

Palm Sunday                      Reflection on Mark 15:1-39, [40-47] portion of Passion Narrative  
Christ and Grace                March 25, 2018                      8 AM Service  
Robin Teasley

Jesus would seem to be all out of power.

He is the subject of consultation among the authorities, he is bound, led, and handed over, accused of many things. He has no reply even though Pilate practically begs him to save himself. The crowd, which had been stirred up by the authorities, is demanding. They are thirsty for blood and scream out “crucify him!” over and over. And so Jesus is flogged and then handed over to be crucified. It was just that easy.

The soldiers led him into the courtyard, and made a game of torturing and mocking Jesus. Exhausted from their cruelty, they compelled a passerby, Simon of Cyrene to carry the heavy cross to Golgotha. Maybe there was some remorse, because they offered Jesus some wine and myrrh, but he had no need of it. They nailed Jesus to the cross and then played a game of dice to see who would win his clothing – the only material things he possessed.

Even the two bandits hanging on nearby crosses that morning, joined in with those who passed by mocking and scorning the King of the Jews, who could not save himself.

And then, just as the sun reached its highest point in the sky, darkness covered the whole land. For three hours. All of creation stopped while the King of Creation took his last breaths. Even then, Jesus called out to God, hoping there might be another way for the redeeming work to be done. And among the people, there was a glimmer of hope as they wondered, just for a moment, if the prophet Elijah might return to help. But Jesus breathed his last and the curtain in the temple was torn in two by the force of God leaving the temple made of stone to care for his Son.

The faithful women looked on from a distance and Joseph of Arimathea gently wrapped the body of Jesus in a linen cloth. Wrapped him in bands of cloth and laid him in a tomb.

Jesus would seem to be all out of power.

Each year we begin Holy Week with this story of suffering and sacrifice, this giving up of power so that we might receive the power to have eternal life. As we move through the week we reflect on the ways Jesus lived a life of humility that was, paradoxically, far more powerful than any of those who opposed him, and perhaps we will learn from him how to live our lives in this same way. While today’s story ends at rock bottom, it is not the end. It is not the end because there is something more powerful than death. May we take time this week to ponder what part we play in this story, and how it will end in our own lives. Because there is power, greater than any human force, just waiting to be received.

Amen.