

Sunday of the Passion: Palm Sunday April 9, 2017

The Collect: Almighty and everliving God, in your tender love for the human race you sent your Son our Savior Jesus Christ to take upon him our nature, and to suffer death upon the cross, giving us the example of his great humility: Mercifully grant that we may walk in the way of his suffering, and also share in his resurrection; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

Old Testament: Isaiah 50:4-9a read from the Revised Standard Version Bible

The Lord God has given me the tongue of those who are taught, that I may know how to sustain with a word him that is weary. Morning by morning he wakens, he wakens my ear to hear as those who are taught. The Lord God has opened my ear, and I was not rebellious, I turned not backward. I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to those who pulled out the beard; I hid not my face from shame and spitting.

For the Lord God helps me; therefore I have not been confounded; therefore I have set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be put to shame; he who vindicates me is near. Who will contend with me? Let us stand up together. Who is my adversary? Let him come near to me. Behold, the Lord God helps me; who will declare me guilty?

The Word of the Lord

Psalm 31:9-16 read from The Episcopal Church Book of Common Prayer

9 Have mercy on me, O Lord, for I am in trouble; * my eye is consumed with sorrow, and also my throat and my belly.

10 For my life is wasted with grief, and my years with sighing; * my strength fails me because of affliction, and my bones are consumed.

11 I have become a reproach to all my enemies and even to my neighbors, a dismay to those of my acquaintance; * when they see me in the street they avoid me.

12 I am forgotten like a dead man, out of mind; * I am as useless as a broken pot.

13 For I have heard the whispering of the crowd; fear is all around; * they put their heads together against me; they plot to take my life.

14 But as for me, I have trusted in you, O Lord. * I have said, "You are my God.

15 My times are in your hand; * rescue me from the hand of my enemies, and from those who persecute me.

16 Make your face to shine upon your servant, * and in your loving-kindness save me."

Epistle: Philippians 2:5-11 read from the God's Word Bible

Have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had.

Although he was in the form of God and equal with God, he did not take advantage of this equality. Instead, he emptied himself by taking on the form of a servant, by becoming like other humans, by having a human appearance. He humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, death on a cross. This is why God has given him an exceptional honor—the name honored above all other names— so that at the name of Jesus everyone in heaven, on earth, and in the world below will kneel and confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

The Word of the Lord

Gospel: Matthew 26:14-27:66 read from The Holman Christian Standard Bible

Then one of the Twelve—the man called Judas Iscariot—went to the chief priests and said, "What are you willing to give me if I hand Him over to you?" So they weighed out 30 pieces of silver for him. And from that time he started looking for a good opportunity to betray Him.

On the first day of Unleavened Bread the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Where do You want us to prepare the Passover so You may eat it?"

"Go into the city to a certain man," He said, "and tell him, 'The Teacher says: My time is near; I am celebrating the Passover at your place with My disciples.'" So the disciples did as Jesus had directed them and prepared the Passover. When evening came, He was reclining at the table with the Twelve. While they were eating, He said, "I assure you: One of you will betray Me."

Deeply distressed, each one began to say to Him, “Surely not I, Lord?”

He replied, “The one who dipped his hand with Me in the bowl—he will betray Me. The Son of Man will go just as it is written about Him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that man if he had not been born.”

Then Judas, His betrayer, replied, “Surely not I, Rabbi?”

“You have said it,” He told him.

As they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, gave it to the disciples, and said, “Take and eat it; this is My body.” Then He took a cup, and after giving thanks, He gave it to them and said, “Drink from it, all of you. For this is My blood that establishes the covenant; it is shed for many for the forgiveness of sins. But I tell you, from this moment I will not drink of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it in a new way in My Father’s kingdom with you.” After singing psalms, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

Then Jesus said to them, “Tonight all of you will run away because of Me, for it is written: I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered. But after I have been resurrected, I will go ahead of you to Galilee.”

Peter told Him, “Even if everyone runs away because of You, I will never run away!”

“I assure you,” Jesus said to him, “tonight, before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times!”

“Even if I have to die with You,” Peter told Him, “I will never deny You!” And all the disciples said the same thing.

Then Jesus came with them to a place called Gethsemane, and He told the disciples, “Sit here while I go over there and pray.”

Taking along Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, He began to be sorrowful and deeply

distressed. Then He said to them, “My soul is swallowed up in sorrow — to the point of death. Remain here and stay awake with Me.” Going a little farther, He fell face down and prayed, “My Father! If it is possible, let this cup pass from Me. Yet not as I will, but as You will.”

Then He came to the disciples and found them sleeping. He asked Peter, “So, couldn’t you stay awake with Me one hour? Stay awake and pray, so that you won’t enter into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.”

Again, a second time, He went away and prayed, “My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, Your will be done.” And He came again and found them sleeping, because they could not keep their eyes open.

After leaving them, He went away again and prayed a third time, saying the same thing once more. Then He came to the disciples and said to them, “Are you still sleeping and resting? Look, the time is near. The Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners. Get up; let’s go! See, My betrayer is near.”

While He was still speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, suddenly arrived. A large mob, with swords and clubs, was with him from the chief priests and elders of the people. His betrayer had given them a sign: “The One I kiss, He’s the One; arrest Him!” So he went right up to Jesus and said, “Greetings, Rabbi!” and kissed Him.

“Friend,” Jesus asked him, “why have you come?”

Then they came up, took hold of Jesus, and arrested Him. At that moment one of those with Jesus reached out his hand and drew his sword. He struck the high priest’s slave and cut off his ear.

Then Jesus told him, “Put your sword back in its place because all who take up a sword will perish by a sword. Or do you think that I cannot call on My Father, and He will provide Me at once with more than 12 legions of angels? How, then, would the Scriptures be fulfilled that say it must happen this way?”

At that time Jesus said to the crowds, "Have you come out with swords and clubs, as if I were a criminal, to capture Me? Every day I used to sit, teaching in the temple complex, and you didn't arrest Me. But all this has happened so that the prophetic Scriptures would be fulfilled." Then all the disciples deserted Him and ran away.

Those who had arrested Jesus led Him away to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders had convened. Meanwhile, Peter was following Him at a distance right to the high priest's courtyard. He went in and was sitting with the temple police to see the outcome.

The chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin were looking for false testimony against Jesus so they could put Him to death. But they could not find any, even though many false witnesses came forward. Finally, two who came forward stated, "This man said, 'I can demolish God's sanctuary and rebuild it in three days.'"

The high priest then stood up and said to Him, "Don't You have an answer to what these men are testifying against You?" But Jesus kept silent. Then the high priest said to Him, "By the living God I place You under oath: tell us if You are the Messiah, the Son of God!"

"You have said it," Jesus told him. "But I tell you, in the future you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of the Power and coming on the clouds of heaven."

Then the high priest tore his robes and said, "He has blasphemed! Why do we still need witnesses? Look, now you've heard the blasphemy! What is your decision?"

They answered, "He deserves death!" Then they spit in His face and beat Him; others slapped Him and said, "Prophecy to us, Messiah! Who hit You?"

Now Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard. A servant approached him and she said, "You were with Jesus the Galilean too."

But he denied it in front of everyone: "I don't know what you're talking about!"

When he had gone out to the gateway, another woman saw him and told those who were there, "This man was with Jesus the Nazarene!"

And again he denied it with an oath, "I don't know the man!"

After a little while those standing there approached and said to Peter, "You certainly are one of them, since even your accent gives you away."

Then he started to curse and to swear with an oath, "I do not know the man!" Immediately a rooster crowed, and Peter remembered the words Jesus had spoken, "Before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times." And he went outside and wept bitterly.

When daybreak came, all the chief priests and the elders of the people plotted against Jesus to put Him to death. After tying Him up, they led Him away and handed Him over to Pilate, the governor.

Then Judas, His betrayer, seeing that He had been condemned, was full of remorse and returned the pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders. "I have sinned by betraying innocent blood," he said.

"What's that to us?" they said. "See to it yourself!"

So he threw the silver into the sanctuary and departed. Then he went and hanged himself.

The chief priests took the silver and said, "It's not lawful to put it into the temple treasury, since it is blood money." So they conferred together and bought the potter's field with it as a burial place for foreigners. Therefore that field has been called "Blood Field" to this day. Then what was spoken through the prophet Jeremiah was fulfilled: They took the 30 pieces of silver, the price of Him whose price was set by the Israelites, and they gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord directed me.

Now Jesus stood before the governor. "Are You the King of the Jews?" the governor asked

Him.

Jesus answered, "You have said it." And while He was being accused by the chief priests and elders, He didn't answer.

Then Pilate said to Him, "Don't You hear how much they are testifying against You?" But He didn't answer him on even one charge, so that the governor was greatly amazed.

At the festival the governor's custom was to release to the crowd a prisoner they wanted. At that time they had a notorious prisoner called Barabbas. So when they had gathered together, Pilate said to them, "Who is it you want me to release for you—Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Messiah?" For he knew they had handed Him over because of envy.

While he was sitting on the judge's bench, his wife sent word to him, "Have nothing to do with that righteous man, for today I've suffered terribly in a dream because of Him!"

The chief priests and the elders, however, persuaded the crowds to ask for Barabbas and to execute Jesus. The governor asked them, "Which of the two do you want me to release for you?"

"Barabbas!" they answered.

Pilate asked them, "What should I do then with Jesus, who is called Messiah?"

They all answered, "Crucify Him!"

Then he said, "Why? What has He done wrong?" But they kept shouting, "Crucify Him!" all the more.

When Pilate saw that he was getting nowhere, but that a riot was starting instead, he took some water, washed his hands in front of the crowd, and said, "I am innocent of this man's blood. See to it yourselves!"

All the people answered, “His blood be on us and on our children!” Then he released Barabbas to them. But after having Jesus flogged, he handed Him over to be crucified.

Then the governor’s soldiers took Jesus into headquarters and gathered the whole company around Him. They stripped Him and dressed Him in a scarlet military robe. They twisted together a crown of thorns, put it on His head, and placed a reed in His right hand. And they knelt down before Him and mocked Him: “Hail, King of the Jews!” Then they spit on Him, took the reed, and kept hitting Him on the head. When they had mocked Him, they stripped Him of the robe, put His clothes on Him, and led Him away to crucify Him.

As they were going out, they found a Cyrenian man named Simon. They forced this man to carry His cross. When they came to a place called Golgotha (which means Skull Place), they gave Him wine mixed with gall to drink. But when He tasted it, He would not drink it. After crucifying Him they divided His clothes by casting lots. Then they sat down and were guarding Him there. Above His head they put up the charge against Him in writing:

THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS.

Then two criminals were crucified with Him, one on the right and one on the left. Those who passed by were yelling insults at Him, shaking their heads and saying, “The One who would demolish the sanctuary and rebuild it in three days, save Yourself! If You are the Son of God, come down from the cross!” In the same way the chief priests, with the scribes and elders, mocked Him and said, “He saved others, but He cannot save Himself! He is the King of Israel! Let Him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in Him. He has put His trust in God; let God rescue Him now—if He wants Him! For He said, ‘I am God’s Son.’” In the same way even the criminals who were crucified with Him kept taunting Him.

From noon until three in the afternoon darkness came over the whole land. About three in the afternoon Jesus cried out with a loud voice, “Elí, Elí, lemá sabachtháni?” that is, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?”

When some of those standing there heard this, they said, “He’s calling for Elijah!”

Immediately one of them ran and got a sponge, filled it with sour wine, fixed it on a reed, and offered Him a drink. But the rest said, "Let's see if Elijah comes to save Him!"

Jesus shouted again with a loud voice and gave up His spirit. Suddenly, the curtain of the sanctuary was split in two from top to bottom; the earth quaked and the rocks were split. The tombs were also opened and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised. And they came out of the tombs after His resurrection, entered the holy city, and appeared to many.

When the centurion and those with him, who were guarding Jesus, saw the earthquake and the things that had happened, they were terrified and said, "This man really was God's Son!" Many women who had followed Jesus from Galilee and ministered to Him were there, looking on from a distance. Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of Zebedee's sons.

When it was evening, a rich man from Arimathea named Joseph came, who himself had also become a disciple of Jesus. He approached Pilate and asked for Jesus' body. Then Pilate ordered that it be released. So Joseph took the body, wrapped it in clean, fine linen, and placed it in his new tomb, which he had cut into the rock. He left after rolling a great stone against the entrance of the tomb. Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were seated there, facing the tomb.

The next day, which followed the preparation day, the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered before Pilate and said, "Sir, we remember that while this deceiver was still alive He said, 'After three days I will rise again.' Therefore give orders that the tomb be made secure until the third day. Otherwise, His disciples may come, steal Him, and tell the people, 'He has been raised from the dead.' Then the last deception will be worse than the first."

You have a guard of soldiers," Pilate told them. "Go and make it as secure as you know how." Then they went and made the tomb secure by sealing the stone and setting the guard.

The Gospel of the Lord

Closing Prayer: On April 15th we remember Damien and Marianne of Molokai, Missionary Priest and Franciscan Nun

In the 1800's, the Hawaiian Islands suffered a severe leprosy epidemic, which was dealt with largely by isolating lepers on the island of Molokai. They were simply dumped there and left to fend for themselves. The crews of the boats carrying them there were afraid to land, so they simply came in close and forced the lepers to jump overboard and scramble through the surf as best they could. Ashore, they found no law and no organized society, simply desperate persons waiting for death.

A Belgian missionary priest, Joseph Van Veuster (Damien of the Fathers of the Sacred Heart), born in 1840, came to Hawaii in 1863, and in 1873 was sent at his own request to Molokai to work among the lepers. He organized burial details and funeral services, so that death might have some dignity. He taught the people how to grow crops and feed themselves better. He organized a choir, and got persons to sing who had not sung in years. He gave them medical attention. Government doctors had been making regular visits, but they were afraid of contacting the disease, and would not come close to the patients. They inspected their sores from a distance and then left medicines on a table and fled. Damien personally washed and anointed and bandaged their sores. There was already a small chapel on the island. It proved too small, and with the aid of patients he built a larger one, which soon overflowed every Sunday. Damien contracted leprosy himself in 1885, and continued to work there until his death on April 15th, 1889.

Mother Marianne Cope was a Franciscan nun of the Sisters of the Third Order of Saint Francis, a religious order of the Roman Catholic Church. She was born in Heppenheim, Germany January 23, 1838. At the age of three her family moved from Germany to the United States, settling in Utica, New York. After joining the Franciscans, she spent nearly a decade as a teacher and then principal in newly established schools for German immigrants. She was also a founding member of two of the first Catholic hospitals in the United States.

In November of 1883, Mother Marianne, then Provincial Mother, traveled from Syracuse to Honolulu with six other nuns to answer a call for aid to the Hansen's disease sufferers. In

1888, she moved to Kalaupapa to help the ailing Father Damien of Moloka'i. When the famed priest died, Mother Marianne Cope took over the care of the patients of Kalaupapa. She was not herself afflicted by the disease, a fact arguably declared to be miraculous considering her close contact with the patients over the course of several years. She remained there until her death on August 9th, 1918.

Let us pray: God of compassion, who binds up the wounds of your children: Help us, following the example of your servants Damien and Marianne, to be bold and loving in service to all who are shunned for the diseases they suffer, that your grace may be poured forth upon all; through Jesus Christ, who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**