

V LENT 2014
SERMON – CHRIST CHURCH PARISH
FATHER CRAIG LOONEY
HEBREWS 9.11



Passiontide...is about the passion...the suffering Jesus had to endure...to set us free from sin and death...and open up for everyone the gate of heaven...and the possibility of enjoying life everlasting with him.

Jesus gave everything he had for us...he gave his life for us because there was no other good enough to pay the price we should have paid. It was for us he was born...it was for us he was baptized...it was for us he was tempted...it was for us he suffered...it was for us he died. And it was for us he Rose again. It was all for us!

Our liturgical reenactments during Holy Week are what we can do for Jesus. They are the best we have to offer to God as we try to experience in some way the Passion...the suffering...Jesus endured for us. We should try to imagine the events of that first Holy Week are taking place now, in this place. This is Jerusalem...and we are there with the crowd at the city limits

When we take our blessed palms in hand and process around the church on Palm Sunday, we will see Jesus riding on the donkey, and we will remember the prophet Zechariah said the King would come to his people in this humble way. At first we will sing with the crowd, "All glory and honor to you, King Jesus"...because he has come to save us. Later in the Liturgy we will become role players in the Passion Story from Matthew, and we join with the rest of the crowd and shout, "Crucify him."

Our "Walk in Jerusalem" on Wednesday will be far different from the one we will take on Palm Sunday. We will try to imagine the dusty road as we walk with Jesus on his final journey to the cross. We will watch him fall...we will fall too. We will see his tears...the tears of his mother...and we will cry too. We will remind ourselves he is doing this for us...and we are doing this for him...we must do our part...it is the cost to us for following him.

Jesus commands us to love each other as much as he loves us. It is a command...not an option or a suggestion. We move forward to the first Maundy Thursday and we will try to imagine we are sitting with Jesus and the disciples having a meal together...not an ordinary meal...but a meal Jesus says is his own living Body and Blood. We will sing "Glory be to God on High"...not heard at Mass since the Last Sunday of Epiphany.

After Mass, the remaining consecrated bread...the Body of Christ...will be taken in a solemn procession to the Altar of Repose, which will become our own Garden of Gethsemane. And we will watch as the High Altar is stripped bare and washed...the tomb is being made ready. The lights

will be turned off and we will leave the church in darkness and silence. But Jesus will ask us to do one more thing...stay with him for just one hour. Will we?

Good Friday is the liturgical re-enactment of the conclusion of the Passion of Jesus...we will witness his ultimate act love for us...God's sacrifice of himself for us. We will try to imagine Good Friday happening now...in this place...and we are the crowd. We will have a choice...we can run away and hide from what we will see...or we can embrace it...and we can kneel at the foot of the cross and say, "My Lord and My God". When we receive communion it will be in one kind only...Jesus will have no more blood to shed. It will be finished!

Jesus offered himself for us as the "full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction, for the sins of the whole world." The Jewish priests offered animal sacrifices in the Temple so people's sins could be forgiven. Those sacrifices had only a temporary effect and had to be repeated every year. Jesus died for our sins...once and for all...his sacrifice cannot be repeated.

The writer of the Letter to the Hebrews calls Jesus the Great High Priest, better than the Temple priests. His sacrifice is better than the sacrifices of the Temple. Because Jesus is priest, sacrifice, and God, he accomplished what no other priest could do...he became the permanent fix for the messes we get ourselves into. Jesus is the High Priest of good things that are already here... our promise of everlasting life.

Jesus tried to explain to the lawyers and religious leaders in the Gospel...the real reason he came was to make the promise of forgiveness and everlasting life God made to Abraham and the prophets come true. It was a message they didn't want to hear, and they ultimately killed him for it.

Let's use this Passiontide to make certain we hear and believe the message Jesus gives us now. And let's take time to thank him for what he did...because it was all for us!

