



Sermon, Palm Sunday April 2, 2023

“Our Role in Holy Week”

SCRIPTURE: 1 Corinthians 2:8 ⁸ and which none of the rulers of this age understood, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

Our Role in Holy Week

The first order of business is that this message is a paraphrase of a sermon written by Reverend Arthur John Gossip. I say “paraphrase”; you could also say “plagiarized.”

Next order of business is that I wrote this on Wednesday night and it might not be the same on Sunday morning because a lot has happened in the last few days.

How did it happen, this horrible experience? What bout of insanity took hold of everyone? But there was no superhuman act of evil, just a group of people who got together and committed an act of mob violence. And they went home to their families and were satisfied with their work. Let us remember that our lives could ring with the hammering, driving the nails home.

We could just as easily be caught up in the moment and swept away by prevailing opinion, and then our hands would bear the blood of an innocent.

In every age somehow, someway, we humans justify our execution of another mother's child who refused to fit in or we turn a blind eye to our hypocrisy.

The Role of the Pharisees

This group hated Jesus.

Jesus was uneducated and hung out with common folk, not the elite that they associated with. He hung out with dirty, ill-mannered ruffians.

The kind who were beneath the cultured men of the Sanhedrin.

The Sanhedrin men prayed, fasted, read the law, and kept the commandments that came from Moses, they were the best of Israel. But the truth be told, they were just as bigoted, if not more so, than the public who made sacrifices and put money in the poor box.

These men were stuck in the past, where they had everyone's respect, because they had been told to do so. Just another group of haves, who would not, could not, let go of their power and prestige. They had written the rules to ensure that they would always be the top dogs.

The Role of the Sadducees

And then there were the Sadducees. Religious leaders with no more spirituality than the wall around Jerusalem. They no longer provided leadership, but took on the role of businessmen. They ran the physical part of religion, they collected money and distributed it, slowly, to the widows and orphans, the cripples and the possessed.

All of this was after their needs were met.

They didn't need Jesus to remind them of the missed opportunities to be men of God. It was evident every time the need arose to interpret the words of Moses. And the verdict came down in favor of the well-to-do.



The Role of Judas

What an unhappy soul. We often forget that Jesus chose Judas as one of the twelve.

Jesus prayed over him and deliberated over him before he picked him to be one of the ones that he, Jesus, loved the most. And still Judas betrayed him.

The writers of the Gospels held Judas in low regard, always reminding us of his betrayal. And the vivid picture that these writers paint of his end, in the most un-Jewish of deaths. Suicide with an unclean rope, taken from a dead animal, and on the start of the sabbath.

A man who was looking to be loved by someone, who threw away the greatest love of all. Even the religious leaders turned away from him because they saw his weak and pathetic actions as disgraceful. He sold out his leader for a month's wages.

Did he look to start a revolution ?

Did he expect a miracle from Jesus, an act that would have saved Jesus' life?

Or maybe he thought that by being the one to cause the death of Jesus, he would be hailed as a hero by the government.

And it has never happened, before or since.

The Role of Pilate

Surely as pathetic a figure as there is in the history of humans. A Roman with a Roman's sense of justice, he knew that these charges against Christ were faked. With some quick questions, he had the phony witnesses tripping and falling over their implausible testimony.

They also contradicted one another at all points, quite evidently twisting innocent words into sinister statements that didn't come from Jesus' mouth. Witnesses who wouldn't enter into a Gentile court.

How Pilate hated them!

He wanted to tell this rabble to go away.

This is a mockery!

Pilate wanted to release Jesus.

But in the end, to keep the peace, he signed the execution warrant.

The Role of the People

Lastly there are the people, the common ordinary people of the land. They were in town to celebrate Passover and were getting a show of immense proportion: the execution of a heretic, someone who had stirred up the hierarchy of their religion. Most had no idea who this Galilean was, and probably didn't care. This was an added show for the out-of-towners

And they ate it up!

They joined the throng in shouting "Crucify him!"

Man, would they have a story for the rest of family back home.

The greatest story ever told.

