

Palm Sunday – Lenten Journey

*Lead us not into temptation,
Save us from the time of trial*

April 5, 2009

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Matthew 11:28-29

Zechariah 9:9-10

Mark 11:1-11

Today is Palm Sunday. There was no day like Palm Sunday for celebration and music.

Christmas is associated with music, but on that first Christmas it was music by the angels. Easter is associated with music, but on that first Easter there was so much wondering about Jesus rising from the dead that there was no rejoicing and singing. But on Palm Sunday we read that the whole multitude began to sing and praise God.

One of the most interesting sidelights to all of this celebrating and music was the Pharisees. They said to Jesus, “Teacher rebuke your followers.” This is embarrassing. Jerusalem is not a one donkey town like those towns in Galilee. This is the capital city. This is the home of the temple.

The answer of Jesus was, “I tell you, if the people stop singing, then even the stones will sing out the message of God. Hosanna, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.” The singers even invoked the name of the greatest hero in Israel which must have really upset the Pharisees. “Blessed be the kingdom of our father David which is coming.”

Martin Luther used the expression, “Sing the Gospel into their hearts.” Luther was both a musician and a writer of music. He was known as a phenomenal preacher, but he even said, “Preaching is alright, but even better to sing the message.”

My uncle was a pioneer missionary in Africa for over 50 years. He would come to a new area and gather, especially the children. They would make instruments like a trumpet out of an animal horn. And they would sing, “O come and let us praise the Lord, the Lord Jesus. Wassah.” And then they would mention specific things for which to give thanks.

This coming Thursday is Maundy Thursday. We usually tell the story in this way.

Jesus gathered with his disciples to eat the Passover Meal. Then he instituted Holy Communion. Then they left and went out to the Mount of Olives and the Garden of Gethsemane.

But we forget to mention a key thing. The Bible story says, “And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives and the Garden of Gethsemane.”

Today we focus on that part of the Lord’s Prayer which says, “Lead us not into temptation.” Down through the ages one of the greatest things to keep people strong in the faith is music. Gain strength to face the ups and downs of life with music.

The Bible mentions several ways to fight the power of temptation. Jesus, for example, when tempted, turned to the devil and said, “Thus says the Lord God.” There was strength in the Word of God.

We go to our Gospel for today. Jesus says, “Come unto me. One of the key verses in the Bible is, “Cast yourself upon me, because I care for you.” Our Gospel uses the expression, “Take my yoke upon you and learn from me.” Put your burdens on me. Don’t go it alone.

The classic story is the Garden of Gethsemane. Jesus goes, as was his custom, to meditate and pray. Heavenly Father, this is tough stuff. I don’t want to do it, but I do want to do your will.

Jesus comes back and finds his disciples sleeping. “Peter, could you not watch, meditate, and pray with me for one hour?” And Peter says, “Lord, don’t worry. Though all others forsake you, I will not; I will be true.” I can handle it. But in a few hours Peter fell into temptation and denied that he ever knew Jesus.

On the other hand Peter’s life changed to one of the most ardent and strong defenders of the faith when he stood for Jesus in the strength of the Lord God.

The Friday edition of the *Chicago Tribune* has this big headline – Feds Widen Net. None of us is perfect, but is there a way to be victorious in temptation? I would like to suggest two words – Music and Meditation.