



CHRIST CHURCH CRANBROOK

What Do We Make of This__ - Palm Sunday- 4_10_2022

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

What are we to make of this? A man comes into the world and makes it His life mission to go around the country, preaching love and becoming one with God and your neighbor. And He captivates us with this beautiful vision of life together that is soaking with forgiveness and filled to the brim with the grace that we're supposed to show one another and a deep and abiding charity and love. And He gives people hope and He even has good news for the downtrodden, the disinherited, the despairing. And in a flash, overnight, He is dead. What are we to make of this?

This man attracts people of all kinds; fishermen, tax collectors, the religious, women of good repute, women of ill repute, even the Roman elite. People want to meet Him. They're mesmerized by Him. They're amazed by Him and throngs of crowds go to see Him and even some begin to follow Him along. And yet, when accused of made up charges, when accused of blaspheming God, no one comes to His rescue. Not a single person offers a defense for Him, a generous word, or even wondering whether the punishment fits the crime. Everyone remains mute. Even when He cries out on the Cross, "Why have you forsaken me?" What are we to make of this?

And not only that, this man is a healer. He heals people of serious debilitating illnesses. I mean, it seems everywhere He goes, He's making someone better. Can you imagine if you had this? Can you imagine if you had this gift? You would never be able to sleep. People would be knocking down your door. They're like, heal me, save me, make me whole. And Jesus, He was healing anybody of anything, He healed the people who were paralyzed. He healed lepers. He healed the mute, people who had never seen anything with their own eyes. He healed a woman who could not stop menstruating. I cannot imagine what that must have felt like for her. He even healed people who were dead. The world should have been smart and kept Him around to heal our every ill. Instead, they throw Him up on a Cross and mock Him, go ahead and try to save yourself. And He doesn't. What do we make of this?

Even Pilate knows that something is awry. He is used to sentencing men to death. He can look a man in the eye, say the word and that man ceases to be, but Pilate had trouble with this. This one didn't make any sense to him. A good

flogging he recommends, and justice will be served. Yet, he too ends up being complicit and he turns over an innocent man to be executed like a trader. What do we make of this? A man comes into the world to love and to serve and to bring goodwill among others and He doesn't get very far in life, does He? And maybe that's what we're supposed to make out of it. Maybe that's the lesson that we learned. In fact, I'm actually surprised that Jesus's story is not more widely known as the parable of only the good die young, because that's what happens.

I read a story of three medical aid workers from Doctors Without Borders who were in war-torn Ethiopia this past June. And they heard of a place where casualties were rising. They jumped into their Jeep to head on their way. Their ages, 35, 32, 31. They were found dead, their bullet-ridden bodies next to the burnt up Jeep. What are we to make of that? All their crime was, was they wanted to help.

As you journey through this Holy Week, as you mark those seven short days between Jesus entering Jerusalem and everyone shouting "Rejoice Hosanna!" to when the crowds blame Him and condemn Him to death, to when God enters and obliterates the chains that are trapping humanity, what are you going to make of this week? Will you see it as just a story? Just maybe a re-enactment of events long gone, meant to help children and the young in faith, get to know a man named Jesus.

I once asked a parishioner why he didn't attend Holy Week services. He said to me, "I know how the story goes." So is that what Holy Week is, a retelling of the story? Or could it be something else? Could it be that when you enter into the world of Jesus, things change in your world? And you can see and touch and wave those palms that hail Him as a King of the Jews. And you watch as He goes and He turns over the tables of commerce in His Father's house. And you can hear him cry out over the city that kills prophets, and you see a small band of friends that gather around the table in a room and you join them. And you sit at that table and you're mesmerized by the man who takes a loaf of bread, lifts it up, breaks it in two and says to you, this is my body. Eat it and remember me. And you say to yourself, I will remember.

But then you find that your eyes are beginning to grow heavy as you sit and you wait and you watch Him in the dark and He's praying for what seems like an eternity. And then the solitude is broken and it's interrupted by shouts and swords and a kiss that confuses everyone except the man that they shackle up and take away, spit at, beat up, mock, and He stands silently like a sheep before its shearers. There's nowhere He wants to go. There's nowhere He needs to be. This is where He is to be. And they take Him and they strip Him and they crown Him with blood-drawing branches and they shove him towards Golgotha, the place where the outcast, the derided, the inhumane humans die.

And as you go through this story, do you think about this messy, messed up, beautiful, but deeply flawed world that we have, and your messed up, messy, beautiful, but deeply flawed life that you're trying to put together? And do you realize that during Holy Week, all of it collides, you, your complicated life, this world, this man, His complicated love, and it comes crashing together and something that you can't make heads nor tails of. An innocent man dies. A healer is killed. The man who speaks of love is hated. This mess all of a sudden brings meaning to your life because this mystery, His mystery makes meaning of our mess. This Savior changes the shape and contours of our lives forever. This man, this beautiful, sweet talking, profound, young, old soul man makes sense out of nonsense just because He lived and died like one of us.

This complicated and messy world needs a complicated and mysterious Savior whose ways are not ours, who can heal in ways we don't know how. And what we humans can make of this mystery of God is only just to shake our heads and say, we don't understand why this place is the way it is. We don't know why there's conflict and cruelty and abandonment and pain, but we know - what we do know this Holy Week is that there's one man and His name is Jesus. He understands it all. Even though we don't know why He had to go through this mockery of a trial, had to be beat and go through death, He knew. And even though we don't understand why an innocent man who loved this world so freely and so completely had to die, He understood. This man, this Jesus, this one who will only die young, this Holy Week, that is all you need to know.

Amen.