

Year B  
Palm Sunday  
Isaiah 50:4-9a  
Psalm 31:9-16  
Philippians 2:5-11  
Mark 15:1-47

The Passion story this morning is really our sermon for today. Hearing the entire passion narrative of trial, crucifixion and death of our Savior is the point of this Palm Sunday service, and I want to respect that. At the same time, this morning I want to talk briefly about Palm Sunday and Holy Week.

It used to be, and some of you probably remember this time before the new prayerbook, that the Palm Sunday service was for telling the story of Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem. The story of people waving palms, and spreading their cloaks on the road to welcome Jesus was a joyful one, and the entire service was joyful. Eventually, however, we realized that most worshipers were not *ever* hearing about the crucifixion. You see, only a small percentage of people attend Holy Week services, so most worshipers were going from Palm Sunday to Easter Sunday—from hearing Jesus being hailed as the Messiah, to Jesus being hailed as the Risen Christ. And this omission of the crucifixion from Jesus' story was theologically unacceptable; after all, we can't have Easter, we can't have salvation, without the crucifixion. We need to remember Jesus's sacrifice, and all that it implies. So now we read the entire story on Palm Sunday.

At the same time, we also still have Holy Week this coming week. The spiritual discipline of reading, praying and meditating on the significance of each day during Holy Week can be a powerful thing. And it can be really challenging. For people who come to church only to be uplifted, Holy Week can be impossible. But worship is not just about us and how we feel. Worship is not designed to always be uplifting. Instead, worship is a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving to God. We say this explicitly when we celebrate the Eucharist. So whenever we worship, we are offering God a sacrifice, not of a dove, or an unblemished lamb, as they did in the Jewish temple, but a sacrifice of our time. A sacrifice of

our attention. A sacrifice of our discomfort. A sacrifice of our grief. A sacrifice of our gratitude, of our praise, and our thanksgiving.

The dates and times of our services this week are in the announcement section of your bulletin. Consider how you want to worship this Holy Week. What sacrifice do you want to make? What offering of yourself to God do you want to give? I pray that this coming time will be a fruitful one for you, and that the Holy Spirit will be powerfully present. Amen.

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