

NOTES FROM PALM SUNDAY SERMON
APRIL 5, 2009
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Were you there?
Were you there when they crucified Jesus?

At this point in the Palm Sunday Liturgy
- at this point in our faith
- at this point in our experience of the world and our lives
we all are there.

In every way except physically and historically, in time and place – we are there:
Emotionally, psychologically, spiritually,
We are there

We share Jesus' suffering, his death, his "Passion" –
Not just by remembering the story, although that is part of it.

But also in our experience of our own world, our own lives –
We experience injustice, oppression, suffering, death
We are there – with Jesus, sharing Jesus' experience, here in our own place and time, in our
own lives.

As the events of Jesus' crucifixion unfold,
These events of brutality and suffering
These expressions of abuse of power, of oppression, of injustice in Jesus' life
As Jesus goes to the cross and dies
-- we call this, Jesus' Passion

What an odd word to use – Passion". It is certainly a "churchy" use; not the way we use it ordinarily.
Maybe we need to look the word again. Maybe as we think of the word passion in connection with
Jesus' "Last Week" (note: see Borg and Crossan: "The Last Week"), we will get a clue as to what is
really going on here.

As the events of Holy week unfold, as we look at Jesus' passion – we are lead to ask:
What actually IS Jesus' passion. What are his passions – what is he passionate about?

Most simply put – Jesus is passionate about God. About the God's kingdom of love.
He is passionate about the image of God in each human being,
About the goodness of the earth as God's creation.
Jesus is passionate in his knowledge that each person is a beloved child of God.

Jesus has a passionate faithful obedient trust in God's promises,
God's promise of God's abiding presence – no matter what.

He is passionate about God's permanent relationship of love which God has with each and every one
of us. – a relationship which brings healing, forgiveness and new life.

Most of all perhaps, Jesus is passionate about justice.
Like the prophets of the Hebrew Scriptures, like Amos – in all he said, in all he did, Jesus proclaimed:

“Let justice roll down like the waters
and righteousness like an everflowing stream”

Jesus was passionate about God’s peace – shalom – Gods kingdom of love, God’s promise of a renewed creation, a new heaven and a new earth.

“They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks;
nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.”

Jesus is passion about hope –

“the Lord will renew our strength, we shall mount up with wings like eagles,
we shall run and not be weary, we shall walk and not faint.”

Jesus was passion about all these things and much more, embodying the reality of God’s kingdom of love, God’s passionate love for us and the whole world.

Remember:

“God so loved the world – the world, each of us and the whole creation – that he gave his son for us.

And, lets be clear: Jesus – God – is NOT passionate about suffering, violence, blood. These are the consequences of human sin. Jesus in fact undergoes suffering and violence and death on the cross – he does shed his blood, he does die. But Jesus’ suffering, Jesus’ death does not save us.

It is God – God’s passionate love for us that saves us.

We are not saved by a dead Jesus on the cross –

We are saved by the living resurrected Jesus –

Jesus is raised from death to new life, eternal life by the passionate loving power of God.

And we are raised with him, but the same passionate loving God, to live with Jesus in the resurrection eternal life.

Were you there?

ARE you there?

Are you passionate in your life for the things Jesus was passionate about?

- the sacredness of creation, of each person made in the image of God.
- trust, faith, obedience in God’s love,
 - God’s loving, healing, freeing indestructible relationship with us.
- justice, peace, hope
- God’s love, God’s life – for you and me and all

Are you there – with Jesus – at the cross, at the empty tomb, in eternal resurrected life

Here and now and always?