



**April 9, 2006**

Preaching: Ronni Sue Verboom

PALM/PASSION SUNDAY

Luke 19:28-40

## “From Cheers to Jeers”

### **Reflection 1:**

Today is the day we remember Jesus’ entrance into the city of Jerusalem: Palm Sunday. Today is the day we remember what happened to Jesus after he got there. He was arrested, beaten, and killed on a cross: Passion Sunday. It is important to remember. It is an act of faith to remember. We remember.

Jesus, we remember how you came to the city of Jerusalem, stopping at a little village outside the great city to carry out your plans. It was Passover time. Jerusalem and the surrounding area were crowded with pilgrims. Over two and a half million people gathered to celebrate the power of God that brought the people of Israel out of bondage in Egypt long ago.

Jesus, you came to a city throbbing with excitement, keyed up with religious expectations. We remember the CHEERS, the flurry of garments as people spread them in the road before you.

### **Reflection 2:**

We remember how the people turned to one another in the confusion, asking, “Who is this? Who is this?” Answers came- a prophet of God! Jesus from Nazareth of Galilee. You were called “Son of David”- a chosen king of God who would rule in justice and equity. The people waved and shouted in joyful praise.

Jesus, we remember their question “Who is this?” and we know that we wonder too. Who are you? What do you have to do with us? What will you do for us? What do

you want from us? Do you care about us? Do you love us, too? Our questions, our shouts and excitement, wonder and need mingle with theirs.

Jesus, you knew who you were. No one else did. You WERE a prophet, in the sense that you spoke for God. You WERE a King, also. But not a prophet or a king like any other. No one understood. Not even the disciples. WE don't really understand either. You were so different from what we think we'd like or want.

A Roman leader would have ridden in a chariot pulled by white stallions.

You came on a donkey loaned to you.

A political leader would have been surrounded by security guards to keep the people safely at a distance.

You were surrounded only by your motley band of followers, many of whom were simple fishermen.

A religious leader in traditional priestly robes would have moved sedately through the crowds surrounded by a contingent of other religious leaders. They would have prevented anyone unclean from touching him.

You dressed in your normal simple clothing, and moved humbly through the crowds, not shrinking from the touch of anyone.

Jesus, we don't fully understand you. But we know more of the story than the crowd waving its branches did. We remember the rest of the story. We remember that the crowd's CHEERS turned to JEERS when you did not meet their expectations.

Jesus, it is hard remembering this part of the story. It is painful. But it is important. So we do. We remember. This is an act of faith; our offering to you.

Luke 23:26-27

### **Reflection 3:**

Jesus, we remember your arrest. The interrogation. The flogging. The crowd turning against you when they saw you were not the king they expected, not the king they wanted. We remember the jeering, the spitting, the beating and mockery.

We remember the worst of all. The crucifixion. When a criminal had been condemned, he was led away to be crucified. He was placed in the center of a hollow square of four Roman soldiers. It was the custom that he should carry the crossbeam of his own cross; the upright was already waiting at the scene of execution. The charge for which he was being executed was written on a board; it was then either

hung around his neck or carried by an officer in front of the procession. Later it was attached to the cross itself. The criminal was led to the scene of crucifixion by as long a route as possible so that as many people as possible might see him and take warning from the grim sight.

Jesus, we remember. The long walk to Golgotha. Your weakness from the beatings. Simon of Cyrene, who carried the crossbeam for you. The nails. The pounding into your flesh.

Luke 23: 33-38, 44-46

#### **Reflection 4:**

Precious Jesus, we remember the long six hours of dying- from nine o'clock in the morning until three o'clock in the afternoon. The observers hurling abuse, taunting you. We remember the desolation of your cry: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" You shouted. You breathed your last. And died. We remember.

Then there was a great tumult: earthquakes and darkness- rocks splitting, graves opening, the Temple curtain tearing. And when the Roman officer saw what was happening, he was filled with awe. He knew you must be someone we didn't really know, we didn't understand—someone very close to God. "He must have been a son of God," he said. We remember.

Jesus, we remember and pray to you now. Keep us close to you during the days of this Holy Week before us. It is too easy for us to want to skip the hard days ahead. We want to remember you when the crowd was full of CHEERS—and then go straight to Easter and CHEER your Resurrection. We want to erase the JEERS, the suffering and pain. But we do not follow a Christ uncrucified; we follow a Christ crucified and Risen.

Jesus, sometimes in the church we have ignored what it means to follow you. We think being a Christian means joining a church. But being a Christian means following where you lead us, even if it is into suffering.

We need your help to do this, Jesus. We do not follow a hero as the world sees them. We follow the mercy and compassion of God in the flesh, Jesus the Christ, the Crucified. Help us to keep faithful through dark valleys, into the light of life beyond. Help us to know that you do not take us around pain and suffering, but carry us through them. Who are you, Jesus? We continue to ask. Help us to follow you- Christ the Crucified and Risen—the Savior of the world. Amen.