

PALM SUNDAY 3-28-10 - "The Road to the Cross"
 Mark 11:1-10 and Mark 14:1-15:47 using *The Message* by Eugene Peterson.

PRELUDE –

Our service this morning will follow the footsteps of Jesus as he walked the road that led to the cross. I will be using a contemporary paraphrase of the Bible called *The Message* by Eugene Peterson. We will begin by celebrating the triumphal entry of Jesus, which is the theme of Palm Sunday. Our Call to Worship is printed in the bulletin. Let us responsively read the praises the people shouted as Jesus rode through the streets of Jerusalem:

CALL TO WORSHIP (Responsively) – WAVE PALMS!!!

Hosanna!

Blessed is he who comes in God's name!

Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David!

Hosanna in highest heaven!

PRAYER OF INVOCATION –

O God, we thank you for your Son Jesus, who rode into Jerusalem as a triumphant King. In this week before Easter, help us to remember all that our Lord went through on our behalf, so that we too can praise and worship our Lord Jesus throughout this morning's service. Amen.

CONCERNS AND CELEBRATIONS OF THE CHURCH

HYMN – "The Palms" (see bulletin insert)

SCRIPTURE READING - Mark 11:1-10

1-3 When [Jesus and the disciples] were nearing Jerusalem, at Bethphage and Bethany on Mount Olives, [Jesus] sent off two of the disciples with instructions: "Go to the village across from you. As soon as you enter, you'll find a colt tethered, one that has never yet been ridden. Untie it and bring it. If anyone asks, 'What are you doing?' say, 'The Master needs him, and will return him right away.'"

4-7 They went and found a colt tied to a door at the street corner and untied it. Some of those standing there said, "What are you doing untying that colt?" The disciples replied exactly as Jesus had instructed them, and the people let them alone. They brought the colt to Jesus, spread their coats on it, and he mounted. 8-10 The people gave him a wonderful welcome, some throwing their coats on the street, others spreading out rushes they had cut in the fields. Running ahead and following after, they were calling out,
 Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in God's name!
 Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David!
 Hosanna in highest heaven!

CHILDREN'S SERMON –

HYMN NO. 173 – “All Glory, Laud and Honor”

MEDITATION – “The New Map”

Before going to a continuing education seminar a couple weeks ago, I stopped at Triple A to pick up a new map. The course was held at a Catholic retreat center in Jacksonville, Florida and I wanted to be sure I could find it. I checked the map and sure enough, there was an insert dedicated solely to the City of Jacksonville.

The address was 1714 State Road 13 and on the map there was a stretch of road about 1 1/2 inches long, labeled 13. How hard could it be, I reasoned, to find this place? After driving up and down that stretch of 13 for a half an hour I decided that either they had given me the wrong address, the map was wrong or the retreat center was so spiritual it was invisible. I even stopped to ask for directions, which shows you how frustrated I was, but no one had even HEARD of this place.

It turned out the map was wrong. The road connected to the end of the section marked 13 was STILL route 13 even though it was listed by a road name on the map. I found out because I called the retreat center and a very nice lady, coincidentally named Mrs. Robinson, gave me directions. Another reason I couldn't find it was because the location was about an inch BELOW the point where the Jacksonville map ended, even though it was, indeed, in Jacksonville.

When I DID finally get there, one of the things I learned from Ed white, who is one of the country's leading authorities on church life, was that things in churches are changing. In the fifties and sixties, most Americans went to church. That is longer true. The seminar leader said that, “We used to have a map that worked and people wanted to come to church, but the old map no longer works.” I understood just what he meant.

Things ARE changing. I recently received a booklet that gives the events which took place the year I was born. This one is titled *1950 - Remember When...* One of the ads has a picture of a bright new red convertible with white sidewall tires. Under the picture it says it is the new sleek and fleet look! Then it reads, "New 1950 Studebaker styled ahead for years to come!" Actually, it was not styled too far because Studebaker started to decline pretty rapidly after 1950 and finally, after many emanations, went belly up in 1966.

There are also ads for Crosley clock radios, black and white TV sets in large consoles and shoes with neolite soles, whatever the heck THEY are. I guess you get the picture. A LOT of maps, a lot of things that used to work, no longer do.

So what IS working in churches these days? That was one of my regular questions at the seminar. I quickly discovered that it is easier to chronicle the things that are going wrong in churches than it is to find out what is working in churches today. That doesn't mean there aren't things that ARE working. It's just that no program is working in all churches or even in most churches. The churches that are doing well are finding maps that work specifically for them.

WE are one of those churches. I said last week that our's was the smallest church represented at the seminar, but we are the BEST. Apart from having the most wonderful people in our church, we have a great new road map that is completely unique.

A week ago Saturday, we had an amazing women's retreat attended by over 100 women. Afterward, several women stopped to talk to me and just gushed with enthusiasm about the retreat. One woman left her travel cup here and when she came to pick it up this past week she said, "That retreat literally changed my life. I now feel much closer to Lord and I am spiritually energized. I just can't WAIT till next year!"

...Wednesday I went out to adjust the heat while MOPS was meeting. MOPS is the Mothers of Pre-schoolers program that meets in our church a couple times a month. The fellowship hall was jammed with young mothers. One new mom with two children came this past week and another new mom with twins is planning to come to the next meeting. MOPS is really starting to take off.

...Carol and I had a blast a week ago Friday when we met with the youth group at Mary Hick's home. If you are worried about where the world is headed, where our country is headed, where our church is headed, you should spend time with our teens. They are AMAZING! This is nine days later and I'm still excited. We will be doing an Earth Day service together on April 25th and they will be doing the CE Sunday service on June 13th. I'm not going to spill the beans, but you will NOT want to miss either service.

This year we had a great Washington Dinner. Everyone involved had a GREAT time and we fed hundreds of people a delicious meal and we made about \$800. AND, we kept alive a tradition that has been going on in our church for 112 years. Not many churches in America can say that.

I gave a presentation at the last presbytery meeting on our weekend backpack program that gives food over the weekend to undernourished children here in Dryden. People in other churches were stunned. Many had no idea that there could be hungry kids in their towns and villages. Some churches are now considering their own program. This year, WEB has fed 24 kids and next year they are going to get some more help and try for 36. Over the summer, they are planning to bring nutritious snacks to kids in trailer parks along with the Solar Express, which drops off books for kids to read.

At the seminar I was asked what I was doing to instigate all this wonderful activity. I said, "Nothing. It's not me. I pray and do my part but it's the people in my congregation. When the Master says he needs somebody to do something, she or he says, "Yes!" I bet if I asked every person who participated in the above activities, almost everyone here would raise their hands.

In the text I read a minute ago, Jesus sent the disciples to get a donkey for Jesus to ride. When the neighbors asked what they were doing, the disciples answered, "The Master needs him." THAT'S our new map. When Jesus says he needs someone to do something, he or she says, "Yes." I thank you. The Lord thanks you. And someday, when you actually MEET the Master, Jesus will say thank you to you face to face. ...Amen.

HYMN NO. 174 – "Hosanna Loud Hosanna"

SCRIPTURE – Mark 14:1-9

1-2 In only two days the eight-day Festival of Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread would begin. The high priests and religion scholars were looking for a way they could seize Jesus by stealth and kill him. They agreed that it should not be done during Passover Week. "We don't want the crowds up in arms," they said.

3-5 Jesus was at Bethany, a guest of Simon the Leper. While he was eating dinner, a woman came up carrying a bottle of very expensive perfume. Opening the bottle, she poured it on his head. Some of the guests became furious among themselves. "That's criminal! A sheer waste! This perfume could have been sold for well over a year's wages and handed out to the poor." They swelled up in anger, nearly bursting with indignation over her.

6-9 But Jesus said, "Let her alone. Why are you giving her a hard time? She has just done something wonderfully significant for me. You will have the poor with you every day for the rest of your lives. Whenever you feel like it, you can do something for them. Not so with me. She did what she could when she could—she pre-anointed my body for burial. And you can be sure that wherever in the whole world the Message is preached, what she just did is going to be talked about admiringly."

OFFERING - We will now receive the morning offering. As we do, let us remember the woman who anointed Jesus. The nard she used may have been the family treasure that she inherited, yet she sacrificed her wealth out of her love for Jesus. ...Let us, also, give whatever we give, out of our love for Jesus.

OFFERTORY

*DOXOLOGY (Hymn No. 625)

SCRIPTURE – Mark 14:10-25

10-11 Judas Iscariot, one of the Twelve, went to the cabal of high priests, determined to betray him. They couldn't believe their ears, and promised to pay him well. He started looking for just the right moment to hand [Jesus] over.

12 On the first of the Days of Unleavened Bread, the day they prepare the Passover sacrifice, [Jesus'] disciples asked him, "Where do you want us to go and make preparations so you can eat the Passover meal?" 13-15 [Jesus] directed two of his disciples, "Go into the city. A man carrying a water jug will meet you. Follow him. Ask the owner of whichever house he enters, 'The Teacher wants to know, Where is my guest room where I can eat the Passover meal with my disciples?' He will show you a spacious second-story room, swept and ready. Prepare for us there." 16 The disciples left, came to the city, found everything just as he had told them, and prepared the Passover meal.

17-18 After sunset [Jesus] came with the Twelve. As they were at the supper table eating, Jesus said, "I have something hard but important to say to you: One of you is going to hand me over to the conspirators, one who at this moment is eating with me." 19 Stunned, they started asking, one after another, "It isn't me, is it?" 20-21 He said, "It's one of the Twelve, one who eats with me out of the same bowl. In one sense, it turns out that the Son of Man is entering into a way of treachery well-marked by the Scriptures—no surprises here. In another sense, the man who turns him in, turns traitor to the Son of Man—better never to have been born than do this!"

22 In the course of their meal, having taken and blessed the bread, [Jesus] broke it and gave it to them. Then he said, "Take, this is my body." 23-24 Taking the chalice, he gave it to them, thanking God, and they all drank from it. He said, "This is my blood, God's new covenant, Poured out for many people. 25 I'll not be drinking wine again until the new day when I drink it in the kingdom of God."

*HYMN NO. 177 - "What Wondrous Love Is This?"

SCRIPTURE – Mark 14:26-42

26They sang a hymn and then went directly to Mount Olives. 27-28Jesus told them, "You're all going to feel that your world is falling apart and that it's my fault. There's a Scripture that says, I will strike the shepherd; The sheep will go helter-skelter." But after I am raised up, I will go ahead of you, leading the way to Galilee." 29Peter blurted out, "Even if everyone else is ashamed of you when things fall to pieces, I won't be." 30Jesus said, "Don't be so sure. Today, this very night in fact, before the rooster crows twice, you will deny me three times." 31[Peter] blustered in protest, "Even if I have to die with you, I will never deny you." All the others said the same thing.

32-34They came to an area called Gethsemane. Jesus told his disciples, "Sit here while I pray." He took Peter, James, and John with him. He plunged into a sinkhole of dreadful agony. [Jesus] told them, "I feel bad enough right now to die. Stay here and keep vigil with me."

35-36Going a little ahead, [Jesus] fell to the ground and prayed for a way out: "Papa, Father, you can—can't you?—get me out of this. Take this cup away from me. But please, not what I want—what do you want?" 37-38[Jesus] came back and found them sound asleep. He said to Peter, "Simon, you went to sleep on me? Can't you stick it out with me a single hour? Stay alert, be in prayer, so you don't enter the danger zone without even knowing it. Don't be naive. Part of you is eager, ready for anything in God; but another part is as lazy as an old dog sleeping by the fire."

39-40[Jesus] then went back and prayed the same prayer. Returning, he again found them sound asleep. They simply couldn't keep their eyes open, and they didn't have a plausible excuse. 41-42[Jesus] came back a third time and said, "Are you going to sleep all night? No—you've slept long enough. Time's up. The Son of Man is about to be betrayed into the hands of sinners. Get up. Let's get going. My betrayer has arrived."

As Jesus prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane, let us also pray, beginning with

SILENT PRAYER
PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE AND
THE LORD'S PRAYER

SCRIPTURE – Mark 14:43-72

43-47[No sooner were the words out of his mouth when] Judas, the one out of the Twelve, showed up, and with him a gang of ruffians, sent by the high priests, religion scholars, and leaders, brandishing swords and clubs. The betrayer had worked out a signal with them: "The one I kiss, that's the one—seize him. Make sure he doesn't get away." He went straight to Jesus and said, "Rabbi!" and kissed him. The others then grabbed [Jesus] and roughed him up.

One of the men standing there unsheathed his sword, swung, and came down on the Chief Priest's servant, lopping off the man's ear. 48-50 Jesus said to them, "What is this, coming after me with swords and clubs as if I were a dangerous criminal? Day after day I've been sitting in the Temple teaching, and you never so much as lifted a hand against me. What you in fact have done is confirm the prophetic writings." All the disciples cut and ran. 51-52A young man was following along. All he had on was a bed sheet. Some of the men grabbed him but he got away, running off naked, leaving them holding the sheet.

53-54 They led Jesus to the Chief Priest, where the high priests, religious leaders, and scholars had gathered together. Peter followed at a safe distance until they got to the Chief Priest's courtyard, where he mingled with the servants and warmed himself at the fire. 55-59 The high priests conspiring with the Jewish Council looked high and low for evidence against Jesus by which they could sentence him to death. They found nothing.

Plenty of people were willing to bring in false charges, but nothing added up, and they ended up canceling each other out. Then a few of them stood up and lied: "We heard him say, 'I am going to tear down this Temple, built by hard labor, and in three days build another without lifting a hand.'" But even they couldn't agree exactly. 60-61 In the middle of this, the Chief Priest stood up and asked Jesus, "What do you have to say to the accusation?" Jesus was silent. He said nothing.

The Chief Priest tried again, this time asking, "Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed?" 62 Jesus said, "Yes, I am, and you'll see it yourself: The Son of Man seated at the right hand of the Mighty One, Arriving on the clouds of heaven." 63-64 The Chief Priest lost his temper. Ripping his clothes, he yelled, "Did you hear that? After that do we need witnesses? You heard the blasphemy. Are you going to stand for it?" They condemned him, one and all. The sentence: death. 65 Some of them started spitting at [Jesus]. They blindfolded his eyes, then hit him, saying, "Who hit you? Prophecy!" The guards, punching and slapping, took [Jesus] away.

66-67 While all this was going on, Peter was down in the courtyard. One of the Chief Priest's servant girls came in and, seeing Peter warming himself there, looked hard at him and said, "You were with the Nazarene, Jesus." 68 [Peter] denied it: "I don't know what you're talking about." He went out on the porch. A rooster crowed. 69-70 The girl spotted him and began telling the people standing around, "He's one of them." [Peter] denied it again. After a little while, the bystanders brought it up again. "You've got to be one of them. You've got 'Galilean' written all over you."

71-72 Now Peter got really nervous and swore, "I never laid eyes on this man you're talking about." Just then the rooster crowed a second time. Peter remembered how Jesus had said, "Before a rooster crows twice, you'll deny me three times." He collapsed in tears.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION (In Silence)

Those who have betrayed someone, let us now confess our sin.
Those who have been betrayed by someone, let us forgive the one who betrayed us.

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

SCRIPTURE – Mark 15:1-20

1 At dawn's first light, the high priests, with the religious leaders and scholars, arranged a conference with the entire Jewish Council. After tying Jesus securely, they took him out and presented him to Pilate. 2-3 Pilate asked him, "Are you the 'King of the Jews'?" [Jesus] answered, "If you say so." The high priests let loose a barrage of accusations. 4-5 Pilate asked again, "Aren't you going to answer anything? That's quite a list of accusations." Still, [Jesus] said nothing. Pilate was impressed, really impressed.

6-10 It was a custom at the Feast to release a prisoner, anyone the people asked for. There was one prisoner called Barabbas, locked up with the insurrectionists who had committed murder during the uprising against Rome. As the crowd came up and began to present its petition for him to release a prisoner, Pilate anticipated them: "Do you want me to release the King of the Jews to you?" Pilate knew by this time that it was through sheer spite that the high priests had turned Jesus over to him. 11-12 But the high priests by then had worked up the crowd to ask for the release of Barabbas. Pilate came back, "So what do I do with this man you call King of the Jews?" 13 They yelled, "Nail him to a cross!"

14 Pilate objected, "But for what crime?" But they yelled all the louder, "Nail him to a cross!" 15 Pilate gave the crowd what it wanted, set Barabbas free and turned Jesus over for whipping and crucifixion. 16-20 The soldiers took Jesus into the palace (called Praetorium) and called together the entire brigade. They dressed him up in purple and put a crown plaited from a thorn bush on his head. Then they began their mockery: "Bravo, King of the Jews!" They banged on his head with a club, spit on him, and knelt down in mock worship. After they had had their fun, they took off the purple cape and put his own clothes back on him. Then they marched out to nail him to the cross.

*HYMN NO. 178 – "O Sacred Head Now Wounded"

SCRIPTURE – Mark 15:21-47 (NT p. 54)

21 There was a man walking by, coming from work, Simon from Cyrene, the father of Alexander and Rufus. They made him carry Jesus' cross. 22-24 The soldiers brought Jesus to Golgotha, meaning "Skull Hill." They offered him a mild painkiller (wine mixed with myrrh), but he wouldn't take it. And they nailed him to the cross.

They divided up his clothes and threw dice to see who would get them. 25-30 They nailed him up at nine o'clock in the morning. The charge against him—the king of the Jews—was printed on a poster. Along with him, they crucified two criminals, one to his right, the other to his left. People passing along the road jeered, shaking their heads in mock lament:

"You bragged that you could tear down the Temple and then rebuild it in three days—so show us your stuff! Save yourself! If you're really God's Son, come down from that cross!"

The high priests, along with the religion scholars, were right there mixing it up with the rest of them, having a great time poking fun at [Jesus]: "He saved others—but he can't save himself! Messiah, is he? King of Israel? Then let him climb down from that cross. We'll all become believers then!" Even the men crucified alongside him joined in the mockery.

33-34At noon the sky became extremely dark. The darkness lasted three hours. At three o'clock, Jesus groaned out of the depths, crying loudly, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?" which means, "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?" 35-36Some of the bystanders who heard him said, "Listen, he's calling for Elijah." Someone ran off, soaked a sponge in sour wine, put it on a stick, and gave it to him to drink, saying, "Let's see if Elijah comes to take him down."

37-39But Jesus, with a loud cry, gave his last breath. At that moment the Temple curtain ripped right down the middle. When the Roman captain standing guard in front of him saw that [Jesus] had quit breathing, he said, "This has to be the Son of God!"

40-41There were women watching from a distance, among them Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of the younger James and Joses, and Salome. When Jesus was in Galilee, these women followed and served him, and had come up with him to Jerusalem.

42-45Late in the afternoon, since it was the Day of Preparation (that is, Sabbath eve), Joseph of Arimathea, a highly respected member of the Jewish Council, came. He was one who lived expectantly, on the lookout for the kingdom of God. Working up his courage, he went to Pilate and asked for Jesus' body. Pilate questioned whether he could be dead that soon and called for the captain to verify that he was really dead. Assured by the captain, he gave Joseph the corpse.

46-47Having already purchased a linen shroud, Joseph took [Jesus] down, wrapped him in the shroud, placed him in a tomb that had been cut into the rock, and rolled a large stone across the opening. Mary Magdalene and Mary, mother of Joses, watched the burial.

SPECIAL MUSIC – “Once Upon a Tree” (The Choir)

Listen to the words of one of the all time favorite hymns, “The Old Rugged Cross” by George Bennard:

On a hill far away stood an old rugged cross,
The emblem of suffering and shame;
And I love that old cross where the dearest and best
For a world of lost sinners was slain.

So I'll cherish the old rugged cross,
 Till my trophies at last I lay down;
 I will cling to the old rugged cross,
 And exchange it one day for a crown.

Why did Jesus willingly allow himself to be nailed to the cross?
 Because he loves you ...and he loves me.
 And Jesus was willing to suffer the agonies of the cross so those who believe in him
 will be forgiven and live with Jesus forever in heaven.

This week, as you go about your busy lives,
 Remember the cross,
 Rejoice in Jesus' love for you.
 Recommit yourself to Jesus, who willingly died on the cross for you. And
 Return a week from today to celebrate Jesus' glorious resurrection.

Let us close the service with that wonderful hymn, # 186 "The Old Rugged Cross"

BENEDICTION –

The lord bless you and keep you;
 The Lord make his face to shine upon you,
 and be gracious to you:
 The Lord up his countenance upon you,
 and give you peace.

POSTLUDE

USHERS

GREETERS

*Those who are able, please stand