

GRACE EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Sheboygan, Wisconsin

Palm Sunday (Passion Sunday)[C]

Isaiah 50.4-9a

Psalm 31.9-16

Philippians 2.5-11

Luke 22.14-23.49

Isaiah 50.4-9a

- 1) This lesson comes from the second part of Isaiah (chs. 40-55), which is thought to have been written by an author different from that of the first section.
 - a) The oracles in the first section predate the exile of the Jews; those of the second are addressed to people already in exile in Babylon.
 - i) The second section oracles, “Deutero-Isaiah,” are focused, therefore, more on hope and redemption.
- 2) The present verses come from one of the “Servant Songs,” in which the Servant (the one who executes the will of God) declares that he speaks for the LORD.
 - a) Like the prophets before him, the Servant is ignored and even maltreated (*cf.* 49.4).
 - i) He sets his face “like flint”. This uses an expression from prophetic literature (Isa. 48.4; Jer. 1.8, 18; Ezek. 3.8-9; *cf.* Luke 9.51, in which Jesus is described as setting His face toward Jerusalem).
 - (1) The use of the expression is all the more striking here, for describing a face covered with spittle.
- 3) The prophet invokes courtroom imagery (of vindication and contention, as found in ch. 41) to make clear that those who contend cannot prevail, for the prophet speaks for the LORD.

Psalm 31.9-16

- 1) An individual lament. The verses selected here focus on lament. The use of this psalm for Palm Sunday makes clear that even as He enters Jerusalem in triumph, and to acclaim, that Jesus knows full well the fate which awaits Him.
- 2) The Fathers of the Church held this psalm (in its entirety) to refer to the crucifixion. Psalm 22 is also frequently cited as specific in its reference to the crucifixion.

Philippians 2.5-11

- 1) The famous “Christ Hymn” is distinguished by its rhythmic character, use of parallelism (as in the Old Testament, particularly the Psalms), and by the occurrence of rare and uncharacteristic language.
 - a) This has led some to believe that the hymn was written originally in Aramaic, and is older than Paul, having been composed at the very start of the Church in Jerusalem.
- 2) The hymn has a two fold structure, following the introduction in v. 5:
 - a) Vv. 6-8 describe Christ’s abasement.
 - b) Vv. 9-11 describe His exaltation.
- 3) Christ was in the “form of God” (*en morphé theou*). *Morphé* denotes the essential mode of being by which the essential character or status of something is known.
 - a) Christ enjoyed a divine way of being.

- 4) In His exaltation, Jesus is given dominion over all. This despite His abasement to the lowest form of death, on a cross.
 - a) At His Name every knee should bend. This is a reference to Isa. 45.23, where the LORD says, “to me every knee shall bow.” Thus the universal worship due to God alone is to be given to Jesus.
 - i) Worship is universal: in heaven, on earth and under the earth.
 - (1) This reflects the complete cosmogony of Paul’s world.
 - (2) God’s sovereignty and glory is reclaimed through Christ.

Luke 22.14-23.56

- 1) Two major sections are found in this Passion story: Jesus is faithful but the disciples abandon Him during His trial; and to the end the innocent Jesus associates with sinners.
 - a) He and His disciples are contrasted in prayer (in the garden).
 - b) His fidelity to those whom He has chosen is contrasted with the infidelity of Judas Iscariot.
 - c) His fidelity is contrasted with Peter’s abandonment of Him.
 - i) Luke uses extreme irony. Right after one of Jesus’ prophecies has been fulfilled (the cock crows after Peter has denied knowing Jesus three times) is when the soldiers abuse Him and mock Him, crying “prophesy!”
 - ii) Jesus is never accused of blasphemy in His trial (in Luke). The soldiers who mock Him are now blaspheming.
- 2) At His trial, while apparently powerless, Jesus foretells God’s vindication of Him and His ministry. This is the Church’s confession of Jesus as Lord.
- 3) At the Cross, Jesus, as the rejected prophet, calls for repentance. He prays for the sinners He is amongst.
 - a) The common people gaze on the events of His crucifixion with sympathy.
 - b) The religious leaders scoff at Him.
 - i) Their scoffing, “Christ of God,” “Chosen One,” “King of the Jews” all refers to truth that they do not see.
 - ii) The “good thief” *confesses* Jesus’ Name, when He asks Him by name to deliver him to His kingdom.
- 4) Darkness descends at Jesus’ death.
 - a) Darkness accompanies judgment, at the Day of the LORD, in Joel 2.31 and Amos 8.9.
 - i) God’s judgment against evil accompanies Jesus’ death.
 - ii) The Temple veil is torn in two because in Jesus all now have access to God.
- 5) “Father, into your hands ...”: This is also based on a psalm (31.5) in which the innocently suffering righteous one extols God’s salvation.
 - a) The fact that the centurion confesses Jesus, together with the common folk in the crowd, means that salvation is now universal.