

Palm Sunday (HC) (2020)

I don't know what you have been doing with your time this past week.

A few days ago I was talking with one of our members who shared with me something she had seen on Facebook.

It was of a woman peering into her refrigerator. As she does, a voice is heard saying: **“Why do you keep opening the door. You just looked in here five minutes ago.”**

Apparently, some people don't know what do with the extra time they have been handed. In their frustration, they go from refrigerator to window.

These, no doubt, are some of the same ones who only a few weeks ago were complaining about how busy they were and how little time they had.

One thing I have been doing this past week is listening to some old books on tape. I am surprise they still play.

I have particularly enjoyed re-listening to C.S. Lewis' *The Lion, the Witch and Wardrobe*.

I didn't grow up with the *Chronicles of Narnia*. I am one of those who had to wait until I was an adult to discovered them.

Nevertheless, Lewis' imaginary world of Narnia still warms my heart.

One thing you might remember about the storyline of *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* is that after the children tumble out of the wardrobe into the enchanted land of Narnia, they discover that here “it's always winter and never Christmas”. Apparently, it has been that way for quite some time, as the country is under the control of an evil White Witch.

But, as the story moves forward, they learn from the talking animals that the true King – Aslan – is on the move. He has been sighted in these parts.

Hence, there is great expectation that now he is come all wrongs will be put to rights.

We find this same spirit of expectation in New Testament times. Rome had rule over God's people. Things were about as bad as they could be.

But, now going around the county was this itinerant teacher and healer named Jesus.

“Could He be the Deliver promised in the Scriptures?” “Was God once again on the move in Israel?”

Then comes Palm Sunday, and all doubt is removed.

Carefully following the script laid out for Him in the book of the Prophet Zachariah, Jesus enters the Holy City and announces – without speaking a word – I am that One. I am your king.

And the people get it! They lay down branches and pieces of their own clothing for Him to pass over on.

The ‘hosannas’ that go up that day translate into something like “God save the king.” It was a triumph moment.

But, if Palm Sunday is a day of great triumph, it is also a day of great irony. And here is why:

We know from our vantage point that in the span of five short days those ‘Hosannas’ will give way to a very different cry . . . that of ‘Crucify Him’.

It is in this part of the story that we find a great challenge for our own day. The challenge is this:

Right now, there are a number of people who are seeking comfort and consolation in spiritual things. I have spoken to some of them of late. They are asking real questions?

Just this past week, I received a text from a young friend now living in Idaho. His question was this:

Is this pandemic God's judgment on our nation and the world? Are we, at last, reaping the harvest of our waywardness?

In responding to my friend's question and to others like it, I am quick to adopt a posture of humility.

I don't know why this calamity has come upon us, for the very good reason God has not told me. When He does, I will share it with you!

What I do know and what I tell people is that everything that happens is *in some sense* God's will. God "worketh all things after the counsel of his own will," Ephesians 1:11 tells us.

There His **direct will**, but there is also His **permissive will**.

God does not directly will evil, but he does – at least at the moment -- seem to allow it.

The glorious thing is – that because He is a big God -- He is able to override it for good.

The most striking example of this is the cross. Wicked men sent Jesus to His death. But God the Father overturned their wicked act for good . . . for the salvation of the world.

Can God use this present crisis? Perhaps use it to bring some people back to their senses and to Himself? You, bet He can.

But, as I said earlier, there is a challenge. Will this renewed interest in spiritual things last?

Or will it be like the fervor of those who lined the roadway that first Palm Sunday? Will it quickly fade away and be forgotten?

Many of you are old enough to remember 911. At that time, there was a surge of interest in religion and spirituality.

On that fateful day, the phone here at St. Luke's immediately began to ring. People wanted to know if the church was open and if we were having any services.

For about a week, we conducted noonday services. These services were well attended . . . mostly by people not members of this church. Where are they now?

In view of the fickleness of human nature, how should we respond to this present crisis?

I would say: Seize the moment for the Gospel. Announce Jesus any way you can.

If people are asking you any of what have been called the ultimate questions of life:

Who am I? Why am I here? What is wrong with the world? and How can what is wrong be made right?

Share your hope. Invite them to join you at worship. Be a witness. But in the end, leave the results up to God. Whether they persevere is not your concern. Leave that to the Almighty.

The triumph, irony and challenge of Palm Sunday remain with us today. Stay at your post.

Instead of incessantly looking into your refrigerator or out the window, look for ways to bring light into a dark world. Be that light. Get creative. And, above all, remain faithful. ///

OPENING REMARKS:

This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it!

Whatever is going on around us, these words from Scripture remains objectively true. Never lose sight of them.

I am Victor Morgan, Rector of St. Luke's, and I welcome you to this morning service . . . both you who are a part of our drive-in congregation, as well as those who are joining us via the internet.

Today is Palm Sunday, the day on which Christians around the world acclaim Jesus as the true King and the Saviour of Mankind. Let me encourage you to acclaim Him as your King and Saviour. In that spirit, let us worship God.

Biddings before the Whole State of Christ Church

I bid your prayers for all doctors, nurses and other health care workers who remain on the job at this time.

I bid your prayer for those in the Emergency Services.

I bid your prayers for those who are suffering with the Coronavirus at this time.

I bid your prayers for those who have lost loved ones and are grieving.

Let us pray for the whole state of Christ's Church . . .