

Isaiah 50:4-9a

⁴The 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.

⁵The Lord GOD has opened my ear, and I was not rebellious, I did not turn backward.

⁶I 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.

⁷The 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;

⁸he who vindicates me is near. Who will contend with me? Let us stand up together. Who are my adversaries? Let them confront me.

⁹It is the Lord GOD who helps me; who will declare me guilty? All of them will wear out like a garment; the moth will eat them up.

Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29 (UMH 839)**Philippians 2:5-11**

⁵Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, ⁶who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, ⁷but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, ⁸he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death— even death on a cross. ⁹Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Mark 11:1-11

¹When they were approaching Jerusalem, at Bethphage and Bethany, near the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples ²and said to them, “Go into the village ahead of you, and immediately as you enter it, you will find tied there a colt that has never been ridden; untie it and bring it. ³If anyone says to you, ‘Why are you doing this?’ just say this, ‘The Lord needs it and will send it back here immediately.’” ⁴They went away and found a colt tied near a door, outside in the street. As they were untying it, ⁵some of the bystanders said to them, “What are you doing, untying the colt?” ⁶They told them what Jesus had said; and they allowed them to take it. ⁷Then they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks on it; and he sat on it. ⁸Many people spread their cloaks on the road, and others spread leafy branches that they had cut in the fields. ⁹Then those who went ahead and those who followed were shouting, “Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord! ¹⁰Blessed is the coming kingdom of our ancestor David! Hosanna in the highest heaven!” ¹¹Then he entered Jerusalem and went into the temple; and when he had looked around at everything, as it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the twelve.

The New Revised Standard Version of the Bible with Apocrypha

Sunday’s Comin’

Linda just read you the scripture passage from Mark’s Gospel where Jesus entered

Jerusalem. This passage, and similar passages in the other Gospels, are why this Sunday is known as Palm Sunday. In thousands of Christian churches around the world this morning, people are reenacting the entrance of Jesus into Jerusalem, by waving palm branches. Often times it is the Sunday School children that carry the palm branches and parade through the sanctuary to the delight of their parents.

As joyous as the Palm Sunday story is, it is not the end of the story. Let me continue reading from Mark's Gospel, starting with Chapter 14, where we hear the Easter story.

¹It was two days before the Passover and the festival of Unleavened Bread. The chief priests and the scribes were looking for a way to arrest Jesus by stealth and kill him; ²for they said, "Not during the festival, or there may be a riot among the people."

³While he was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper as he sat at the table, a woman came with an alabaster jar of very costly ointment of nard, and she broke open the jar and poured the ointment on his head. ⁴But some were there who said to one another in anger, "Why was the ointment wasted in this way? ⁵For this ointment could have been sold for more than three hundred denarii, and the money given to the poor." And they scolded her. ⁶But Jesus said, "Let her alone; why do you trouble her? She has performed a good service for me. ⁷For you always have the poor with you, and you can show kindness to them whenever you wish; but you will not always have me. ⁸She has done what she could; she has anointed my body beforehand for its burial. ⁹Truly I tell you, wherever the good news is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in remembrance of her."

¹⁰Then Judas Iscariot, who was one of the twelve, went to the chief priests in order to betray him to them. ¹¹When they heard it, they were greatly pleased, and promised to give him money. So he began to look for an opportunity to betray him.

¹²On the first day of Unleavened Bread, when the Passover lamb is sacrificed, his disciples said to him, "Where do you want us to go and make the preparations for you to eat the Passover?" ¹³So he sent two of his disciples, saying to them, "Go into the city, and a man carrying a jar of water will meet you; follow him, ¹⁴and wherever he enters, say to the owner of the house, 'The Teacher asks, Where is my

guest room where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?’¹⁵ He will show you a large room upstairs, furnished and ready. Make preparations for us there.”¹⁶ So the disciples set out and went to the city, and found everything as he had told them; and they prepared the Passover meal.¹⁷ When it was evening, he came with the twelve.¹⁸ And when they had taken their places and were eating, Jesus said, “Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me, one who is eating with me.”¹⁹ They began to be distressed and to say to him one after another, “Surely, not I?”²⁰ He said to them, “It is one of the twelve, one who is dipping bread into the bowl with me.²¹ For the Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that one by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that one not to have been born.”

²² While they were eating, he took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it he broke it, gave it to them, and said, “Take; this is my body.”²³ Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, and all of them drank from it.²⁴ He said to them, “This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many.²⁵ Truly I tell you, I will never again drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.”

- Carol -

²⁶ When they had sung the hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.²⁷ And Jesus said to them, “You will all become deserters; for it is written, ‘I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.’²⁸ But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee.”²⁹ Peter said to him, “Even though all become deserters, I will not.”³⁰ Jesus said to him, “Truly I tell you, this day, this very night, before the cock crows twice, you will deny me three times.”³¹ But he said vehemently, “Even though I must die with you, I will not deny you.” And all of them said the same.

³² They went to a place called Gethsemane; and he said to his disciples, “Sit here while I pray.”³³ He took with him Peter and James and John, and began to be distressed and agitated.³⁴ And he said to them, “I am deeply grieved, even to death; remain here, and keep awake.”³⁵ And going a little farther, he threw himself on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him.³⁶ He said, “Abba, Father, for you all things are possible; remove this cup from me; yet, not what I want, but what you want.”³⁷ He came and found them sleeping; and he said to Peter, “Simon, are you asleep? Could you not keep awake one hour?³⁸ Keep awake and pray that you may not come into the time of trial; the

spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.”³⁹ And again he went away and prayed, saying the same words.⁴⁰ And once more he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were very heavy; and they did not know what to say to him.⁴¹ He came a third time and said to them, “Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? Enough! The hour has come; the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.⁴² Get up, let us be going. See, my betrayer is at hand.”

⁴³Immediately, while he was still speaking, Judas, one of the twelve, arrived; and with him there was a crowd with swords and clubs, from the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders.⁴⁴ Now the betrayer had given them a sign, saying, “The one I will kiss is the man; arrest him and lead him away under guard.”⁴⁵ So when he came, he went up to him at once and said, “Rabbi!” and kissed him.⁴⁶ Then they laid hands on him and arrested him.⁴⁷ But one of those who stood near drew his sword and struck the slave of the high priest, cutting off his ear.⁴⁸ Then Jesus said to them, “Have you come out with swords and clubs to arrest me as though I were a bandit?⁴⁹ Day after day I was with you in the temple teaching, and you did not arrest me. But let the scriptures be fulfilled.”⁵⁰ All of them deserted him and fled.⁵¹ A certain young man was following him, wearing nothing but a linen cloth. They caught hold of him,⁵² but he left the linen cloth and ran off naked.

⁵³They took Jesus to the high priest; and all the chief priests, the elders, and the scribes were assembled.⁵⁴ Peter had followed him at a distance, right into the courtyard of the high priest; and he was sitting with the guards, warming himself at the fire.⁵⁵ Now the chief priests and the whole council were looking for testimony against Jesus to put him to death; but they found none.⁵⁶ For many gave false testimony against him, and their testimony did not agree.⁵⁷ Some stood up and gave false testimony against him, saying,⁵⁸ “We heard him say, ‘I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and in three days I will build another, not made with hands.’”⁵⁹ But even on this point their testimony did not agree.⁶⁰ Then the high priest stood up before them and asked Jesus, “Have you no answer? What is it that they testify against you?”⁶¹ But he was silent and did not answer. Again the high priest asked him, “Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?”⁶² Jesus said, “I am; and ‘you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of the Power,’ and ‘coming with the clouds of heaven.’”⁶³ Then the high priest tore his clothes and said, “Why do we still need witnesses?⁶⁴ You have heard his blasphemy! What is your decision?” All of them condemned him as deserving death.⁶⁵ Some began to spit on him, to blindfold him, and to strike him,

saying to him, "Prophecy!" The guards also took him over and beat him.

- Sam -

⁶⁶While Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant-girls of the high priest came by. ⁶⁷When she saw Peter warming himself, she stared at him and said, "You also were with Jesus, the man from Nazareth." ⁶⁸But he denied it, saying, "I do not know or understand what you are talking about." And he went out into the forecourt. Then the cock crowed. ⁶⁹And the servant-girl, on seeing him, began again to say to the bystanders, "This man is one of them." ⁷⁰But again he denied it. Then after a little while the bystanders again said to Peter, "Certainly you are one of them; for you are a Galilean." ⁷¹But he began to curse, and he swore an oath, "I do not know this man you are talking about." ⁷²At that moment the cock crowed for the second time. Then Peter remembered that Jesus had said to him, "Before the cock crows twice, you will deny me three times." And he broke down and wept.

¹As soon as it was morning, the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council. They bound Jesus, led him away, and handed him over to Pilate. ²Pilate asked him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" He answered him, "You say so." ³Then the chief priests accused him of many things. ⁴Pilate asked him again, "Have you no answer? See how many charges they bring against you." ⁵But Jesus made no further reply, so that Pilate was amazed.

⁶Now at the festival he used to release a prisoner for them, anyone for whom they asked. ⁷Now a man called Barabbas was in prison with the rebels who had committed murder during the insurrection. ⁸So the crowd came and began to ask Pilate to do for them according to his custom. ⁹Then he answered them, "Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?" ¹⁰For he realized that it was out of jealousy that the chief priests had handed him over. ¹¹But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have him release Barabbas for them instead. ¹²Pilate spoke to them again, "Then what do you wish me to do with the man you call the King of the Jews?" ¹³They shouted back, "Crucify him!" ¹⁴Pilate asked them, "Why, what evil has he done?" But they shouted all the more, "Crucify him!" ¹⁵So Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd, released Barabbas for them; and after flogging Jesus, he handed him over to be crucified.

¹⁶Then the soldiers led him into the courtyard of the palace (that is, the governor's

headquarters); and they called together the whole cohort. ¹⁷And they clothed him in a purple cloak; and after twisting some thorns into a crown, they put it on him. ¹⁸And they began saluting him, "Hail, King of the Jews!" ¹⁹They struck his head with a reed, spat upon him, and knelt down in homage to him. ²⁰After mocking him, they stripped him of the purple cloak and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him out to crucify him.

- Carol -

²¹They compelled a passer-by, who was coming in from the country, to carry his cross; it was Simon of Cyrene, the father of Alexander and Rufus. ²²Then they brought Jesus to the place called Golgotha (which means the place of a skull). ²³And they offered him wine mixed with myrrh; but he did not take it. ²⁴And they crucified him, and divided his clothes among them, casting lots to decide what each should take. ²⁵It was nine o'clock in the morning when they crucified him. ²⁶The inscription of the charge against him read, "The King of the Jews." ²⁷And with him they crucified two bandits, one on his right and one on his left. ²⁹Those who passed by derided him, shaking their heads and saying, "Aha! You who would destroy the temple and build it in three days, ³⁰save yourself, and come down from the cross!" ³¹In the same way the chief priests, along with the scribes, were also mocking him among themselves and saying, "He saved others; he cannot save himself. ³²Let the Messiah, the King of Israel, come down from the cross now, so that we may see and believe." Those who were crucified with him also taunted him.

³³When it was noon, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. ³⁴At three o'clock Jesus cried out with a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?" which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" ³⁵When some of the bystanders heard it, they said, "Listen, he is calling for Elijah." ³⁶And someone ran, filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on a stick, and gave it to him to drink, saying, "Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to take him down." ³⁷Then Jesus gave a loud cry and breathed his last. ³⁸And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. ³⁹Now when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that in this way he breathed his last, he said, "Truly this man was God's Son!" ⁴⁰There were also women looking on from a distance; among them were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joses, and Salome. ⁴¹These used to follow him and provided for him when he was in Galilee; and there were many other women who had come up with him to Jerusalem.

⁴²When evening had come, and since it was the day of Preparation, that is, the day before the Sabbath, ⁴³Joseph of Arimathea, a respected member of the council, who was also himself waiting expectantly for the kingdom of God, went boldly to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. ⁴⁴Then Pilate wondered if he were already dead; and summoning the centurion, he asked him whether he had been dead for some time. ⁴⁵When he learned from the centurion that he was dead, he granted the body to Joseph. ⁴⁶Then Joseph bought a linen cloth, and taking down the body, wrapped it in the linen cloth, and laid it in a tomb that had been hewn out of the rock. He then rolled a stone against the door of the tomb. ⁴⁷Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Jesus saw where the body was laid.

- Sam -

You will have to wait until next Sunday to hear the end of the story. In the meantime, we are entering the period traditionally known as Holy Week - the week between Palm Sunday and Easter - a week of contemplation and preparation.

I have some good news for you this morning. The good news comes from a special book called, *It's Friday, but Sunday's Comin'*.(6) It is a series of essays by Dr. Anthony Campolo, and the title work tells of a church service in which the author participated that remembered those horrific events that led up to Jesus' death on Good Friday - it is a line from a sermon preached by one of the other speakers that day, a wise old African-American pastor. Dr. Campolo writes: For an hour and a half he preached one line over and over again...*"It's Friday, but Sunday's comin'!"* He started his sermon real softly by saying, *"It was Friday; it was Friday and my Jesus was dead on the tree. But that was Friday, and Sunday's comin'!"* One of the Deacons yelled, *"Preach, brother, Preach!"* It was all the encouragement he needed.

He came on louder as he said, *"It was Friday and Mary was cryin' her eyes out. The disciples were runnin' in every direction, like sheep without a shepherd, but that was Friday, and Sunday's comin'!"*

The preacher kept going. He picked up the volume still more and shouted, *"It was Friday. The cynics were lookin' at the world and sayin' `As things have been so shall they be. You can't change anything in this world; you can't change anything. But those cynics don't know that it was only Friday. Sunday's comin'! It was*

Friday, and on Friday those forces that oppress the poor and make the poor to suffer were in control. But that was Friday! Sunday's comin'!

It was Friday, and on Friday Pilate thought he had washed his hands of a lot of trouble. The Pharisees were struttin' around, laughin' and pokin' each other in the ribs. They thought they were back in charge of things. But they didn't know it was only Friday! Sunday's comin'!

Campolo continues, "He kept on working that one phrase for a half hour, then an hour, then an hour and a quarter, then an hour and a half. Over and over he came at us, "It's Friday, but Sunday's comin'!" By the time he had come to the end of the message...He had me and everybody else so worked up that I don't think any of us could have stood it much longer. At the end of his message he just yelled at the top of his lungs, 'It's FRIDAY!' and all 500 of us in that church yelled back with one accord, 'SUNDAY'S COMIN!'"(7)

That is the good news, the Gospel, the word the world is waiting to hear. That is the church's message of hope. When life begins to get you down, our word is SUNDAY'S COMIN'. When the love you had counted on is gone and you feel that you may never know love again, remember that SUNDAY'S COMIN'. When you see what is happening in the hallways of our schools or the streets of our cities and are angry and afraid, we have to tell you that SUNDAY'S COMIN'. When you have lost your belief in the miraculous and no longer expect great things from God, look at the calendar and note that SUNDAY'S COMIN'. When you are so far down you don't remember up, the word is SUNDAY'S COMIN'.

Yes, there is lots wrong with this world. But it is hope that we need to sustain us. Indeed, it is ONLY hope that gets us through the darkest hours. I have hope, the same hope that energized that Palm Sunday crowd. On this first day of Holy Week, we know know there will be a Monday, a Tuesday, a Wednesday, a Thursday, and finally, a devastating, death-dealing Friday. But on that awful day we can think again and recall a special time long, long ago. Then with heart and soul and every fibre of our being we can shout, IT'S FRIDAY, BUT, PRAISE GOD, SUNDAY'S COMIN'!

Amen!