



Sermon for the Sunday of the Passion: Palm Sunday
Rev. Jonathan Stepp
April 5, 2020

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Some memories from childhood are vivid – this is one of those memories. I was at a church convention with my family, I was seven years old, and it was about 15 minutes before the worship service was to begin. My Dad was helping with the service in some way that I don't remember and he had to go and talk to someone, while my Mom needed to go to the restroom. My Dad headed in one direction, thinking that I was with my Mom, and my Mom headed in the other direction, thinking I had gone with my Dad. I have no idea where my brother was but somehow, in the blink of an eye, I found myself alone in a convention space crowded with several thousand people.

I still vividly remember the sight of my Dad's 6'2" frame disappearing into the crowd and the forest of strange adult legs that closed in around me. I have to admit, I wasn't a very plucky or resourceful kid – I promptly just sat down on a bench and began to cry, somehow certain that I was now an orphan who would die alone on the streets of Savannah, GA.

Perhaps that is something of what Jesus felt that day on the cross when he cried out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" In these profound words of desolation we hear the cry of humanity – from the mildest forms of suffering, like a child lost in a crowd, to the deepest cries of our anguish, when we fall victim to violence, disease, or death. Sometimes God is like my Dad in that crowd that day: a tall figure disappearing into the world around us and leaving us alone with our suffering.

This Holy Week will be like no other we have every experienced. We will be isolated in our homes, cut off from the sacraments and the sacramental rites, and experiencing all the stress and anxiety that come with life in a time of plague. From talking with you all the last couple of weeks by phone, text, email, and zoom, I know that many of us are doing okay and some of us are struggling, weighed down with worries, fears, and sadness. For all of us, though, the difficult times through which we are living are either creating, or have creat-

ed, or will create, that moment when we also cry out like Jesus: “God, where are you? Why have you gone and left us here alone?”

Of course, the question of faith that we must ask ourselves is this: has God abandoned us simply because we cannot see how God is at work? My parents had certainly not abandoned me that day at the convention – in fact, I was every bit as loved and included in their life as I ever had been, even though I did not know where they were or how to find them. Jesus could not see God at work that dark and terrible day on the cross and there will be times in our lives when we cannot see God at work – but we are never abandoned by the loving Father who has made us his own adopted children through the Son in the Holy Spirit. We are loved and included in God’s life even when we do not see it.

As I began to cry, sitting on that bench, a woman came up and said “what’s wrong, are you okay?” I explained my lost-ness and she took me to the sound booth of the auditorium where they paged my Mom and Dad and they came within moments to retrieve me. If only all our times of lost-ness and pain could be resolved so easily!

If, on this Palm Sunday, you are feeling lost and abandoned like Jesus, do not give up. You will see God at work again soon – and probably sooner than you expect. If, on this Palm Sunday, you are feeling close to God and secure in God’s provision, then I ask you to be like the woman who found me crying that day. Look around you, take notice of who seems lost, and ask them if they are okay. You might just be the one that God will use to reveal himself to someone who really needs to see God right now.

Amen.