

13th Sunday after Pentecost

August 30, 2020

Collect: LORD OF ALL power and might, the author and giver of all good things: Graft in our hearts the love of your Name; increase in us true religion; nourish us with all goodness; and bring forth in us the fruit of good works; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God for ever and ever. Amen.

Lessons: Jeremiah 15:15-21

Psalm 26:1-8

Romans 12:9-12

Matthew 16:21-28

Sermon: Earlier while walking with his disciples, Jesus asked his disciples who the people said he was. The disciples replied, "Some say you are Elijah, some say you are Jeremiah, some say you are John the Baptist and some say you are a prophet sent to speak the word of God to us and direct us in being obedient to his commandments."

Jesus listened and then he asked the disciples, "But who do you say I am?" Quickly Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah." Jesus told Simon Peter he was correct and from that time on he was Peter, a solid rock and he was going to be the builder of his, Jesus, church and nothing would prevail against or destroy it.

However, Jesus sternly forbade the disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah.

At this point in the Gospel, Jesus is destined to go to Jerusalem. He will identify himself to the people as their king. As prophesied, he will ride into Jerusalem mounted on a donkey and the people will throw tunics and palm branches into the roadway and hail him as King of the Jews, the Messiah. Today we commemorate this as Palm Sunday. Jesus goes on

to tell them he will be taken by the religious authorities: The Chief priest, the elders, the scribes and suffer greatly before being put to death. But he would arise on the third day.

When Jesus told this to the disciples they were perplexed. Peter took him aside and told him he was wrong and it couldn't happen to him, God would forbid it.

Now the disciples, Peter, James and John had been with Jesus on the mountain, on the day we know as Transfiguration Sunday. On that day, Jesus was illuminated with a terrific brightness and there appeared Elijah and Moses talking with him. They talked about this very day, the day Jesus would enter Jerusalem and go on to be put to death. The disciples saw Jesus talking with them, but they couldn't hear what they were talking about.

The whole sequence of Jesus entering Jerusalem and ending with his death on the cross is wonderfully described in the movie, *The Passion of Christ* by Mel Gibson. I would encourage you to see it, especially just before Easter.

When Peter took Jesus aside and told him he was wrong, Jesus rebuked Peter and said, "Get behind me Satan, you are in my way, you don't understand what is going on, you are thinking as a human and not as a divine being."

Jesus is telling Peter he must do this; God had planned it. Jesus knew that his talk with Moses and Elijah on the mountain was like a briefing to ensure that he understood precisely what he was to do and how things would be carried out.

For the disciples it was difficult news, they didn't expect the Messiah to be killed and his ministry to end so soon. They knew he was the Messiah and they expected greater things. Along with the healings they witnessed and did they had heard the prophecy from the Hebrew Bible that he was to come and bring justice and that he would drive the captors out and restore the rule and government to the Hebrew people.

But now in just three short years, they are hearing that their teacher and master would leave them. An immediate question for them had to be:

What is going to happen to us? They had given up their prior lives, families, and totally immersed themselves in the ministry of Jesus. Could they continue to build the ministry or would they meet the fate of Jesus and also be taken and put to death.

We know that they were fearful. They were locked in the upper room when Mary came to tell them that Jesus was not in the tomb. They were still locked in on the day of Pentecost.

Should I remind you that these were ordinary men that Jesus had called on to do an extraordinary thing. Though fearful, they endured and forged on. We, today's Christians, are the proof that God's plan/plans still prevail. We are not alone. We have a constant presence of God in our lives: The Holy Spirit.

What do you think the lives of mankind would be like if Jesus had not gone on into Jerusalem?