

### Pastor Roy's Sermon from March 29, 2015 (Palm Sunday)

Earlier, we processed in celebration of the Jesus' ministry as did the folks in Jerusalem when he lived. It was a celebration of his teaching, his healing, his love, his compassion for the least, and his passion for justice. It began with a few followers picking up the donkey, then the crowds picked up palms to celebrate his coming to Jerusalem. It was a good day. He was adored because he was not just another leader who was looking out for himself and his own. He cared about everyone, saw the humanity of the Samaritans and Gentiles. He loved. This was a celebration of the best of Israel, the best of the Jews, the best of Jerusalem. A spontaneous one man parade of joy. Pure joy.

A few days passes. A few more enemy lines are drawn hard into the sand. Into the rocks around Jerusalem. Threats are made. Promises of revenge and the protection of national security. A plan is crafted and carefully executed. For the good of the people, of course, this man must die. And, for the good of the people, this man does die. Circles of grief go out from him through his friends. Great change for their lives. The loss of comfort. Feelings of abandonment, not caused by the one taken away, but by the loss, keenly felt. He is gone. Who can speak of hope? Who can imagine at this point anything but piercing distress, the dull ache of emptiness, extreme disappointment.

Are not the details of our lives made of a similar material? Celebrations of joy placed side by side with searing grief? We know not at any moment which it will be. We think we know. We think at times we finally have a handle on it all—the highs and lows, the expectations and surprises. Then, over and over, our experience proves—we do not. Faith does not eliminate the uncertainty or pain of doubt and unknowing. Faith gives us a confession of hope. It gives us an orientation toward love and peace. Peace mingled with uncertainty and pain. With this hope, we walk through a barrage of reasons to give up, to turn around, to give into despair and become cynical. At the bottom, we come face to face with the strange hope of faith. But this week, this week it is important to sit with our experience of loss, hopelessness, and despair. Unknowing. Yet, hold on. Be patient, let the grief, do its work. Let the disappointment be felt and known. Honesty is what we seek. Not denial. Not, “whatever makes me feel better.” The dark night of the soul promises a strange healing. Ultimately, it is the only path to faith, isn't it!? I do so believe. [Thanks be to God for this upside-down Kingdom of unexpected hope even in the dark places of our lives.] This is a week for plenty of stillness in meditative prayer. To be honest in our grief with the harshness of our reality. Christ goes before us into those same places. Thanks be to God.

Amen.