

Dear Friends,

We are in the journey of Holy Week. It is the story of a man who came to share the love of God, heal the world, and show us a better way of life. It is a story of betrayal, of cowardice, and of desertion. The story contains naked grabs for power, false accusations, and lots of fear. For Jesus entered Jerusalem with a crowd that sang his praises and then openly discussed and debated with seekers, foreigners, lawyers, scribes, Pharisees, Sadducees, and temple priests. Jesus showed anger in the Temple that those who came to bring sacrifices were taken advantage of in the pursuit of profit and overturned the money tables and cleared the courtyard. For the most part, Jesus used stories to share about love, righteousness, and the justice of God that favors the poor and the dispossessed.

It is on this day of Maundy Thursday that Jesus gathered with his disciples to celebrate the Passover (remembering the freedom from slavery in Egypt wrought by God). Just as Jesus told them where to find the colt he would ride into Jerusalem, he told his disciples how to find the room in which they would celebrate by following a man with a jar on his head. In the gospel of John, Jesus shares much with his disciples, including a new commandment (maundy), to love people as Jesus loves people. He washes their feet to share that they are to humble themselves in service to one another, and not expect to be served. In the other three gospels, Jesus gives us the Last Supper that we might break bread and drink the cup in remembrance of him. In this meal, he foretells of Judas' betrayal and Peter's denial.

He goes to the Garden of Gethsemane to pray to God for the cup (crucifixion) to pass from his hand, but not what Jesus' wants, but what God wants. The mob comes and drags him away, led by Judas, and brings him before the religious authorities to accuse and convict him. Though it is a kangaroo court, he is then brought before Pontius Pilate, the Roman authority in Jerusalem.

Though Pontius Pilate finds no reason to condemn Jesus, he sends Jesus to Herod who rules over Galilee, who sends him back. For reasons stated and reasons unknown, Jesus is finally condemned to death by crucifixion. His crime is posted on the cross, "King of the Jews" which was shouted when Jesus entered into Jerusalem just 6 days ago. Jesus is on the cross for 6 hours, slowly suffocating, though he forgives those who put him on there, and promises a thief he will see heaven before the day is over.

Mary, the mother of Jesus, and other women, and the disciples of Jesus, the followers, and friends are grief-stricken that Jesus died, that Jesus was allowed to die, that their dreams of a new kingdom were done.

Peace

*Pastor Enno*