Sola Lectionary Text Study

Palm/Passion Sunday

March 21, 2027 (Year B)

"'He [Jesus] humbled himself,' or debased himself.
In addition to manifesting his servant form in becoming man
and faring as an ordinary human being, he went farther
and made himself lower than any man.
He abased himself to serve all men with
the supreme service — the gift of his life in our behalf."
– Martin Luther –
Sermon from Palm Sunday, Lenker, Volume 7

Proclamation Points

The following are some thoughts and questions to be used for a text study on the weekly lessons, or for jump-starting the imagination of the preacher and hearer in preparing for the proclamation event.

Zechariah 9:9-12

Have you ever known someone who is *always* happy? There are some people who, no matter what the circumstances, always project peace and happiness. Such people can change the mood of a room of people simply by walking into it. We might say they are "happiness in the flesh."

In this lesson, the prophet and priest Zechariah told the Jews of the coming Messiah, foreshadowing Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem on a donkey. He told the people to "rejoice" for their king was coming — specifically that he was coming in righteousness and humbleness, bearing salvation.

In verse 9, the Hebrew root verb, *yasha* (meaning "salvation" or "deliverance") is what is called a *reflexive* verb — indicating that the Messiah has salvation in himself. In other words, his very presence is salvation; he carries deliverance with him because he himself is salvation. It is significant to note that this same Hebrew root is also found in the name *Yeshua* (Jesus). In a clearly prophetic way, these verses from Zechariah point us to "salvation in the flesh" which is Jesus Christ our Lord.

- *How is Jesus "salvation incarnate"? What does it mean that by his very nature he is the source of salvation?*
- *Is this a salvation that benefits the Messiah himself? Or is it for the benefit of others? Why?*

Psalm 118:19-29

The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone sang the psalmist. Through him and him alone are the gates of righteousness. Such a wonderful gift God has given to his people deserves worship and praise. Salvation comes riding into town "in the name of the Lord!"

- *How do the blessings of God often come to us in unexpected ways? Can you give any examples?*
- *How did Jesus become the cornerstone by being rejected?*

Philippians 2:5-11

We often talk about "feeling empty" when we get down or lonely. When a vessel is empty, its contents are all gone, there is nothing left. Ordinarily we would not consider this a condition which has merit or is positive in any way.

However, Paul, in describing Jesus Christ, said that he emptied himself of his divinity, taking on the form of a slave. This is a paradox of faith, something that can be difficult for us to understand: weakness, emptiness, setting aside power for the sake of those one loves? How can this be the way that God acts in the world?

- *How do you understand this self-emptying of Jesus in relation to the salvation he offers us? In what ways does God call us to take on this same attitude, as Paul suggests?*
- *Why does a glass need to be emptied before it can be filled? If we seek to empty our lives of ourselves, what do we pray to be filled with?*

Processional Gospel: John 12:12-19

As Jesus came into Jerusalem riding on the colt of a donkey, the crowds shouted, "Hosanna!" This term comes from two Hebrew words: *yasha* which means to deliver, save, or rescue (the same word used in the Old Testament lesson), and *na* which means "please" (as in, we ask you to do this for us). It was a cry yelled by Jewish people in celebration toward their heroes as a call for deliverance and victory.

- *Have you ever made a connection between the word Hosanna and the name of Jesus? What does it mean that in shouting Hosanna, we are asking God to "Jesus" us?*

It is with this cry for deliverance and victory that the people welcomed Jesus into the city. Their hopes of being saved by the Messiah were cause for joy and celebration. But by the end of the week the people would not see Jesus as victorious, but rather as an abject failure.

- *In what ways is God victorious even when it looks like a mission has failed miserably? Have you experienced this in your own life? How has God brought about victory for you in the midst of pain and hardship?*
- *How can our prayer "Hosanna!" be both a request for help and a sign of our hope and faith in Jesus' salvation?*

Passion Story: Mark 14:26-15:47

For many people, the Gospel reading on this Sunday may be the only time in the year they get to hear the full story of Jesus' Passion (suffering) in one sitting. Rather than focusing on a few specific verses, listeners are encouraged to hear and feel the impact of the extended narrative.

- *What do you get from hearing the long reading of Jesus' trial and death that you would not get from hearing only smaller snippets of the story?*
- *Why do you think all the Gospel writers spend so much time on the final hours of Jesus' life? What is so important about this part of the story?*

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