

Palm Sunday ~ Year A
March 16, 2008
The Reverend Dr. Howard J. Hess

“Two Journeys: A Reflection”

Several days later, Jesus entered Jerusalem a second time – but this time there would be no waving palm branches and no cheering people – only the sound of the temple guards whisking Jesus away in the dark of night. And then the journey of Jesus’ passion began: his abuse, the false accusations against him, his movement back and forth from one ruler to another, and finally his journey on the Via Dolorosa, the way of sorrows, to the hill outside the city where he would be crucified.

How could this have happened? How could a man of such gentleness, of such tenderness and love have been treated in this way? Partly it happened because Jesus spoke truth to power. Partly it happened because Jesus refused to allow himself to be used for political purposes; and it happened because Jesus remained committed to the mission God had given him and did not flee to protect himself. This morning we are reminded that as disciples of Jesus Christ we follow a Savior who does not choose a path of power and self-advancement. Instead we follow a Savior who put himself in harms’ way to demonstrate the depth of his love for us. It is sometimes hard to focus on the love because we recoil so in response to the pain we see. But underlying the pain is Christ’s love for us. Has he not told us that God so loved the world that whosoever believeth in me shall not die but have everlasting life? And has he not also told us “if anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it”? (Mark 8:34-35).

It is my prayer that we have the wisdom and the faith to follow where Jesus leads us – that we will not become seduced by our pride or offers of power, or recoil at the pain we see, or become so fearful of the cost that we choose not to follow Christ. This morning is a good time to reflect upon where we are in our faith journey – to let go of the distractions, to draw closer to Christ, and to journey with him to a place of new birth and new life.

Amen.