

St. Mary's Episcopal Church

Message by The Rev. Michael Burke

April 4, 2022 Sunday of the Passion



(1 Corinthians 1:21-24)

"...in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. [21] For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom; [23] but, we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, [24] but, to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God."

Over the past twenty years or so, it has been our St. Mary's custom not to have a sermon on this Sunday of the Passion. The thinking was to let the power of the story stand alone, as anything that might be said could distract from it or diminish it.

This year, without any particular reason, we depart a bit from that tradition, but in doing so, I will try to be concise.

The crucifixion stands at the heart of our faith, a holy and redemptive mystery. For it is by Christ's birth, life, ministry, *death upon the cross, and resurrection* that we have been redeemed.

Redeemed: I believe the word covers many other words: Saved, rescued. made whole, delivered, restored, transformed.

Of all the many ways of understanding the crucifixion in Christianity, the Anglican tradition, of which we are a part, has never felt it necessary to say "any one way alone is the singular correct way to understand the cross."

As I look out at the world from where we are in this present moment, this is what seems to resonate with me:

I see horrific images from Ukraine. The depths and breadth of humanity's inhumanity. Hospitals and train stations bombed. Residential neighborhoods destroyed. Civilians shot with their hands tied behind their backs.

Further down the headlines, sometimes buried in the back pages of media accounts: black and brown faces, in Eritrea, Ethiopians, Yemen, the list goes on, from Los Zetas to Rojova¹. Wikipedia lists 43 active wars and conflicts going on right now around the world, in places most of us will never hear of and scarcely recognize or pronounce. In 2020, these conflicts resulted in over 120,000 combat deaths, and millions of civilians killed, wounded, their homes and livelihood destroyed, and families become refugees. Those that survive huddle together and sleep tonight in refugee camps and at border crossings around the world.

In each person, made in the sacred image of God, Christ will be mocked, humiliated, scorned, beaten, and crucified anew.

The crucifixion happened. The crucifixion happens anew each new day.

God is Love, as St. John famously wrote. And God so loved the world that in Jesus, God's own Self was born among us.² In Jesus, God entered the human story. And not just the good parts: the high notes, the moments of triumph. Scripture tells us that "He was tempted in every way as we are, yet did not sin." In Jesus, God entered into the deepest depths of what it means to be human.³

The Passion Gospel gives witness to Jesus' arrest, trial, abuse, humiliation. In it, he is nailed to the cross.

¹ Los Zetas is the region in brutal infighting among rival Mexican gangs, with villages caught between. Rajavas is in northern Syria and Western Kurdistan, where Islamist factions battle to establish control and self-autonomy.

² Compare John 3:16.

³ Hebrews 4:14-16 "For we do not have a High Priest who is unable to sympathize *and* understand our weaknesses *and* temptations, but One who has been tempted [knowing exactly how it feels to be human] in every respect as *we are, yet* without [committing any] sin." (Amplified Bible)

In the Passion Gospel according to St. Matthew, which is slightly different from the version in Luke's Gospel that we have heard today, the last words from Jesus are those of Psalm 22. "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" (My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?)

Psalm 22 in the Hebrew Scriptures gives voice to perhaps the lowest point in the human experience. It is cry of lament wailed from the lowest point in the valley of the shadow of death. For to be in pain, and feel that even God cannot be found, is to be lost indeed. With those words, God's self-identification with humanity is complete. ⁴ And then, it is finished.

It is finished. But it has only begun. For on the third day, on early Easter morning, one week from today, we celebrate the resurrection. As we have been taken into God's own being on the cross, so do we rise on that third day.

In between is a liminal period, one of the most profound times of the Christian year – the experience of Holy Saturday. Between the victory won for us upon the cross, and its fulfillment in the resurrection.

Many times, we know what is like to find our lives suspended in the balance. There we wait, and listen, and breathe... and be. Like the seed beneath the winter's frozen ground, already new life is undergoing changes.

Awaiting the day and the hour. Waiting, with those in the refugee camps of the deserts of South Sudan. The tent cities of Syria, On the far banks of the river crossings of Guatemala. In the mountains of Columbia, going back to the time of *The Violencia*.⁵

And closer to where we live: in homes where violence rules unchallenged. In the alleyways of our cities. Under bridges. Behind dumpsters. In institutions, locked away and forgotten. In nursing homes and hospitals, alone.

Waiting, keeping alive the flame of hope among the hopeless.⁶
Awaiting the realization of the victory already won,
In places where it is perpetually Good Friday and Holy Saturday.

They wait. Waiting for the Miracle.

⁴ Phillipians2:5-8: "Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, ⁷ but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, ⁸ he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death — even death on a cross."

⁵ See: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Colombian_conflict and <https://justiceforcolombia.org/about-colombia/colombian-armed-conflict/#Latest%20Armed%20Conflict%20News>

⁶

And so we, too, will wait. It is a sacred and a holy thing. We wait in witness. We read Psalm 22 together. We await some more, so they do not wait alone. For we are members of one another in this this sacred, mystical Body of Christ. .

With them, we wait... For the first dawning of the light. The rumble of the entrance to the tomb as it rumbles in the still-darkness.

When the Song of Redemption shall at long last rise from our souls... our hearts... our bodies...

Yes, friends, Easter is coming. But let us not *hasten* through this Holy Week to come. But move slowly, deliberately, attentively...

and with our prayerful hearts - broken, wounded, and on fire with the Passion of God...

Amen.

⁷ Matthew 27:46 : "And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (NIV)

Scripture Readings for this day:

at The Liturgy of the Palms

The Gospel - Luke 19:28-40

After telling a parable to the crowd at Jericho, Jesus went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem. When he had come near Bethphage and Bethany, at the place called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of the disciples, saying, "Go into the village ahead of you, and as you enter it you will find tied there a colt that has never been ridden. Untie it and bring it here. If anyone asks you, 'Why are you untying it?' just say this, 'The Lord needs it.'" So those who were sent departed and found it as he had told them. As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, "Why are you untying the colt?" They said, "The Lord needs it." Then they brought it to Jesus; and after throwing their cloaks on the colt, they set Jesus on it. As he rode along, people kept spreading their cloaks on the road. As he was now approaching the path down from the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to praise God joyfully with a loud voice for all the deeds of power that they had seen, saying,

"Blessed is the king
who comes in the name of the Lord!

Peace in heaven,
and glory in the highest heaven!"

Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, order your disciples to stop." He answered, "I tell you, if these were silent, the stones would shout out."

The Psalm - Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29

1 Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; *
his mercy endures for ever.

2 Let Israel now proclaim, *
"His mercy endures for ever."

19 Open for me the gates of righteousness; *
I will enter them;
I will offer thanks to the Lord.

20 "This is the gate of the Lord; *
he who is righteous may enter."

21 I will give thanks to you, for you answered me *
and have become my salvation.

22 The same stone which the builders rejected *
has become the chief cornerstone.

23 This is the Lord's doing, *
and it is marvelous in our eyes.

24 On this day the Lord has acted; *
we will rejoice and be glad in it.

25 Hosannah, Lord, hosannah! *
Lord, send us now success.

26 Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord; *
we bless you from the house of the Lord.

27 God is the Lord; he has shined upon us; *
form a procession with branches up to the horns of the altar.

28 "You are my God, and I will thank you; *
you are my God, and I will exalt you."

29 Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; *
his mercy endures for ever.

***at* The Liturgy of the Word**

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

The Lord God has given me
the tongue of a teacher,

that I may know how to sustain
the weary with a word.

Morning by morning he wakens--
wakens my ear
to listen as those who are taught.

The Lord God has opened my ear,
and I was not rebellious,
I did not turn backward.

I gave my back to those who struck me,
and my cheeks to those who pulled out the beard;

I did not hide my face
from insult and spitting.

The Lord God helps me;
therefore I have not been disgraced;

therefore I have set my face like 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 are my adversaries?
Let them confront me.

It is the Lord God who helps me;
who will declare me guilty?

The Psalm - Psalm 31:9-16

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."

The Epistle - Philippians 2:5-11

Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus,

who, though he was in the form of God,
did not regard equality with God
as something to be exploited,

but emptied himself,
taking the form of a slave,
being born in human likeness.

And being found in human form,
he humbled himself
and became obedient to the point of death--
even death on a cross.

Therefore God also highly exalted him
and gave him the name
that is above every name,

so that at the name of Jesus
every knee should bend,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

and every tongue should confess
that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.

The Gospel - Luke 22:14-23:56

When the hour for the Passover meal came, Jesus took his place at the table, and the apostles with him. He said to them, "I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; for I tell you, I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God." Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he said, "Take this and divide it among yourselves; for I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes." Then he took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." And he did the same with the cup after supper, saying, "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood. But see, the one who betrays me is with me, and his hand is on the table. For the Son of Man is going as it has been determined, but woe to that one by whom he is betrayed!" Then they began to ask one another, which one of them it could be who would do this.

A dispute also arose among them as to which one of them was to be regarded as the greatest. But he said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those in authority over them are called benefactors. But not so with you; rather the greatest among you must become like the youngest, and the leader like one who serves. For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one at the table? But I am among you as one who serves.

"You are those who have stood by me in my trials; and I confer on you, just as my Father has conferred on me, a kingdom, so that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and you will sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

"Simon, Simon, listen! Satan has demanded to sift all of you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your own faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned back, strengthen your brothers." And he said to him, "Lord, I am ready to go with you to prison and to death!" Jesus said, "I tell you, Peter, the cock will not crow this day, until you have denied three times that you know me."

He said to them, "When I sent you out without a purse, bag, or sandals, did you lack anything?" They said, "No, not a thing." He said to them, "But now, the one who has a purse must take it, and likewise a bag. And the one who has no sword must sell his cloak and buy one. For I tell you, this scripture must be fulfilled in me, 'And he was counted among the lawless'; and indeed what is written about me is being fulfilled." They said, "Lord, look, here are two swords." He replied, "It is enough."

He came out and went, as was his custom, to the Mount of Olives; and the disciples followed him. When he reached the place, he said to them, "Pray that you may not come into the time of trial." Then he withdrew from them about a stone's throw, knelt down, and prayed, "Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me; yet, not my will but yours be done." Then an angel from heaven appeared to him and gave him strength. In his anguish he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down on the ground. When he got up from prayer, he came to the disciples and found them sleeping because of grief, and he said to them, "Why are you sleeping? Get up and pray that you may not come into the time of trial."

While he was still speaking, suddenly a crowd came, and the one called Judas, one of the twelve, was leading them. He approached Jesus to kiss him; but Jesus said to him, "Judas, is it with a kiss that you are betraying the Son of Man?" When those who were around him saw what was coming, they asked, "Lord, should we strike with the sword?" Then one of them struck the slave of the high priest and cut off his right ear. But Jesus said, "No more of this!" And he touched his ear and healed him. Then Jesus said to the chief priests, the officers of the temple police, and the elders who had come for him, "Have you come out with swords and clubs as if I were a bandit? When I was with you day after day in the temple, you did not lay hands on me. But this is your hour, and the power of darkness!"

Then they seized him and led him away, bringing him into the high priest's house. But Peter was following at a distance. When they had kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and sat down together, Peter sat among them. Then a servant-girl, seeing him in the firelight, stared at him and said, "This man also was with him." But he denied it, saying, "Woman, I do not know him." A little later someone else, on seeing him, said, "You also are one of them." But Peter said, "Man, I am not!" Then about an hour later still another kept insisting, "Surely this man also was with him; for he is a Galilean." But Peter said, "Man, I do not know what you are talking about!" At that moment, while he was still speaking, the cock crowed. The Lord turned and looked at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said to him, "Before the cock crows today, you will deny me three times." And he went out and wept bitterly.

Now the men who were holding Jesus began to mock him and beat him; they also blindfolded him and kept asking him, "Prophecy! Who is it that struck you?" They kept heaping many other insults on him.

When day came, the assembly of the elders of the people, both chief priests and scribes, gathered together, and they brought him to their council. They said, "If you are the Messiah, tell us." He replied, "If I tell you, you will not believe; and if I question you, you will not answer. But from now on the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the power of God." All of them asked, "Are you, then, the Son of God?" He said to them, "You say that I am." Then they said, "What further testimony do we need? We have heard it ourselves from his own lips!"

Then the assembly rose as a body and brought Jesus before Pilate. They began to accuse him, saying, "We found this man perverting our nation, forbidding us to pay taxes to the emperor, and saying that he himself is the Messiah, a king." Then Pilate asked him, "Are you the king of the Jews?" He answered, "You

say so." Then Pilate said to the chief priests and the crowds, "I find no basis for an accusation against this man." But they were insistent and said, "He stirs up the people by teaching throughout all Judea, from Galilee where he began even to this place."

When Pilate heard this, he asked whether the man was a Galilean. And when he learned that he was under Herod's jurisdiction, he sent him off to Herod, who was himself in Jerusalem at that time. When Herod saw Jesus, he was very glad, for he had been wanting to see him for a long time, because he had heard about him and was hoping to see him perform some sign. He questioned him at some length, but Jesus gave him no answer. The chief priests and the scribes stood by, vehemently accusing him. Even Herod with his soldiers treated him with contempt and mocked him; then he put an elegant robe on him, and sent him back to Pilate. That same day Herod and Pilate became friends with each other; before this they had been enemies.

Pilate then called together the chief priests, the leaders, and the people, and said to them, "You brought me this man as one who was perverting the people; and here I have examined him in your presence and have not found this man guilty of any of your charges against him. Neither has Herod, for he sent him back to us. Indeed, he has done nothing to deserve death. I will therefore have him flogged and release him."

Then they all shouted out together, "Away with this fellow! Release Barabbas for us!" (This was a man who had been put in prison for an insurrection that had taken place in the city, and for murder.) Pilate, wanting to release Jesus, addressed them again; but they kept shouting, "Crucify, crucify him!" A third time he said to them, "Why, what evil has he done? I have found in him no ground for the sentence of death; I will therefore have him flogged and then release him." But they kept urgently demanding with loud shouts that he should be crucified; and their voices prevailed. So Pilate gave his verdict that their demand should be granted. He released the man they asked for, the one who had been put in prison for insurrection and murder, and he handed Jesus over as they wished.

As they led him away, they seized a man, Simon of Cyrene, who was coming from the country, and they laid the cross on him, and made him carry it behind Jesus. A great number of the people followed him, and among them were women who were beating their breasts and wailing for him. But Jesus turned to them and said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For the days are surely coming when they will say, 'Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bore, and the breasts that never nursed.' Then they will begin to say to the mountains, 'Fall on us'; and to the hills, 'Cover us.' For if they do this when the wood is green, what will happen when it is dry?"

Two others also, who were criminals, were led away to be put to death with him. When they came to the place that is called The Skull, they crucified Jesus there with the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. Then Jesus said, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing." And they cast lots to divide his clothing. And the people stood by, watching; but the leaders scoffed at him, saying, "He saved others; let him save himself if he is the Messiah of God, his chosen one!" The soldiers also mocked

him, coming up and offering him sour wine, and saying, "If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!" There was also an inscription over him, "This is the King of the Jews."

One of the criminals who were hanged there kept deriding him and saying, "Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us!" But the other rebuked him, saying, "Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed have been condemned justly, for we are getting what we deserve for our deeds, but this man has done nothing wrong." Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." He replied, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise."

It was now about noon, and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon, while the sun's light failed; and the curtain of the temple was torn in two. Then Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said, "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit." Having said this, he breathed his last. When the centurion saw what had taken place, he praised God and said, "Certainly this man was innocent." And when all the crowds who had gathered there for this spectacle saw what had taken place, they returned home, beating their breasts. But all his acquaintances, including the women who had followed him from Galilee, stood at a distance, watching these things.

Now there was a good and righteous man named Joseph, who, though a member of the council, had not agreed to their plan and action. He came from the Jewish town of Arimathea, and he was waiting expectantly for the kingdom of God. This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then he took it down, wrapped it in a linen cloth, and laid it in a rock-hewn tomb where no one had ever been laid. It was the day of Preparation, and the sabbath was beginning. The women who had come with him from Galilee followed, and they saw the tomb and how his body was laid. Then they returned, and prepared spices and ointments.

On the sabbath they rested according to the commandment.

or

Luke 23:1-49

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Songfile:

Waiting for a Miracle

[Bruce Cockburn](#)

Look at them working in the hot sun
 The pilloried saints and the fallen ones
 Working and waiting for the night to come
 And waiting for a, and waiting for a, and waiting for
 a miracle
 Somewhere out there is a place that's cool
 Where peace and balance are the rule
 Working toward a future like some kind of mystic
 jewel
 And waiting for a, and waiting for a, and waiting for
 a miracle

You rub your palm on the grimy pane
 In the hope that you can see (when you're waiting)
 You stand up proud, you pretend you're strong
 In the hope that you can be (when you're waiting)
 Like the ones who've cried, like the ones who've died
 Trying to set the angel in us free

While they're waiting for a
 While they're waiting for a
 While they're waiting for a miracle

Struggle for a dollar, scuffle for a dime
 Step out from the past and try to hold the line

So how come history takes such a long, long time?

When you're waiting for a
 When you're waiting for a
 When you're waiting for a miracle

You rub your palm on the grimy pane
 In the hope that you can see (when you're waiting)
 You stand up proud, you pretend you're strong
 In the hope that you can be (when you're waiting)
 Like the ones who've cried, like the ones who've died
 Trying to set the angel in us free

While they're waiting for a
 While they're waiting for a
 While they're waiting for a miracle

While they're waiting for a
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While they're waiting for a
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 While they're waiting for a miracle

Source: [LyricFind](#)

Songwriters: Bruce Cockburn

Waiting for a Miracle lyrics © Carlin America Inc

Last Night of the World

Song by Bruce Cockburn

... I'm sipping Flor De Caña and lime juice, it's three a.m.
Blow a fruit fly off the rim of my glass
The radio's playing Superchunk and the Friends of Dean Martinez

... Midnight it was bike tires whacking the pot holes
Milling humans' shivering energy glow
Fusing the space between them with bar-throb bass and laughter

... If this were the last night of the world
What would I do?
What would I do that was different
Unless it was champagne with you?

... I learned as a child not to trust in my body
I've carried that burden through my life
But there's a day when we all have to be pried loose

... If this were the last night of the world
What would I do?
What would I do that was different
Unless it was champagne with you?

**... I've seen the flame of hope among the hopeless
And that was truly the biggest heartbreak of all
That was the straw that broke me open**

... If this were the last night of the world
What would I do?
What would I do that was different
Unless it was champagne with you?

Source: [Musixmatch](#)

Songwriters: Bruce Cockburn

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