

What drastic contrasts we face in this week. First a parade and party – and within a few short days came the trial of the ages. In this holy week, God touched earth in a way unlike any other moment since Creation. Join us as we remember crowd noise and silence, earthquake and cross, and know that these sights and sounds are the labor pains of a new life and a new creation.

“Hosannas and palms were signs of nationalistic hopes – a celebration for a powerful king who would restore earthly prosperity & peace. Soon those same voices screamed “crucify Jesus” and begged for Pilate to set free an evil and murderous Barabbas! What an exchange! One who knew no sin for a vile and murderous criminal. In all of this, Jesus remained silent!

Was he detached? Above it all? Somewhere else? He showed no reaction to the typical extremes of our world -- as the people treated him as a hero one day and condemned him as a disappointment on the next. How fickle. How like us!

Just like our visions of youthful innocence that become overwhelmed with the reality of adult world. Like confusion that reigns as marriages end in divorce and birth leads only to death! Life is not always as we want it. In this holy week Jesus embraced what we would avoid AND avoided what we feel we deserve!

INNOCENCE or GUILT? That was Pilate’s question. (Isn’t it always?) Each should get what he or she deserves. Nothing more and nothing less. No wonder Pilate was confused. How unfair when the good must suffer and the guilty are set free! Pilate feared the crowd, and we follow the crowd for similar reasons.

Throughout this surrealistic trial, Jesus remained silent. How silent do we ever remain when WE suffer? Don’t the same vocal chords that say “I believe!” breathe cries, complaints, and revenge when life doesn’t seem fair?

Jesus’ passive quiet can become our cue. Allow this week to be a journey in silence, as we listen, meditate, and celebrate the wonder and warmth of God’s love for you and me? The “world’s way” is never a quiet way -- yet Jesus’ procession toward betrayal and arrest was a quiet walk.

He looked beyond what the world can see or seek and calmly accepted death. He climbed the cross to gain access to the tomb. And the tomb was a necessary stop so that it could be turned into a place of life for us!

What an incredible week we remember! Such a study in opposites. Hosanna or crucify? Palms or fists? King or criminal? Innocence or guilt? Death or life! The procession moved from city gates to the palace of the Roman governor to the execution grounds of common criminals. Jesus entered Jerusalem triumphantly on a donkey but walked out dragging a cross. What a reversal as the expected coronation evolved into physical abuse, and the hammering sounds of death.

SILENTLY he allowed the punishment to increase, where we would seek to lighten the load. And injury was added to insult as the world’s only truly innocent life was sacrificed for a sin-filled world. AND OUR LOAD becomes his!

He has become the beast of burden that carries us into joy (palms) through sorrow (passion.)

Birth gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh were replaced with Darkness! Forsakeness! Death!

His silent journey makes perfect sense – there *was* nothing to say until He reached the cross. For this was his throne! This was his mission. He was born as a baby to die on a cross. He accepted our death so he could give us his life. His way was the only way, because our way is a nothing way.

Join this week in the awesome sights and cataclysmic sounds of earthquake, crucifixion, and resurrection. Remember a sky that was darkened and an earth that trembled, as all creation groaned with pain. If anything every looked like the LAST DAY this was it! But this “last day” is our “first day,” for the King has conquered and this triumph is now complete!

The temple curtain was torn and the Holy of Holies exposed as Jesus blood was poured out and his body broken. He has become the true temple. As he died, the earth shuddered, and the dead returned to life. His great exchange means that death can never be the same again.

The triumphant entry with palms and Hosannas is certainly easier to watch – but the passion and pain of his surrender and sacrifice are the gifts that make any day worthy of any joy or hope! These seven days have the same climax as those in Genesis ... slowly, purposefully, powerfully GOD CREATES ... LIFE IS A GIFT!

Why palms and passion palms? Now you remember why ... amen

### **Matthew 27:11-54**

<sup>11</sup> Now Jesus stood before the governor, and the governor asked him, “Are you the King of the Jews?” Jesus said, “You have said so.” <sup>12</sup> But when he was accused by the chief priests and elders, he gave no answer. <sup>13</sup> Then Pilate said to him, “Do you not hear how many things they testify against you?” <sup>14</sup> But he gave him no answer, not even to a single charge, so that the governor was greatly amazed.

<sup>15</sup> Now at the feast the governor was accustomed to release for the crowd any one prisoner whom they wanted. <sup>16</sup> And they had then a notorious prisoner called Barabbas. <sup>17</sup> So when they had gathered, Pilate said to them, “Whom do you want me to release for you: Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ?” <sup>18</sup> For he knew that it was out of envy that they had delivered him up. <sup>19</sup> Besides, while he was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent word to him, “Have nothing to do with that righteous man, for I have suffered much because of him today in a dream.” <sup>20</sup> Now the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowd to ask for Barabbas and destroy Jesus. <sup>21</sup> The governor again said to them, “Which of the two do you want me to release for you?” And they said, “Barabbas.” <sup>22</sup> Pilate said to them, “Then what shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?” They all said, “Let him be crucified!” <sup>23</sup> And he said, “Why? What evil has he done?” But they shouted all the more, “Let him be crucified!”

<sup>24</sup> So when Pilate saw that he was gaining nothing, but rather that a riot was beginning, he took water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying, “I am innocent of this man's blood; see to it yourselves.” <sup>25</sup> And all the people answered, “His blood be on us and on our children!”

<sup>26</sup> Then he released for them Barabbas, and having scourged Jesus, delivered him to be crucified.

<sup>27</sup> Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the governor's headquarters, and they gathered the whole battalion before him. <sup>28</sup> And they stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, <sup>29</sup> and twisting together a crown of thorns, they put it on his head and put a reed in his right hand. And kneeling before him, they mocked him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" <sup>30</sup> And they spit on him and took the reed and struck him on the head. <sup>31</sup> And when they had mocked him, they stripped him of the robe and put his own clothes on him and led him away to crucify him.

<sup>32</sup> As they went out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name. They compelled this man to carry his cross. <sup>33</sup> And when they came to a place called Golgotha (which means Place of a Skull), <sup>34</sup> they offered him wine to drink, mixed with gall, but when he tasted it, he would not drink it. <sup>35</sup> And when they had crucified him, they divided his garments among them by casting lots. <sup>36</sup> Then they sat down and kept watch over him there. <sup>37</sup> And over his head they put the charge against him, which read, "This is Jesus, the King of the Jews." <sup>38</sup> Then two robbers were crucified with him, one on the right and one on the left. <sup>39</sup> And those who passed by derided him, wagging their heads <sup>40</sup> and saying, "You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save yourself! If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross." <sup>41</sup> So also the chief priests, with the scribes and elders, mocked him, saying, <sup>42</sup> "He saved others; he cannot save himself. He is the King of Israel; let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him. <sup>43</sup> He trusts in God; let God deliver him now, if he desires him. For he said, 'I am the Son of God.'" <sup>44</sup> And the robbers who were crucified with him also reviled him in the same way.

<sup>45</sup> Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour. <sup>46</sup> And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?" that is, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" <sup>47</sup> And some of the bystanders, hearing it, said, "This man is calling Elijah." <sup>48</sup> And one of them at once ran and took a sponge, filled it with sour wine, and put it on a reed and gave it to him to drink. <sup>49</sup> But the others said, "Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to save him." <sup>50</sup> And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice and yielded up his spirit.

<sup>51</sup> And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. And the earth shook, and the rocks were split. <sup>52</sup> The tombs also were opened. And many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised, <sup>53</sup> and coming out of the tombs after his resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many. <sup>54</sup> When the centurion and those who were with him, keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were filled with awe and said, "Truly this was the Son of God!"