Palm Sunday, Year B

March 28, 2024

How many times have I worshipped on Palm Sunday and thought after reading the Passion, perhaps we should all have a few minutes to think about what we have just heard, what we have just read, what we have just said. The collective emotion in the room says it all: we cringe as we join in the cries of “Crucify him! Crucify him!” - the mocking, the spitting – and we wonder at Jesus’ silence.

Would you and I actually have joined the crowd? I believe most of us probably would have. We like to think of ourselves as faithful Christians; chances are back then we would have been somewhat observant Jews. The authorities among us - the high priests and scribes - would have at least made us think twice about this man who says he is the Son of God. An observant Jew would not attribute parenthood to God, nor would any human equate himself with the One God: those tenets distinguish the Israelites from others who worship their earthly king as if a god and who worship more than one deity. However much we might have listened to Jesus’ teaching and attempted to follow in his command to love one another, our superiors – those who know better, those who are educated – have planted doubt and seem justified in their horror towards a human who plays God.

So we comply. We join the crowd in calling for this Jesus to be crucified.

That was then. This is now. We know the end of the story.

Do we repeat our mistakes in 2024? Do we blame people without knowing the full story? Do we write off people who differ from us? Do we discount someone who does not share our political beliefs? Do we approach those we don’t know with hostility or suspicion? Do we make assumptions about other folks’ faith or lack of and wait, poised for the attack if they say something we disagree with? Do we disregard the needs of others because we view them as the enemy?

The new commandment: Love one another as I have loved you.

This is not a suggestion, something we can choose to do or not. This is the Son of God, commanding: Love. Even the unlovable.

As the guards raise the wooden cross over us, as we fall on our knees, let us say, Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us.