



CATHEDRAL *of the* INCARNATION

Gotta Go Through

Palm Sunday, April 5, 2020

The Very Rev. Dr. Michael Sniffen, Dean of the Cathedral

Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!

Today – from our homes - we join Christians throughout the world in commemorating the beginning of Holy Week. This is a sacred time in which we focus our attention on what is called the Passion of Christ – the crucifixion, death and resurrection of Jesus, from Nazareth.

This is a yearly journey on which we solemnly consider the pains and injustices of the world, in which we all share. Pains in which we are never alone – because God is in them too. We see this most strikingly in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.

Many of you are familiar with an old children’s poem – ‘we’re going on a bear hunt.’ ‘What a beautiful day!’ the children proclaim at the beginning of the story. ‘We’re not scared!’

But then on their journey to find a bear, they are faced with a number of dilemmas. Thick, oozy mud, a big dark forest, a deep cold river. Each time they encounter a problem, they realize there is no way around it. The only way to go forward is to go through.

“We can’t go over it.

We can’t go under it.

Uh oh!

We’ve got to go through it!

Following a brief public ministry of healing and reconciliation, Jesus leads his disciples on a journey into the holy city, Jerusalem. It was a dilemma to say the least. They couldn't go over it. They couldn't go under it. They couldn't go around it. They had to go through it!

No sooner had they arrived with shouts of *Hosanna!* with coats and branches laid in the streets, when the tone and the mood changed completely. They were in the middle of it.

The situation they expected was not the situation they found themselves in. Their plan did not work out. Disappointment and despair were the order of the day.

In such a short time they would find themselves in significantly different circumstances than they expected. A changed reality. And it was terrifying.

But what God was doing among them had not changed. God was with them.

As it was then, is now. When our plans are confounded. When our hearts are troubled. When our despair is palpable. When our grief overwhelms us - God is with us. God is always showing up, making a way out of no way. God is laying branches on the road before us and calling out to us - you are my beloved child - with you I am well pleased!

For us, as for the first disciples, it seems everything has changed around us, and so quickly. These are not the circumstances we expected. We find ourselves in a changed reality.

But what God is doing among us has not changed.

God is with us
God is loving us

God is healing us
God is empowering us
God is inviting us to be agents of grace.
God is encouraging us to be brave and hopeful and selfless.

God us shouting Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in My name!

Jesus was crucified, died and is risen. And now it is we who come in the Name of the Lord.

As we hear the sacred songs and stories of this week, may we rediscover our hope, which is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness. As the old hymn proclaims, "On Christ the solid rock, I stand – all other ground is sinking sand, all other ground is sinking sand."

This does not take away the sorrow, the grief and the suffering that is all around us and within us right now. But it does give us everything we need to endure it. To emerge even stronger in faith. To know that neither life, nor death nor things present, nor things to come, will ever, ever, *ever* separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus.

And when we finally arrive in the New Jerusalem – there will be the whole communion of saints to greet us with shouts of *Hosanna!*

So, hold your branches high – because we do not go this way alone. God is with us. Can't go over it, can't go under it, can't go around it: gotta go through. And so, we will, with God by our side, until his Kingdom come, on earth as it is in heaven.