

Message for Palm Sunday
April 1, 2012
Hope Dying
The Rev Dr. R. K. Miller

How quickly things can change! One minute you're bouncing around the house, singing along with iTunes, and the next minute you get a phone call that changes everything. Your day starts with coffee and conversation, and then ends with darkness and despair.

That's what happened to the disciples one day. Their hero rides into Jerusalem on a donkey like a humble King. People bow before him. "Hosannas" ring through the air, garments and palm branches cover the road like red carpet. Everyone has high hopes for Jesus to be THE ONE. But by Friday the crowd has changed its tune from "Hosanna!" to "Crucify him!" The disciples watch their hope die on a cross. How quickly things can change.

The Jesus story is quite a story, with Jesus we never know what's going to happen next. In this story:

- * There's a plot to kill Jesus by the religious leaders.
- * A woman anoints Jesus with perfume for his burial while he is still alive.
- * Judas, one of the 12, agrees to betray Jesus with a kiss.
- * The Passover celebration becomes the Lord's Supper.
- * Jesus prays in Gethsemane and the disciples fall asleep.
- * Jesus is arrested and brought before the high priest.
- * Peter denies knowing Jesus three times.
- * Pontius Pilate, a man of power, doesn't know what to do with Jesus so he gives into the wishes of the crowds. It is a strange story indeed...

This week, we hear part of the Jesus story. Come back next week to hear the rest of the story. Of course, we know where this story is going or do we? Those living through it with Jesus had no idea where it was going. They don't know who Jesus is or what he came to do. No one does. The religious leaders, Pilate, the crowds, the soldiers, the disciples – they all misunderstood Jesus.

His disciples are confused and clueless the whole time. They know Jesus but they don't really know him. They've been with him, learned from him, saw his miracles, heard him predict his own death, but then argue which one of them is the greatest.

Everyone was hoping for something different than what Jesus offers.

Are we not like that? As we listen to this story, are we any different? Do we really understand who Jesus is and what he has done for us? What difference does Jesus make in our lives?

Traditionally on Palm Sunday we hear the long dramatic reading of the Passion Story. This morning we hear that story as told by Max McLean on the big screen. Max has memorized the entire Gospel of Mark and he tells it on stage chapter by chapter. He brings the Jesus story to life in a bold new way.

So instead of me reading to you here this morning, I invite you to watch Max McLean tell this part of the Jesus story as only he can. Max picks up with Chapter 15 in Mark's Gospel right after things have gone terribly wrong. Jesus has been arrested and things go from bad to worse. Let's watch...

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OF8XvmyWxjo&feature=endscreen&NR=1>

This part of the story, Chapter 15, ends abruptly. Jesus is in the tomb. What to do? Hope seems to have died with him.

And yet, with Jesus things aren't always what they seem. With Jesus there is always more to the story. He offers a different kind of hope. He offers a different way of living. With Jesus up is down, out is in, lost is found, last is first, and death is life.

The Jesus story is quite a story. With Jesus we never know what amazing things are going to happen next. Amen.