

***“Carrying The Cross Of Jesus” Delivered 04 21 19 by E A Terry***  
Isaiah 53: 1 – 12; Luke 19: 28 – 47; Luke 9:22 – 26; **Mark 15: 1 – 41 (sermon)**

Today is Palm Sunday, but more importantly today is Passion Sunday.

Palm Sunday without the passion of Jesus is a theology designed by Disney World for people who never sin and for people who have never faced the reality of death.

A faith that stops with Palm Sunday is a faith that leaves us dead in our sins and trespasses.

Hebrews 9:22 is clear ***“For without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness”***. Without the death and burial of Jesus there is no resurrection.

A faith that stops with Palm Sunday is a faith that does not have to deal with reality of spiritual death and / or the meaning of Christian discipleship.

When we refer to the passion of Christ we are talking about the suffering Jesus endured during the week before Jesus rose from the tomb.

In addition to The Gospel accounts we can read about the passion of Christ in Acts 1:3, Acts 17:3, Luke 17:25, and Luke 24:26.

The dictionary also defines passion as an obsession, determination, commitment, and fervor.

And certainly Jesus was totally committed to carry out God’s plan to save mankind from sin and eternal death by dying on the cross to pay the price of our sins.

The Jewish religious leaders also were totally committed to putting Jesus to death because Jesus exposed their hypocrisy, their empty religious practices, and their authority.

So today as we sing Hosannas let us begin our journey to the cross and walk the road that leads us through the darkness and reality of Jesus’ betrayal, trials, suffering, and Jesus’ crucifixion.

Our text has several ironies that we will recognize when we recall the actions and words of the 12 disciples.

First, in verse 27 we read ***“They crucified two robbers with Him, one on His right and one on His left.”***

Remember just days earlier James and John were arguing about who was the greatest and they asked Jesus to be in positions of authority, one on His left and one on His right.

In verses 29-32 we read that the crowd hurled insults at Jesus and mocked Jesus calling for another miracle.

And we recall that just days before ***“the whole crowd of disciples praised God in loud voices for all of the miracles they had seen”, saying, “Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!”***  
(Luke 19:37-38)

We recall Jesus’ words to the disciples.

Jesus called them by saying; ***“Follow me”*** (Matthew 4:19) and in Luke’s account we read; ***“whoever wants to be my disciple must deny himself and take up their cross and follow me.”*** (Luke 9:23)

A number of people followed along the road as the Roman soldiers led Jesus to Golgotha to be crucified but from the Gospels it does not appear that The 12 were in the crowd.

It appears that The 12 were afraid and were in hiding.

Next, Simon of Cyrene serves as a substitute disciple.

Remember all of Jesus’ disciples deserted Jesus when Jesus was arrested in the Garden.

Simon boasted, ***“even if I have to die with you, I will never desert you, Jesus.”***

Simon of Cyrene does what Jesus told all of His disciples what we must do - take up Jesus’ cross.

The journey from Palm Sunday to the cross is a journey from an illusion to reality.

Because the same crowd that welcomed Jesus on His triumphant entry into Jerusalem singing ***“Hosanna!”*** is the same crowd that later in that week shouted ***“Crucify Him! Crucify Him!”***

Barabbas, was an insurrectionist who was scheduled to be crucified with the two thieves.

But Pontius Pilate pardoned Barabbas and released Barabbas.

Jesus was crucified in Barabbas’ place.

Jesus was crucified with two thieves.

In Mark 14:48 we read Jesus’ words when the Jewish leaders and the temple guards came to arrest him. ***“Am I leading a rebellion that you have come out with swords and clubs to capture me?”***

And in our lesson from Isaiah that was read earlier we learned that Jesus suffered and died for our sins. Jesus took our place. Jesus was the substitutionary sacrifice for us.

Philippians 2:10 tells us that ***“At the name of Jesus every knee should bow in Heaven and on earth and under the earth and every tongue confess that Jesus is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”***

And in Mark 15:18-20 we read that the Roman soldiers mockingly declared Jesus as king.

The soldiers mockingly fell on their knees to pay homage to Jesus, put a purple robe on Jesus signifying royalty, and placed a crown of thorns on Jesus’ head.

In verse 39 after the Centurion, who was the Roman soldier charged with carrying out Jesus’ execution, heard Jesus’ words from the cross.

The Centurion declared, ***“Surely this man was the Son of God.”***

This Gentile understood who Jesus is and why Jesus came.

But for three years The 12 Disciples had been with Jesus and Jesus had taught them and Jesus had plainly showed them with miracles and Jesus told them who He was, but they didn't get it.

Jesus plainly told them that He must suffer and die but The 12 Disciples did not understand what Jesus was all about.

People who were crucified also had to suffer the humility of being paraded through the streets carrying their own cross.

Some historical records estimate that a cross would have weighed over one hundred pounds.

It is no wonder that Jesus stumbled and fell under the weight of His cross, considering that Jesus had not gotten any sleep and Jesus spent a grueling night of punishment.

Jesus had also lost a lot of blood from the scourging and the beating.

But the fact that Jesus stumbled under the weight of the cross also reminds us that Jesus was fully human as well as being fully Divine.

As you will recall the Jewish leaders arrested Jesus on a Thursday night.

They spent all night questioning Him. In verse 1 we read, ***“it was very early in the morning that the whole Sanhedrin reached a decision to have Jesus put to death.”***

Jesus had spent a long night of questioning and being falsely accused by members of The Sanhedrin.

We read that the members of The Sanhedrin spit on Jesus and blindfolded Jesus.

Then the members of The Sanhedrin slapped Jesus' face, struck Jesus with their fists and said, ***“Prophesy who hit you.”*** (Matthew 26:68)

The temple guards also beat Jesus before the Jewish leaders took Jesus to Pilot for questioning.

After Pilate had finished questioned Jesus he found Jesus innocent of the charges.

But in spite of being found innocent Pontius Pilate had Jesus flogged.

People often died from flogging because the custom was for the whip to have pieces of metal attached to the end of the leather thongs.

The metal tips would rip the flesh to the bone and caused severe bleeding.

Forty lashes usually killed a man so normally the Roman soldier would stop the flogging at 39 lashes.

We also read that the Roman soldiers jammed a crown of thorns on Jesus' head, they mocked Jesus, they humiliated Jesus, they struck Jesus in the head with a staff, and then they took Jesus to be crucified.

The purpose of recalling the Passion story is to lead each of us to the cross.

The cross is the key for us understanding who Jesus is.

Jesus came to earth to die so that you and I could live.

The crucifixion was not the result of an unruly mob.

Jesus voluntarily laid down His life for you and me.

Because of the cross of Jesus you and I have victory over temptation, victory over sin, and victory over spiritual and eternal death.

1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 1:18 says; ***“the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.”***

Hopefully after we consider all the evidence presented in the Bible, we will come to the same conclusion that the Roman centurion did.

***“Surely, Jesus is the Son of God”*** and when we do, we will gladly volunteer to carry Jesus’ cross.

You see the cross is also the key for us understanding discipleship, which is a call to us to deny ourselves, to pick up His cross, and to follow where the crucified, but risen, Son of God leads us.

If we choose to follow Jesus we too will be compelled to carry His cross.

For in Matthew 10:38 Jesus said, ***“Anyone who does not take up his cross and follow me is not worthy of me.”***

Cross bearing begins with the realization that we are all sinners by nature and we are all sinners by our actions.

The Bible tells us that the wages of sin is death. (Romans 6:23)

Cross bearing begins when we acknowledge that we cannot save ourselves, we believe Jesus’ promise of eternal life, and we completely depend upon Jesus alone for our salvation.

Denying ourselves and taking up our cross means to put Jesus in the center of our lives and to follow Jesus’ example of serving others each day.

Any person who is unwilling to do this will lose their eternal life and they will experience spiritual death throughout eternity.

But the Good News of The Cross is that who ever claims Jesus as their Savior by accepting Jesus’ substitutionary death will live!

just exist but they will experience the love, the joy, and the peace of Jesus Christ every day of their life here on earth and they will live in Heaven throughout eternity with The Lord!

The physical in The Bible always points to a spiritual truth.

Simon of Cyrene was compelled to carry Jesus’ cross but each of us have a choice.

Our choice is to accept Jesus as our Savior! And, in a real sense we all have the opportunity to bear Jesus' cross every day.

Just as carrying Jesus' cross interrupted Simon's day and is viewed by many as an inconvenience, we have to be willing to have our days interrupted in order to serve our Lord just like a servant serves His master.

Just as carrying Jesus' cross was a public commitment to serve and acknowledged Simon's association with Jesus, we must be willing to be associated with Jesus when we are around non-believers.

We must be willing to serve Jesus and we must publicly acknowledge Jesus as our Savior and Lord.

Jesus said, ***"Whoever acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven. But whoever disowns me before men, I will disown him before my Father in heaven."*** (Matthew 10:32-33).

The Roman soldiers unknowingly granted Simon of Cyrene a great privilege of carrying Jesus' cross.

I am sure that any of us who know Jesus personally as our Lord would be glad to carry Jesus' cross. You see Simon of Cyrene did what Jesus told all of His disciples we must do.

We must take up our cross daily and follow Jesus' example of love, compassion, service, and forgiveness.

The measure of our devotion to Jesus is **not** measured by our attendance at church, nor is our devotion based upon our behavior on Sunday morning.

But rather our devotion and our commitment to Jesus is measured by our willingness to put our shoulder beneath the cross and carry Jesus' message, Jesus' love, Jesus' forgiveness, Jesus' service, and Jesus' compassion to the people around us each and every day.

The Good News is that Jesus' story does not end with His crucifixion because Jesus defeated evil and death when Jesus rose from the grave on that first Easter morning.

We must always look to the Good News of Easter.

*"Jesus is alive!"*

Jesus is The King of Kings and The Lord of Lords.

Hallelujah!

**AMEN!**