

Readings for Palm Sunday

The Palm Gospel

John 12:12-16

The great crowd that had come to the festival heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem. So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, shouting, 'Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord – the King of Israel!' Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it; as it is written: 'Do not be afraid, daughter of Zion. Look, your king is coming, sitting on a donkey's colt!' His disciples did not understand these things at first; but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things had been written of him and had been done to him.

Old Testament

Isaiah 50:4-9a

The servant of the LORD said: The Lord GOD has given me the tongue of a teacher, that I may know how to sustain the weary with a word. Morning by morning he wakens – wakens my ear to listen as those who are taught. The Lord GOD has opened my ear, and I was not rebellious, I did not turn backwards. I gave my back to those who struck me, and my cheeks to those who pulled out the beard; I did not hide my face from insult and spitting. The Lord GOD helps me; therefore I have not been disgraced; therefore I have set my face like flint, and I know that I shall not be put to shame; he who vindicates me is near. Who will contend with me? Let us stand up together. Who are my adversaries? Let them confront me. It is the Lord GOD who helps me; who will declare me guilty?

The Passion Gospel

Matthew 27:11-54

Now Jesus stood before the governor; and the governor asked him:

Pilate 'Are you the King of the Jews?'

Narrator Jesus said:

Jesus 'You say so.'

Narrator But when he was accused by the chief priests and elders, he did not answer. Then Pilate said to him:

Pilate 'Do you not hear how many accusations they make against you?'

Narrator But he gave him no answer, not even to a single charge, so that the governor was greatly amazed. Now at the festival the governor was accustomed to release a prisoner for the crowd, anyone whom they wanted. At that time they had a notorious prisoner, called Jesus Barabbas. So after they had gathered, Pilate said to them:

Pilate 'Whom do you want me to release for you, Barabbas or Jesus who is called the Messiah?'

Narrator For he realized that it was out of jealousy that they had handed him over. While he was sitting on the judgement seat, his wife sent word to him:

Wife 'Have nothing to do with that innocent man, for today I have suffered a great deal

because of a dream about him.'

Narrator Now the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowds to ask for Barabbas and to have Jesus killed. The governor again said to them:

Pilate 'Which of the two do you want me to release for you?'

Narrator And they said:

Crowd 'Barabbas.'

Narrator Pilate said to them:

Pilate 'Then what should I do with Jesus who is called the Messiah?'

Narrator All of them said:

Crowd 'Let him be crucified!'

Narrator Then he asked:

Pilate 'Why, what evil has he done?'

Narrator But they shouted all the more:

Crowd 'Let him be crucified!'

Narrator So when Pilate saw that he could do nothing, but rather that a riot was beginning, he took some water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying:

Pilate 'I am innocent of this man's blood; see to it yourselves.'

Narrator Then the people as a whole answered:

Crowd 'His blood be on us and on our children!'

Narrator So he released Barabbas for them; and after flogging Jesus, he handed him over to be crucified.

Narrator Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the governor's headquarters, and they gathered the whole cohort around him. They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, and after twisting some thorns into a crown, they put it on his head. They put a reed in his right hand and knelt before him and mocked him, saying:

Soldiers 'Hail, King of the Jews!'

Narrator They spat on him, and took the reed and struck him on the head. After mocking him, they stripped him of the robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him away to crucify him. As they went out, they came upon a man from Cyrene named Simon; they compelled this man to carry his cross. And when they came to a place called Golgotha (which means Place of a Skull), they offered him wine to drink, mixed with gall; but when he tasted it, he would not drink it. And when they had crucified him, they divided his clothes among themselves by casting lots; then they sat down there and kept watch over him. Over his head they put the charge against him, which read, 'This is Jesus, the King of the Jews.'

Then two bandits were crucified with him, one on his right and one on his left. Those who passed by derided him, shaking their heads and saying:

Bystanders You who would destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself! If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross.'

Narrator In the same way the chief priests also, along with the scribes and elders, were mocking him, saying:

Priest He saved others; he cannot save himself. He is the King of Israel; let him come down from the cross now, and we will believe in him. He trusts in God; let God deliver him now, if he wants to; for he said, "I am God's Son."

Narrator The bandits who were crucified with him also taunted him in the same way. From noon on, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. And about three o'clock Jesus cried with a loud voice:

Jesus 'Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?'

Narrator That is:

Jesus 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?'

Narrator When some of the bystanders heard it, they said:

Bystander 'This man is calling for Elijah.'

Narrator At once one of them ran and got a sponge, filled it with sour wine, put it on a stick, and gave it to him to drink. But the others said:

Bystander 'Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to save him.'

Narrator Then Jesus cried again with a loud voice and breathed his last.

 At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. The earth shook, and the rocks were split. The tombs also were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised. After his resurrection they came out of the tombs and entered the holy city and appeared to many. Now when the centurion and those with him, who were keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were terrified and said:

Centurion 'Truly this man was God's Son!'

Narrator This is the Passion of the Lord.

No response is made.