

Sermon Notes



Series: Against the Current

Sermon: Who Is Lord?

Philippians 1:2-11

If then there is any encouragement in Christ, any consolation from love, any sharing in the Spirit, any compassion and sympathy, make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross. Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Monday: Read Mark 11: 1-19

Jesus came into Jerusalem dragging the world in behind him. He'd spent most of his ministry with what the Pharisees regarded as all the wrong people. When Jesus entered Jerusalem on that first Palm Sunday, he had all of these folks in tow. But when he got to the Temple, he found no place for his new friends. So he left. He pondered. He prayed. And he returned--he came back to make room. Palm Sunday is not just about Jesus' first entry. We need to wonder what Jesus sees when he gets here and looks around at everything. It wasn't the pigeons or the selling of them that bothered Jesus but instead where it was taking place (in the court of the Gentiles) and what, or who, was getting pushed out as a result. Most of us spend at least some time thinking about church, church work, church services. Now and again we also find things that upset us or worry us. We can have some pretty intense discussions about the church but how many of those discussions center on our being a welcoming place for all who may be seeking God? When was the last time you were concerned with how well we welcome outsiders? How often do we share our Lord's passion to be with those different from us?

Prayer: Lord, may we make room in your house of worship for all people. Amen.

Tuesday: Read Mark 11:20-24; 12:13-17; 28-13: 2

The "Widow's Mite" is a well-known part of today's reading. Yet it is part of a larger context of Jesus' being questioned by the Temple leadership and of Jesus' critique of the Temple establishment. It is striking that what Jesus says about the widow ("she gave her whole life") mirrors his own life. Her offering of her life foreshadows Jesus' own act for us. Jesus will have to give his whole life, his entire life. He already did, in fact, prior to the cross. He constantly embraced rejection. He consistently accepted the questioning of his followers. He confirmed over and over again that following him would mean *whole-life-giving* and *whole-life-living*. She embodies Jesus' own ministry. She acts out Jesus' own call. She believes that what she does will manifest itself in something beyond herself. In the end, that is truly discipleship according to Mark. How can you take one step closer to *whole-life-living* in your discipleship? What holds you back from giving your all?

Prayer: All Giving God, grant me the courage to give my whole life over to you. Amen.

Wednesday: Read Mark 14: 1-11

The unnamed woman who anointed Jesus remains a mystery to us. We know nothing much about her. The disciples were blind to the gathering storm, but somehow she understood that Jesus was about to die the death of a common criminal where anointing for burial would not be an option. Her anointing of Jesus was an act of selfless love toward him - an act of faith, generosity, acceptance, recognition - an act, says Jesus, that will be retold through time. In the midst of deception and disloyalty we find an act of dedication to Christ and his cross. A woman recognized that Jesus would pour out his life for all humanity and she spared no expense (of finance or reputation) to honor him. Can you think of a time when someone acted so selflessly toward you in your time of need? How does this unnamed woman call you toward a life of dedication to Jesus? What does it mean to know

that Jesus poured out his life for you?

Prayer: Jesus, as you poured out your life, so may I pour out mine to honor you. Amen.

Thursday: Read Mark 14: 17-53, 60-72

In Gethsemane, we see a very a human Jesus who knows that events are headed for a violent climax. He is described as "*distressed and agitated*" and speaks of being "*deeply grieved*." Yet his prayer combines fervent supplication with reverent submission. The human Jesus does not want to die, while the obedient Son will not turn from his task. The disciples are only superficially affected by all this anguish, as is evident by their ability to nod off repeatedly. Judas arrives with the arresting mob, and there is a short-lived and misguided attempt at violent resistance by an unnamed disciple. The sleepiness in Gethsemane, this sword-wielding outburst, and the ensuing desertion of the disciples are among the final strokes of the dismal portrait of the disciples in Mark. In telling the story, Mark often has no choice but to lay bare the disciples' cowardice and failure. They all flee with a kind of shameful nakedness like the anonymous "young man" of verse 51. When has your cowardice prevented you from following Jesus faithfully? From speaking the truth of the Gospel? In what ways do you need to "wake up" your faith from its slumber?

Prayer: Lord, help me in my failed attempts toward discipleship. Make me obedient to your ways. Amen.

Friday: Read Mark 15: 1-39

Debra Mumford asserts that today's reading teaches us to celebrate the power of understanding. Understanding that Jesus was the Son of God would have a profound impact on the lives of the centurion, the bystanders and, ultimately, the entire world. When we truly understand who Jesus is and the power of God at work in his life and witness we, too, can be transformed. We, too, can be the people God is calling us to be. However, to gain understanding we must be open to listening for the voice of God, even in the midst of disruption and chaos. We reflect on and celebrate Good Friday because, as the world continues to turn upside down, Jesus is still at work transforming lives, governments, systems, and societies. How has your life been transformed by Jesus? In times of disruption and chaos what helps you find hope?

Prayer: Holy God, help me live in the power of your work through Jesus, your son and my Lord. Amen.

Saturday: Read Mark 15: 42-47

We rush so quickly toward Easter. We want new life, a fresh start, resurrection. Yet too often we ignore the fact that for resurrection to be possible there must first be death. We must sit with death, bury what has died, and trust in God's work to bring new life from that death. When you reflect on your life in the past year, what death (physical, emotional, spiritual) has occurred? How has that death become an opportunity for resurrection? What do you need to bury today in order to fully live in newness of life?

Prayer: Help me roll the stone of death into place and turn, in hope, toward the new life you have promised, O God. Amen.