

Palm Sunday 3/29/15
Mark 15:1-47 B

As we ponder Jesus' passion, we find that it is very easy to get angry, and upset, and downright mad at a whole lot of people.

First off, there are the chief priests, elders of the people, and the whole Jewish council. They are the ones who had conspired in secret to arrest Jesus and kill Him. They are the ones who set the armed crowd out to the Garden of Gethsemane to seize Jesus. They are the ones who tried Jesus with the help of false witnesses on trumped up charges to convict Him of blasphemy, a crime He had never committed. Its easy to be mad at them.

Its easy to be mad at Judas Iscariot. He was one of the twelve. Jesus even called Him "Friend". When the chief priests want to find a way to get rid of Jesus, Judas Iscariot betrays the Savior for 30 pieces of silver. So, he goes to Jesus, betrays Him with a kiss and a "Hail, Rabb." With that, Jesus is seized by the crowd with swords and clubs. We are so angry at that guy that when he goes out and hangs himself in guilt and he falls and his belly bursts open and his inside run out, our instinct is to say he got what he deserved.

Then you have Peter. In the upper room, Jesus tells the twelve they will all fall away, and Peter boasts, "I will never fall away." From Gethsemane, he does follow all the way to the courtyard of the high priest and goes right up to the fire to warm himself. But as soon as someone asks him, "Hey, weren't you with Jesus," he says, "I don't even know who the guy is." He does it not once, not twice, but three times, all before the rooster crows

We dare not overlook the other disciples. Remember in the upper room, when Peter boasted he would never fall away, “All the disciples said the same thing.” Yet by the time they got to the Garden of Gethsemane, they can’t even stay awake. And when the crowd shows up with swords and clubs, those guys who were never going to fall away from Jesus, are nowhere to be found. They’re gone. They’ve run away from Jesus as fast as their little feet would go.

We can’t let Pontius Pilate off the hook, can we? He has the power, He has the authority to set Jesus free, but he’s a big coward so he decides to go along with the crowd and do what they want. So, he sentenced Jesus to death, washes his hands, then piously says His blood be on you, but I -- I -- have nothing to do with it, even though he had everything to do with it.

Then there are the Roman soldiers. What do they do? Well, they mock Jesus, twist a crown of thorns into his scalp, strike Him on the head with a reed, spit on Him, and take Him to Calvary where they drive nails through His hands and feet. Then to see if He’s dead, they drive a spear into His side.

So ya, let’s be mad at all those people. Let’s be angry and upset as we ponder Jesus’ passion. But before we do that, answer this question, please: What does your anger really show about you? Your anger betrays who you really and truly are. A sinner -- who likes to get mad, who likes to get upset, who likes to sit in judgment of other people and condemn them, forgetting that you do that same thing to people all the time.

Anger is not the way to go when you ponder Jesus’ passion. Not everybody goes that way. Some people get really sad, mournful, weepy. They get very discouraged when they see all that Jesus is going through and the tears flow. There was a group of women who had been following

Jesus and they were weeping and wailing over Jesus. So you know what Jesus told them? He rebuked them, “Weep for yourselves and your children.” There is very good advice in light of the destruction of Jerusalem that was to come in a few short years.

As you ponder Jesus’ passion, your first reaction should not be one of anger, or sadness. Your first reaction should be one of fear and utter horror. For as you ponder Jesus’ passion, you see exactly what it is you deserve for your sins. When you see your Lord Jesus being betrayed, when you see Him being abandoned, when you see Him being denied, understand that is what you deserve for all the times you have betrayed, abandoned, and denied your friends and for all the times you have failed to love your neighbor as yourself. When you see your Lord Jesus standing on trial for blasphemy, when you see Him convicted, condemned, sentenced to death, understand this: that is the sentence you deserve for your blasphemy, for all the times you failed to put God first in your life and your breaking of His Commandment to have no other gods. You are guilty of that and that is what you deserve.

When you see your Lord Jesus Christ being spat upon, punched in the face, struck with a reed, understand that is what your sins deserve. For your wretchedness and wickedness, your flesh deserves to be crowned with thorns and thrust through with a spear.

This is what you deserve for your sins. Understand that it was your sins that put Him there. Your sins caused His crucifixion. When you see Him upon that cross and you hear Him cry out with a loud voice, “Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?” that is, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken Me?,” that is the damnation that you deserve for all of your sins. That is the wrath of God falling on His only-begotten Son for what you have done --

your thoughts, words, and deeds. And when you see Him die upon that cross, understand that should be **you** dying for all your sins. Jesus' passion fills us with horror over what it is our sins deserve.

But to terrified, horrified, condemned sinners like you, the Scriptures speak, "the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all" (Is 53:6). "He Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By His wounds you have been healed." (1 Pe 2). "For our sake He made Himself to be sin who knew no sin, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Cor 5).

When you see your Lord Jesus Christ hanging dead upon that cross and His lifeless body buried in the tomb, rejoice! Be glad! For it is the Lord Jesus Himself who went to Calvary bearing your sin upon His own body. He went there freely of His own will to give His life as a ransom for you. Its His blood shed upon that cross that washes away your sin. Its His death that has paid the price of all your sins. Its His dying that has freed you from all your sins and the wrath of God upon them. And the Lord's resurrection has swallowed up all of your sins, so you are completely and totally forgiven.

By your baptism, by the hearing and learning of His holy Word, by the eating and drinking of His body and blood, He delivers to you that forgiveness, life, and salvation.

As you ponder Jesus' passion, your reaction will not be one of anger, it will not be sadness, but most of all and above all, **joy**. For Christ has died and Christ is risen. And because of that, you are forgiven in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.