

Palm Sunday, 2010
Good Hope Lutheran Church

In the name of Jesus Christ+, Amen.

On Sunday morning, He rode a donkey. Much like a chauffeured stretch limousine today, to ride a donkey into Jerusalem meant in ancient Israel that you were somebody special, a celebrity somehow. Maybe even, a king. Crowds cheered, women smiled and waved; small men with smaller personal agendas pressed in, eager to be seen in His presence. And all the while palm branches, like archaic ticker tape, waved in the breeze. A hero's welcome. That was Sunday morning

By Wednesday evening the mood had changed, and for the worse. Stirred up by various vested interests, and turned off by His apparent lack of political savvy, the crowds began quietly crumbling; then openly jeering. Late Thursday night He was arrested, in a little park on the outskirts of town. The move to arrest Him was made quietly, cautiously, under the cover of darkness, lest the crowds come rushing to His rescue. The authorities, really didn't need to worry. Nobody, came rushing to His rescue. They all ran away, including His best friends. One of them even went so far as to volunteer to turn Him in. Certainly Sunday's "cheering crowds" were nowhere to be found.

The following day, a Friday, a kangaroo court convened, one in which the Roman governor Pilate was made to jump through the appropriate hoops, before washing His hands of the whole sorry mess—plausible deniability it was called, something as familiar to American politicians today as it was to Roman governors then. The court reached its inevitable verdict, Pilate pronounced the necessary sentence, and the case was closed—He was taken out to be whipped, beaten, mocked, humiliated; and finally crucified.

To imagine, even for a moment, that we would have done anything different had we been there, is folly. Pure, folly. I mean, look at your life—each and every day we deny and betray Jesus, each and every day our words and deeds are an embarrassment to Him, we humiliate Him. The motto of the human race from day 1 till these present unhappy times has always been the same, What's in it for me. What's in it for me, and if that's your motto—and it is—neither you nor me nor anyone else would ever be caught dead within 100 miles of the cross.

But He was. He was, caught dead. And He stayed caught dead for three whole days, till something interesting happened.

We'll come back to that. For now, the story, of the death He died for us, for our forgiveness, for our salvation. We turn to the larger, printed insert, the Passion of our Lord Jesus according to St. Luke.

I wish to thank those of you who have agreed to read individual parts.

7:45 I invite the men reading the parts of Jesus and the Evangelist to come forward to the microphones. As they come forward I point out to the congregation as a whole that you will be reading the part of, the congregation. Not hard to figure out maybe, but follow along with the text and be prepared to read when those lines come up. Thank you.

10 a.m. I invite the men reading the parts of Jesus and the Narrator to come forward to the microphones. As they come forward I point out to the congregation as a whole that you actually have two parts to read. You as a group will read the part of the Disciples, and later in the text you will also read the part of the Crowd. That seems to make sense, if you think about it—the very people who called themselves disciples and, followers of Jesus; turned out to be the ones in the crowd who shouted for His death. You as a congregation read both the part of the Disciples and later, the part of the Crowd, follow the text carefully, and let us begin.