



# SERMONS AT SAINT MARK'S

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THE REV. CANON JENNIFER KING DAUGHERTY, CANON FOR CONGREGATIONAL LIFE  
THE SUNDAY OF THE PASSION, APRIL 5, 2020  
ISAIAH 50:4-9A; PSALM 31:9-16; PHILIPPIANS 2:5-11; Matthew 21:1-11

## PILGRIMAGE AT HOME

With Palm Sunday, Holy Week begins -- and we join Christians throughout the world in remembering Jesus' journey to the cross, the grave, and new life. We do that over the course of this week with liturgies, hymns, rituals, and time for quiet and stillness. And all of this is rooted in the ancient tradition of pilgrimage -- pilgrimage to Jerusalem for special observances of Holy Week.

The earliest account of one such pilgrimage is by a 4<sup>th</sup> century woman, Egeria. She writes that they begin on Palm Sunday at the top of the Mount of Olives and process down the Mount throughout the day, carrying branches and stopping to sing hymns and hear lessons. In the evening, they enter Jerusalem just as Jesus did,

offering songs of praise. As the week wears on, they follow Jesus' journey from his last meal with his disciples and lonely prayer in the garden of Gethsemane to his arrest, trial, crucifixion and burial.

The people who make this journey are not *tourists*, traveling to observe and question the sites and events from a safe distance. No, they are *pilgrims*, intending to give themselves over to the unfamiliar, to immerse themselves in what they see and do and let the experience ask questions of them. Trusting that if they give themselves fully to the pilgrimage, they will be transformed.<sup>1</sup>

That's our invitation this week, too -- to be pilgrims. Over the years, there

has been a familiar Holy Week rhythm at Saint Mark's as we gathered each day for services that recall how it was that Jesus offered himself as embodied love on his journey to the cross.

But this year, things are different; we are distanced from each other. It is not the first time Christians have refrained from gathering in a church building due to epidemic illness; it happened 100 years ago in Seattle during the Spanish flu. But it's the first time for almost all of us.

And there are so many different circumstances among us. Some are alone in lockdown in their senior living community, distressed that they are unable to leave their room even to get the mail. Some are at home juggling the demands of remote work, home-schooling children, caring for elders from afar, and worrying they are letting someone down. Some are working in the hospital in stressful conditions, or providing other essential services, and afraid they will get sick or bring the virus home. Others are filing for unemployment and worried how long their finances will hold after losing their job. And

there are many in vulnerable health who are anxious and praying for healing.

This is some of the context for Holy Week this year, but it is not unknown to God.

A short time before he is arrested and begins his journey to the cross, Jesus goes with his disciples to the garden of Gethsemane to pray. He takes Peter, James, and John aside and shares his agitation. Jesus says to them, "I am deeply grieved, even unto death; please stay here with me."

The Greek words that Matthew uses in his gospel describe a state of deep distress, a profound disarray that is expressed physically. And the root connotation is the experience of being separated from others, a situation that results in anguish.<sup>ii</sup> That is what Jesus feels. Jesus tells his friends about this distress and then he turns to God, saying, "My Father, if this cup cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done."

Because God became flesh and dwelt among us, there is no human pain or grief that is unknown to Jesus or that is separate from God's love.

This Holy Week we follow Jesus by worshipping *from* home. Through livestream and zoom, there are opportunities to join this broad community of faith for: evening prayer on Monday and Tuesday, walking the Stations of the Cross on Wednesday, participating in foot washing, an agape meal and stripping the altar on Maundy Thursday, keeping the night watch with Jesus into Friday, observing the Passion on Good Friday, joining the Great Vigil of Easter on Saturday, and sharing in celebration on Easter Day.

It is our established tradition, experienced in a new way. And even though we will be distanced from each other, we will be one body, united in our common worship *from* home.

Our circumstances this year also offer an opportunity – to worship *at* home and to notice and honor the presence

of God in our daily, messy lives. It may feel a little self-conscious to process with branches around the living room or wash your partner's feet at the kitchen table, but it can open our eyes to how mundane actions are shot through with the holy. How bringing flowers into the house expresses gratitude to God or washing dishes is service to others.

So, we are pilgrims this week, not in Jerusalem but in our own homes.

If we give ourselves fully to this pilgrimage, willing to immerse ourselves in the worship and rituals and letting the experience do its work, we will be changed.

Will you go with me?

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<sup>1</sup> Bishop Rickel introduced me to the distinction between tourists and pilgrims on our Holy Land pilgrimage in January 2019. He's written extensively in his blog about this.

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<sup>11</sup> Raymond Brown, The Death of the Messiah, 1:153.

**Matthew 21:5-11** *[When Jesus and his disciples had come near Jerusalem and had reached Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, "Go into the village ahead of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her; untie them and bring them to me. If anyone says anything to you, just say this, 'The Lord needs them.' And he will send them immediately." This took place to fulfill what had been spoken through the prophet, saying,*

*"Tell the daughter of Zion,  
Look, your king is coming to you,  
humble, and mounted on a donkey,  
and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.*

*"The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them; they brought the donkey and the colt, and put their cloaks on them, and he sat on them. A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. The crowds that went ahead of him and that followed were shouting,*

*"Hosanna to the Son of David!  
Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!  
Hosanna in the highest heaven!"*

*When he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was in turmoil, asking, "Who is this?" The crowds were saying, "This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee."]*



SAINT MARK'S  
EPISCOPAL CATHEDRAL

*Saint Mark's Cathedral lives in a grounded faith and spirituality; we seek to liberate people for ministry. We are grounded in ancient Christian scripture and tradition while at the same time remaining open to the insight and truth of contemporary life. You'll find Saint Mark's Cathedral actively involved in service and outreach to our community. Together we pray, worship, study the scriptures, and explore the richness of twenty-one centuries of Christian experience. Wherever you are on your journey of faith, you are welcome here!*