

TRINITY NEWS

WEEK 14.
April 2, 2023

Palm Sunday

So we begin our yearly reliving of the most momentous week in History. A few points to bear in mind.

First, I think it's important for us to remember that what happens to Jesus is not particularly extraordinary. Unfortunately, things like that happen all the time in this fallen world of ours, and the only thing that makes this particular event unique is the religious significance we believers ascribe to it. The pattern is very familiar. The people in charge of things – the government, the church, the army, the rich – they decide that some person or group is a threat and so they destroy them. There's nothing unusual about that.

Jesus, who is no fool, knows this very well. He knows that what he's started is going to be seen as dangerous. Because it is a movement, with its leaders, the apostles, its meetings, its preaching campaigns that attract huge crowds – it's bound to catch the attention of the authorities.

And what a way to start it off! A provocative entry into Jerusalem with huge crowds waving palms, and the occupation of the Temple itself, the heart of political, religious and economic life – of course the authorities are going to react!

So when they do, Jesus is expecting it. But, he reacts to it in a way that the authorities don't expect. He accepts the role of Victim; He doesn't defend himself, but he doesn't surrender, either.

He tells his followers not to resist, and lets the authorities do what they want. So they kill him. His movement is scattered, they all run away, and as far as the authorities are concerned, that's that. It's over.

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But it isn't over, is it? If it were over, we heirs to that shattered movement and followers of that murdered man wouldn't be commemorating anything. And it's the authorities who have totally disappeared. We are still here.

Now down through the ages there's been a tendency to forget how political this all really was. We've preferred to make it all about spiritual things like Atonement, Redemption and so forth. And it's important that we do so. But we miss the point if we don't see the connection between what happened to Jesus and what happens around us all the time, that pattern, where the weak, the powerless suffer at the hands of strong and the powerful. We forget that Jesus is with us today in the weak and the powerless and that our calling as his followers, is to do what he did, be on their side.

We need to remember how the early Church linked this event with the Exodus: it's not only a spiritual liberation we're talking about then, but a liberation that affects us in this life, that changes the way we live, changes the relationship between those who govern and those who are governed, between the rich and the poor.

Christians have all too often forgotten that I'm afraid, and used their religion as a drug of sorts, to forget the world, not to change it. That isn't what Jesus is about. That's not what we should be about, either.