



**Sermon by: Rev. Dr. Randy Bush**  
**Text: Luke 22:39 – 23:56**

**April 13, 2025**

### **Words of Reflection**

Reading from the bible is one of the most common things we do here in church and yet the thing we talk the least about. Why do we read from the bible? Because it is God's word. Because it contains the stories of our faith. Because it can guide us on how to live our lives today. All of that is true, yet it is far from the full truth.

You all know the bible is composed of different types of writings, divided into two parts – what we call the Old and New Testaments. On any given Sunday, you will likely hear readings from a couple parts of the bible – maybe a Psalm plus something from the writings of Paul or one of the gospels. We don't tend to read long passages of scripture, which helps keep our services to one hour but doesn't necessarily help with your spiritual growth. If you came to worship every week, you might be able to string together the short passages read each Sunday into one coherent narrative; or if you routinely read the bible at home, you would know how one group of verses fits into the larger story. But sadly, neither of those options is common anymore.

People often say that they want sermons to be relevant to their daily lives - to give them something they can take away and ponder once they're outside these walls. Ministers want to please people, so we try to do just that. We break scripture down into small chunks; we summarize bible truths into weekly portions easy to digest. But the bible is not a reference book to sample in small doses; it's a world into which we step, an ocean in which we swim, a panorama that extends before us, behind us, above and below us.

The time between Palm Sunday and Easter is the perfect reminder of this truth about the bible. The longest part of all four gospels is the epic story of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem, his eventual arrest, crucifixion, death, and resurrection. Yes, we'll re-tell that story today and on Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, Holy Saturday, and Easter Sunday. This week you'll hear again about palm branches and a Last Supper, about a betrayer's kiss, a phony trial, an angry mob, an act of capital punishment, and a burial in a borrowed tomb. But sometimes it is important to hear it all at once. Which is why today's service is both Palm Sunday and Passion Sunday.

Reading entire stories from the bible is an act of defiance. Outside these walls the prevalent culture insists that everything can be made sense of without God. Inside these walls we have the audacity to insist humbly, imperfectly, that what truly matters in this world only makes sense with God.

Reading entire stories from the bible is also an act of love. Every part of the bible presupposes a believing community whose identity was shaped by the very words we share in church – words that were repeated, treasured, handed down by the collective wisdom of generations before us. Scripture asks something of us. It asks that we listen, that we take it seriously, that we argue with it and ponder it and let it wash over us in waves of images. And each time we hear it, it asks us to listen for what stands out – to listen for what disturbs and unsettles us – and then look to God in Christ to glimpse for ourselves a fresh awareness of what is eternally true in our brief, earthly moment of time.

So listen to the Holy Week story again from the beloved words of Luke's gospel.

But first: let us pray:

*Gracious God, as we enter this Holy Week, move beside us from the parade of palms to the somber march to the cross. Quiet within us our individual voices so that the story of the passion of Christ may become your word for us today. By the power of your Holy Spirit, may we have the same mind that was in Christ Jesus, who was, who is, and who shall be forevermore. Amen.*

**TEXT: Luke 22:39 – 23:56**

**39** He came out and went, as was his custom, to the Mount of Olives; and the disciples followed him. **40** When he reached the place, he said to them, "Pray that you may not come into the time of trial." **41** Then he withdrew from them about a stone's throw, knelt down, and prayed, **42** "Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me; yet, not my will but yours be done." **43** [Then an angel from heaven appeared to him and gave him strength. **44** In his anguish he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down on the ground.] **45** When he got up from prayer, he came to the disciples and found them sleeping because of grief, **46** and he said to them, "Why are you sleeping? Get up and pray that you may not come into the time of trial." **47** 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; **48** but Jesus said to him, "Judas, is it with a kiss that you are betraying the Son of Man?" **49** When those who were around him saw what was coming, they asked, "Lord, should we strike with the sword?" **50** Then one of them struck the slave of the high priest and cut off his right ear. **51** But Jesus said, "No more of this!" And he touched his ear and healed him. **52** 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? **53** 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!" **54** Then they seized him and led him away, bringing him into the high priest's house. But Peter was following at a distance. **55** When they had kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and sat down together, Peter sat among them. **56** Then a servant-girl, seeing him in the firelight, stared at him and said, "This man also was with him." **57** But he denied it, saying, "Woman, I do not know him." **58** A little later someone else, on seeing him, said, "You also are one of them." But Peter said, "Man, I am not!" **59** Then about an hour later still another kept insisting, "Surely this man also was with him; for he is a Galilean." **60** But Peter said,

"Man, I do not know what you are talking about!" At that moment, while he was still speaking, the cock crowed. **61** 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." **62** And he went out and wept bitterly. **63** Now the men who were holding Jesus began to mock him and beat him; **64** they also blindfolded him and kept asking him, "Prophecy! Who is it that struck you?" **65** They kept heaping many other insults on him.

**66** 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. **67** They said, "If you are the Messiah, tell us." He replied, "If I tell you, you will not believe; **68** and if I question you, you will not answer. **69** But from now on the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the power of God." **70** All of them asked, "Are you, then, the Son of God?" He said to them, "You say that I am." **71** Then they said, "What further testimony do we need? We have heard it ourselves from his own lips!"

**1** Then the assembly rose as a body and brought Jesus before Pilate. **2** 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." **3** Then Pilate asked him, "Are you the king of the Jews?" He answered, "You say so." **4** Then Pilate said to the chief priests and the crowds, "I find no basis for an accusation against this man." **5** 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." **6** When Pilate heard this, he asked whether the man was a Galilean. **7** 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. **8** 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. **9** He questioned him at some length, but Jesus gave him no answer. **10** The chief priests and the scribes stood by, vehemently accusing him. **11** 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. **12** That same day Herod and Pilate became friends with each other; before this they had been enemies. **13** Pilate then called together the chief priests, the leaders, and the people, **14** 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. **15** Neither has Herod, for he sent him back to us. Indeed, he has done nothing to deserve death. **16** I will therefore have him flogged and release him." **17 18** Then they all shouted out together, "Away with this fellow! Release Barabbas for us!" **19** (This was a man who had been put in prison for an insurrection that had taken place in the city, and for murder.) **20** Pilate, wanting to release Jesus, addressed them again; **21** but they kept shouting, "Crucify, crucify him!" **22** 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." **23** But they kept urgently demanding with loud shouts that he should be crucified; and their voices prevailed. **24** So Pilate gave his verdict that their demand should be granted. **25** 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.

**26** 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. **27** A great number of the people followed him, and among them were women who were beating their breasts and wailing for him. **28** But Jesus turned to them and said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. **29** 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.' **30** Then they will begin to say to the mountains, "Fall on us'; and to the hills, "Cover us.' **31** For if they do this when the wood is green, what will happen when it is dry?" **32** Two others also, who were criminals, were led away to be put to death with him. **33** 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. **34** [Then Jesus said, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing."] And they cast lots to divide his clothing. **35** 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!" **36** The soldiers also mocked him, coming up and offering him sour wine, **37** and saying, "If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!" **38** There was also an inscription over him, "This is the King of the Jews." **39** One of the criminals who were hanged there kept deriding him and saying, "Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us!" **40** But the other rebuked him, saying, "Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? **41** And we indeed have been condemned justly, for we are getting what we deserve for our deeds, but this man has done nothing wrong." **42** Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." **43** He replied, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise." **44** It was now about noon, and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon, **45** while the sun's light failed; and the curtain of the temple was torn in two. **46** Then Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said, "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit." Having said this, he breathed his last. **47** When the centurion saw what had taken place, he praised God and said, "Certainly this man was innocent." **48** And when all the crowds who had gathered there for this spectacle saw what had taken place, they returned home, beating their breasts. **49** But all his acquaintances, including the women who had followed him from Galilee, stood at a distance, watching these things. **50** Now there was a good and righteous man named Joseph, who, though a member of the council, **51** 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. **52** This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. **53** 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. **54** It was the day of Preparation, and the sabbath was beginning. **55** The women who had come with him from Galilee followed, and they saw the tomb and how his body was laid. **56** Then they returned, and prepared spices and ointments. On the sabbath they rested according to the commandment.