Jesus’ sacrifice as the lamb of God was God’s ultimate plan for salvation from the beginning of time.

As Paul opened the hymn, he called the followers of Jesus (you and me) to have the same mind as Christ. There are many things about ourselves that we cannot change. Yet, we can change our minds. We can choose what where we have our focus. Paul calls us to have our focus on Christ. To constantly live as Christ lived. Obedient to the call of God for our lives. To humble ourselves and follow God where God is leading us.

I was once told that it is the hymns that shape our view of God more than any sermon. The sermons I preach may be remembered for a week at most. Yet, we sing hymns and songs over and over again. Paul gave us an early church hymn focusing on the life of Jesus. The message of God’s salvation can be found in this hymn. Maybe today, you can spend some time learning this hymn of salvation. For as the hymns ends, Jesus life (and ours) is focused on the glory of God the Father.

Prayer:

Holy God, we have taken Jesus’ sacrifice too lightly. You cleansed your temple to become a house of prayer. All too often, we clutter our lives with the concerns of this world instead of following your path to the cross. Forgive us for our hesitant steps in following you to the cross. Guard us from small denials and convenient betrayals. Make us ready to go where you lead, willing to love this world in Jesus’ name. Amen.