

Palm Sunday Year A

April 13, 2014

It wasn't supposed to end this way. The good guys are supposed to win. The damsel in distress is supposed to be untied from the railroad track in the nick of time. The underdog team is supposed to score the winning run in the bottom of the ninth inning. The symphony is supposed to rise to a stirring conclusion which invites us to jump to our feet with applause. But not this... not the silence, not the emptiness, not the loss.

Yes, I know, that there are future chapters of this story yet to be revealed. Most of us... and several times our number... will be back here next week on Easter Sunday, as we celebrate the crown jewel of our Christian experience. But we do a disservice to today's part of the story if we try to skip over this episode, or move through it too quickly for fear that we don't want to deal with the pain, or the disappointment, or the sadness, or the grief.

For today... with Jesus having breathed his last, and hanging lifeless on a cross... this is where the story ends... perhaps not with a period, but certainly with a long pause, before we are allowed to turn the page and continue.

The writer of the 23rd Psalm penned the words which many of us know by heart: "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil. For thou art with me, thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." We love those words. Many of us have clung to them to hold us up through some of the most challenging moments of our lives.

But now the characters in that great drama are reversed. Today, we don't simply plead that God will walk alongside us through those darkest moments of life, holding our hand and promising not to let it go. Today, we are asked to be the guide, to hold tight to that pierced hand with all our strength, with the same promise that – just as God will never let go of our hand, neither will we let go of God's. We don't simply ask God to enter in to our story today. This morning, it is we who are asked to enter into God's story.

And so, today, we accept Christ's brokenness, and offer in return no quick fix, no simple panacea, no easy answers. Instead, we offer the only thing we can truly give... our own brokenness... our broken hopes and shattered dreams, our unfulfilled ideals and unrequited loves, the missing pieces of our hearts and the messed up pieces of our lives. And we pray to God that our brokenness might be bound to the broken body of Jesus, that our pain might be mingled with his pain, that his loss and our loss might be merged and melded and molded into a single offering. We give it all to God, and ask God to make us whole once again.

And so, for each of us, and for all of us, I invite you all to stand, as we pray for the needs of the world.