

# Sermon for Palm Sunday/Sunday of the Passion, March 25, 2018

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

*"He saved others; He cannot save Himself."* - Mark 14:22

"Hosanna!" It means, save us. That is the irony of our Gospels today. We began this morning hearing again, celebrating again, our Lord's triumphal entry into Jerusalem, as the adoring the crowds, and we ourselves cried out "Hosanna!" Save us!

And now we hear these words, the derision of the same crowds, the contempt of the priests and rabbis, *"He saved others; He cannot save Himself."*

The contrast here between the joy as we cry out for Him to save us, and the contempt when He actually does is stark and glaring. It's a strange and twisted form of, "Be careful what you wish for, you just might get it."

For what the crowds miss, what we so often miss is that our salvation lies in Him not saving Himself. Our salvation lies in God doing the very opposite of what we would do, and what we want done.

In our hearts we want a god who comes in power. A god who fixes things, who heals everyone and everything, who destroys evil, who destroys our enemies, who sets all things right, who brings justice. For then we would believe Him, then we would trust Him... For power is the currency of our world. If only we had the power to bring about justice. If only one who has power would do the right thing...

We want power because we forget power is not love. Power is force. Power is coercion. Power does not bear all things, believe all things, hope all things... Power forces, power scares, power enslaves... whether it's the power of one man, or the power of the people, or even the power of a god.

What we see on the cross, what we see in Jesus Christ, crucified, is not power. It is love. Love manifested in God becoming human. Human to the extent no human wants to be forced to become. Beaten and whipped to shreds, the hot sun baking his flesh as His blood pours out, and the sand sticks to His wounds, and the flies bite, and the world taunts and jeers.

What kind of god is this, who takes His place not with the good, but with the evil - the thieves. Who takes His place not with the great, but with the despised - born in a stable, killed as criminal. Who takes His place with us, with you, with me, with all who suffer the hells that this world and its inhabitants inflict. This is a God who loves, because He wants to save others, not Himself.

Here, hung between heaven and earth; here beaten, bloody, ravaged, dying, dead flesh and blood He takes His place with us, for us, becoming most truly one with us, one with you.

He does it to save others, to save you. He will not come down until the work of your salvation is finished and done. He will not come down until after He has become as godforsaken and more than the most-godforsaken of all of us. He will not come down until He is united with us not just in life, not even just in suffering, but in death, the grave, and hell itself.

This, Saint Mark wants us to see, is where we find God. This is where God wants to be; to be with us, to be with you. And in Jesus Christ God is with you in suffering, death, the grave, and hell. For when God unites Himself with you there then they lose all their power over you.

Yes, through their power they can defeat you. Yes, through their power they can force you do their will. Yes, through their power they can even destroy you. But God out love for you is now with you, and God will give you life. God will overcome the powers, the people, the afflictions that overcome you. God will see you through, God will give life to you, not because of His power, but because of the depths of love He has for you.

Love so deep it can swallow the depths of hell. Love so strong it can give strength to the weak. Love so powerful it can raise to the dead.

"Save us!" That is our cry. The cross, death, and the grave are His reply. That is where you will find the one who comes in the name of Lord. The One who cannot save Himself, who will not save Himself. He saved others, indeed. He saved you. May you have a blessed and holy Holy Week. Amen.

