

Pericope Study for Sunday, April 9, 2017 – Palm / Passion Sunday

Collect(s) / Prayer(s) of the Day (ELW)

Everlasting God, in your endless love for the human race you sent our Lord Jesus Christ to take on our nature and to suffer death on the cross. In your mercy enable us to share in his obedience to your will and in the glorious victory of his resurrection, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

or

Sovereign God, you have established your rule in the human heart through the servanthood of Jesus Christ. By your Spirit, keep us in the joyful procession of those who with their tongues confess Jesus as Lord and with their lives praise him as Savior, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

or

O God of mercy and might, in the mystery of the passion of your Son you offer your infinite life to the world. Gather us around the cross of Christ, and preserve us until the resurrection, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Presenter's Comments

Since the full gospel for the day is quite long (118 verses in NRSV) and the other lessons have significant content in and of themselves, we will not be able to study all of the lessons in detail. Instead, I propose that we study the alternate Gospel text of Matthew 27.11-54 and view it through the lens of the Epistle text, Philippians 2.5-11. In a further attempt to keep things manageable and still allow maximum opportunity for the Holy Spirit to speak to us through the text and our study, I also offer thought questions for the day and for our study of the Gospel text.

Thought Questions for Palm / Passion Sunday and in Preparing for Holy Week:

- How are the Cross and Resurrection at the center of your life as a Christian?
- How are the Cross and Resurrection at the center of your ministry as a leader of the Church?

Isaiah 50:4-9a (NRSV)

[4] The Lord God has given me
the tongue of a teacher,
that I may know how to sustain
the weary with a word.
Morning by morning he wakens~
wakens my ear
to listen as those who are taught.
[5] The Lord God has opened my ear,
and I was not rebellious,
I did not turn backward.
[6] I gave my back to those who struck
me,
and my cheeks to those who pulled
out the beard;
I did not hide my face
from insult and spitting.

[7] The Lord God helps me;
therefore I have not been disgraced;
therefore I have set my face like flint,
and I know that I shall not be put to
shame;
[8] he who vindicates me is near.
Who will contend with me?
Let us stand up together.
Who are my adversaries?
Let them confront me.
[9] It is the Lord God who helps me;
who will declare me guilty?
~~All of them will wear out like a garment;
—the moth will eat them up.~~

Philippians 2:5-11 (NRSV)

[5] Let the same mind be in you that was
in Christ Jesus,

[6] who, though he was in the form of
God,
did not regard equality with God
as something to be exploited,
[7] but emptied himself,
taking the form of a slave,
being born in human likeness.
And being found in human form,
[8] he humbled himself
and became obedient to the point of
death~
even death on a cross.

[9] Therefore God also highly exalted him
and gave him the name
that is above every name,
[10] so that at the name of Jesus
every knee should bend,
in heaven and on earth and under
the earth,
[11] and every tongue should confess
that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.

Thought questions for studying the Gospel through the lens of Php 2.5-11:

- How is Christ emptying himself?
- How is Christ being exalted / glorified?

Gospel: Matthew 27:11-54 (NRSV)

¹¹Now Jesus stood before the governor; and the governor asked him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" Jesus said, "You say so." ¹²But when he was accused by the chief priests and elders, he did not answer. ¹³Then Pilate said to him, "Do you not hear how many accusations they make against you?" ¹⁴But he gave him no answer, not even to a single charge, so that the governor was greatly amazed.

¹⁵Now at the festival the governor was accustomed to release a prisoner for the crowd, anyone whom they wanted. ¹⁶At that time they had a notorious prisoner, called Jesus Barabbas. ¹⁷So after they had gathered, Pilate said to them, "Whom do you want me to release for you, Jesus Barabbas or Jesus who is called the Messiah?" ¹⁸For he realized that it was out of jealousy that they had handed him over. ¹⁹While he was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent word to him, "Have nothing to do with that innocent man, for today I have suffered a great deal because of a dream about him." ²⁰Now the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowds to ask for Barabbas and to have Jesus killed. ²¹The governor again said to them, "Which of the two do you want me to release for you?" And they said, "Barabbas." ²²Pilate said to them, "Then what should I do with Jesus who is called the Messiah?" All of them said, "Let him be crucified!" ²³Then he asked, "Why, what

evil has he done?" But they shouted all the more, "Let him be crucified!"

²⁴So when Pilate saw that he could do nothing, but rather that a riot was beginning, he took some water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying, "I am innocent of this man's blood; see to it yourselves." ²⁵Then the people as a whole answered, "His blood be on us and on our children!" ²⁶So he released Barabbas for them; and after flogging Jesus, he handed him over to be crucified.

²⁷Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the governor's headquarters, and they gathered the whole cohort around him. ²⁸They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, ²⁹and after twisting some thorns into a crown, they put it on his head. They put a reed in his right hand and knelt before him and mocked him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" ³⁰They spat on him, and took the reed and struck him on the head. ³¹After mocking him, they stripped him of the robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him away to crucify him.

³²As they went out, they came upon a man from Cyrene named Simon; they compelled this man to carry his cross. ³³And when they came to a place called Golgotha (which means Place of a Skull), ³⁴they offered him wine to drink, mixed with gall; but when he tasted it, he would not drink it. ³⁵And when they had crucified him, they divided his clothes among themselves by casting lots; ³⁶then they sat down there and kept watch over him. ³⁷Over his head they put the charge against him, which read, "This is Jesus, the King of the Jews."

³⁸Then two bandits were crucified with him, one on his right and one on his left. ³⁹Those who passed by derided him, shaking their heads ⁴⁰and saying, “You who would destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself! If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross.” ⁴¹In the same way the chief priests also, along with the scribes and elders, were mocking him, saying, ⁴²“He saved others; he cannot save himself. He is the King of Israel; let him come down from the cross now, and we will believe in him. ⁴³He trusts in God; let God deliver him now, if he wants to; for he said, ‘I am God’s Son.’” ⁴⁴The bandits who were crucified with him also taunted him in the same way.

⁴⁵From noon on, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. ⁴⁶And about three o’clock Jesus cried with a loud voice, “Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?” that is, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” ⁴⁷When some of the bystanders heard it, they said, “This man is calling for Elijah.” ⁴⁸At once one of them ran and got a sponge, filled it with sour wine, put it on a stick, and gave it to him to drink. ⁴⁹But the others said, “Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to save him.” ⁵⁰Then Jesus cried again with a loud voice and breathed his last. ⁵¹At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. The earth shook, and the rocks were split. ⁵²The tombs also were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised. ⁵³After his resurrection they came out of the tombs and entered the holy city and appeared to many. ⁵⁴Now when the centurion and

those with him, who were keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were terrified and said, “Truly this man was God’s Son!”