

“Truly this was the Son of God”
In the Name...

In the 12th Chapter of the book of Exodus, The Lord tells Moses to instruct the Israelites, who were slaves in Egypt, to slaughter a lamb. They are to eat the lamb and take the blood and wipe it on the door posts of their house. For the Lord was going to pass through all of Egypt and He would kill all the first born of Egypt, both man and beast, whose homes were not marked by the blood of the lamb. The Lord says, “against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I AM the Lord.” You remember the story of the Exodus, God sent plague after plague, hail which destroyed, He sent frogs, flies, famine, locusts which devoured the land, plagues of boils, He even turned the Nile into blood, and caused three days of darkness to cover the land. But still Pharaoh’s heart was hardened, he would not listen and he would not obey God. So the Lord passed through the Land of Egypt sparing all Hebrew infant boys and all the firstborn of Egypt died.

The Lord gave specific instructions to Moses for the Passover lamb. It could not be any lamb, but must be “without blemish, a male of the first year, ye shall take it out from the sheep, and ye shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month.” Then the Lord told Moses, “and the whole congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening,” and later He says, “And ye shall let nothing remain until the morning.” These were the directions given by God to His people.

The Passover was an important and required feast for the faithful Jews. Our Lord kept the feast but He had other plans for the Passover. Our Lord offered Himself as the Passover Lamb. He was without blemish, without sin, and was the first born of Mary, and the only begotten of God. He was ready and perfect for the sacrifice. All that had to be accomplished then was that He be chosen by the people of Israel as their Passover lamb, and sacrificed by all the people of Israel. This is the reason why it seems our Prayer Book has overshadowed Palm Sunday with the Passion Narrative. But the important point is made, that the people did choose Jesus to be their sacrifice.

As He entered Jerusalem they sang and shouted, “blessed is He that comes in the Name of the Lord, Hosanna in the highest.” They waved palm branches and laid down their coats along His way. They celebrated His entry into Jerusalem, right up and into the Temple. The people chose Him out as their lamb and took Him to the Temple. A week later, Our Lord would be arrested and brought before the governor, another Pharaoh of sorts, and they would again choose their paschal lamb, Jesus or Barabbas, Christ, or Anti-Christ. Which would be the better sacrifice, the one without sin or blemish, the one meek and lowly and wholly innocent, or the one who was a murderous and thieving villain? By popular vote the people chose wisely; they chose Jesus to be their sacrifice.

Caiaphas the high priest had already chosen Jesus to be the sacrifice when Lazarus was raised from the dead. Caiaphas was more concerned with a potential uprising of Jesus’ followers, and since they were already enslaved to the Romans, Caiaphas thought it best to sacrifice Jesus for the sake of the nation. *It is better for one man to die for the nation rather than the whole nation perish.* (St. John xi. 50) From the political side, we see execution and crucifixion for political ends; from the Divine side, Caiaphas unconsciously affirmed that Christ was an offering for the Jews and for all people.

Palm Sunday then is bitter sweet. It must have been surreal for our Lord, to see the great crowd praising and worshipping Him, only to know that He was one step closer to His death, to His torture and execution for the sake of the sins of the whole world. But this is exactly what was supposed to happen. For St. Paul tells us that Jesus thought it not robbery to be equal with God and become flesh. He humbled Himself, and became obedient to the plan of God, even unto death. This is the Divine Mercy of God. The Lord God comes down to earth and lives among us, He shares our burdens, our grief, our sorrow, and is put to death for our sake. He bears the burden that we cannot bear and then gains the victory over it forever! He frees us from the slavery of sin and invites us to fullness life.

The collect for this morning reminds us, that Jesus has done all of this for our sakes, but, we are called to follow His example that we be made partakers in His Resurrection. But how do we do this? We are not all called to Martyrdom for Jesus' sake, though some may. Nor, in all likelihood, will we be called to huge feats of asceticism and self-mortification. But we are all called to take up our crosses and follow Jesus. We must follow Jesus in big and small ways. Perhaps it is wisest to listen to St. Therese and seek to sacrifice ourselves in little ways. Little acts of kindness, little acts of love, little acts of mercy done in Jesus' Name and for His sake may be the only way we are called to experience Cavalry. But it is important to remember in the times of trial and grief, of emotion, that we must continue to point to the Cross of Christ.

Jesus Christ died for you. He gives you His very own Body and Blood. You are heirs of the Cross and Resurrection. To whom much is given, much will be required. We have been given Jesus, how much then is required? Ourselves, our souls, and bodies are required. We are to become living sacrifices. We are to bear the crucifixion, the passion of our Lord in our souls and in our bodies. If we are to be saved, our very minds must have the cross of Christ imprinted upon them with the Face of Jesus before our eyes. No longer is the blood of lambs required. No longer is the keeping of the Passover required. Jesus has done away with those things. Now all that remains is Easter Sunday, the Cross and the Resurrection, and His Body and Blood in Holy Communion. This is our Passover supper, and we must take this Passover supper inwardly. We must allow His Body to nourish us, and His blood to wash us, and then we must go back into the world and live this new Passover for all to see. Amen.