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Our Saviour Lutheran Church  
Palm Sunday  
March 28, 2021

Let us pray...May the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, for you are our strength and you are most certainly our redeemer. Amen.

Sisters and Brothers in Christ, we have just heard the reading of the Passion of our Lord.

And as we think about this most important story of our Christian faith, there is one phrase that should come to our minds.

The faithfulness of Christ.

The faithfulness of Christ.

If there is one thing I would want to hammer home for us this morning, having heard this story of Christ's last moments before death, it is the faithfulness of Christ.

Yes, the whole story of Christ's passion...

The whole story of Christ's suffering and death...

The whole story of redemption for humanity and all creation...

This whole story is a story about the faithfulness of Christ.

PAUSE

Jesus is betrayed by Judas. The authorities come to arrest him.

And our Lord could have up and fled like the other disciples, but instead Jesus doesn't run away. Instead Jesus submits to his arrest.

And we are reminded of the faithfulness of Christ.

And then, after his arrest, Jesus is brought before the Sandhedrin, the Jewish high court, and Jesus is brought before Pilate, the high Roman official invested with the powers of life and death.

And before those authorities, our Lord could have begged forgiveness for whatever wrongs the authorities felt he had committed.

He could have asked for pardon, and had said he would never misbehave in the future.

But instead Jesus is quiet before his accusers.

And we reminded of the faithfulness of Christ.

And then after his presence before the Sanhedrin and before Pilate, Jesus is sentenced and he is led off to be crucified.

And he is nailed to the cross.

And our Lord could have summoned legions of angels to rescue him. He could have been freed from impending death.

But instead Jesus submits to his sentence, and he died a most humiliating death, he died a criminal's death.

And we are reminded of the faithfulness of Christ.

Yes, this story of Jesus' passion, this story of Jesus' suffering and death is a story about the faithfulness of Christ.

PAUSE

Indeed, this story of the Passion is not a story about church doctrines.

This story of the Passion is not a story about Church creeds.

It is not a story about what we are supposed to believe in terms of Church teachings, Church dogma, and canons of religious law.

This story is not about all those things we build our religion around.

This story is about a person who was faithful.

This story is about a man who was obedient to God's will even to the point of death.

This story is about the faithfulness of Christ.

This is what we observe in this story.

We observe God's Son who does not flinch in the face of his calling to walk the way of the cross.

And I find it hard to fathom, really.

I find it hard to comprehend, actually.

God's Son, Jesus Christ, who could see his future, who could see his fate as clear as day...

Jesus could see what awaited him in Jerusalem.

In fact, he predicted his Passion three times in the gospel of Mark.

He predicted that he would be arrested, that he would be condemned, that he would suffer and die, and on the third day rise again.

Jesus knew what awaited him, and yet he still made the journey to Jerusalem anyway.

Jesus still made that journey into the heart of darkness.

Jesus still obediently fulfilled his calling, even though he knew what was waiting for him.

And we are reminded then of the great faithfulness of Christ.

And so, when I say that the story of Jesus' Passion is not about doctrines, and creeds, and Church teachings...

That it is not about church dogmas, and religious canon law...

What I mean by that is that the story of Jesus' Passion is not trying to move us simply to proclaim "Jesus Christ is Lord."

No, I think it is more than that.

I think this gospel reading wants to challenge us, it may even want to critique us and even convict us.

I think this gospel reading wants to tell us that faithfulness is more than words that we speak, more than an announcement about the person in whom we trust.

"I believe in Jesus Christ." Faithfulness is more than that.

Faithfulness is action, it is animation, it is a calling.

Jesus was not faithful because he made a declaration about believing in the God the Father.

Jesus was not faithful because he could ramble on about doctrines pertaining to God.

Jesus was faithful because he put his belief into action.

He followed his calling from God.

He was obedient to God's will even to the point of death on a cross.

PAUSE

Now this is not to say that we are being called to die on a cross.

There can only be one Jesus, and you and I are not him.

But even though we are not Jesus, we are still called to be obedient to God, we are still call to be faithful.

And that obedience to God may take various forms, shapes, and sizes.

Faithfulness is not a one size fits all kind of thing.

It is kind of like clothing.

Our waistlines are different. Our inseams are different. Our neck sizes are different.

Faithfulness is contextual. It is dependent to some extent on where we are in life, what we do in life, and who we are.

Faithfulness is to unique to our given person.

And faithfulness then, knowing God's will for our particular life can be the most challenging thing in our life to discern.

What does God want ME to do with MY life? What is God's will for ME? Who does God want ME to be? How am I supposed to serve? What is MY calling?

And the thing is, that question—What is God's will for me? How am I supposed to be faithful?—that question, never, never goes away.

PAUSE

We might have become empty-nesters, such that our kids are out on their own.

We might have retired from our jobs, maybe having been highly successful in our careers.

We might have accomplished all that we had ever dreamed.

We might be in our 70s, our 80s or even our 90s.

We might have done all these great things, but come the end of the day the question is still there: what is God calling me to do? How can I be faithful to God's will for my life?

PAUSE

One of the most powerful lines in the movies speaks to this very thing.

In the movie *Forest Gump*, a movie you have seen, but in this movie from many years back, the main character played by Tom Hanks is talking to his dying mother, played by Sally Field.

And at this point in his life, Forest has been a college football star.

He has been a war hero, who has received the Congressional Medal of Honor.

He has been a ping pong champion, who had competed in China.

And he has been a shrimp boat captain, whose shrimp business has become a household name.

And here he is, with all of these accomplishments, there Forest is talking with his mother, and he asks her, "What is my destiny, Mama?"

In other words, "What is God still calling me to do?"

What is my purpose in life?

What is God's will for me?

Anyone one of these accomplishments could have defined who Forest has become in life. We would think, Forest could up and retire.

But Forest recognizes that God still has plans for him.

God still has more defining of his person to do.

And so Forest asks, “What is my destiny, Mama?”

And she tells Forest, that most famous line from the movie: “You will have to figure that out that destiny for yourself. Life is like a box of chocolates, Forest. You never know what you are going to get.”

PAUSE

That question is the question that challenges us everyday, sisters and brothers in Christ.

Regardless of our station in life.

Regardless of our age.

Regardless of our past accomplishments.

This is the question that is ever before us.

What is my destiny? What is my purpose? What is my calling? What does it mean for me to be faithful to God’s will?

PAUSE

So, in this Holy Week, sisters and brothers in Christ.

In this most sacred time in the Church year, we are observing the faithfulness of Christ, from Maundy Thursday, to Good Friday, to Easter morning.

And it is not just a moment for us to ponder the great mystery of Christ’s faithfulness—the suffering, death, and resurrection of Christ Jesus.

It is not just a moment for us to witness again Christ’s faithfulness on our behalf.

But it is also a moment for us to consider our own faithfulness.

It is also a moment for us to consider our own holy journey in life.

It is also a moment for us to consider how we are obediently fulfilling God’s will.

It is moment to discern our own journey of faithfulness.

That journey may lead us to go outside our comfort zone, to serve in ways we may not have considered before.

That journey may lead us to places where we may even be a bit uncomfortable.

Our holy journey in life may challenge us, probably should challenge us.

Our holy journey should test us and try us.

But this is not to be wondered at, because faithfulness to God's will, required our Lord to experience the greatest of all trials on the cross.

But through that trial there is new life, there is resurrection, there is victory over sin and death.

I pray that each one of us embraces our calling, walking in faith where God leads the way, knowing that whatever befalls us, there is the blessing of God on the other side.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

In Christ we pray...Amen.