
Look Closely at the Story

A sermon by Canon Wallace Marsh
Palm Sunday – Year B

This story is at the heart of our faith. It is a story that we hear over and over again because it reveals the truth about God. But, this holy story also reveals the truth about our lives.

Look closely at the story and you will see someone willing to put money above all else. That person put money and power above relationship; money and power above love.

Look at your own life and see how easy it is to put money and power above others, especially above those we love. Certainly you know something about that feeling, or something about that guilt.

Look closely at the story and you will see someone who was scared to speak when called upon. That individual couldn't say the words "I love you" until after the person he loved had died.

Look at your own life and acknowledge how difficult it is to say those words; to know it involves some sense of loss. Then, recall the moments in your life, when you should have spoken those words, but didn't speak at all. Certainly you know something about wanting to have that moment back, about living with that regret.

Look closely at the story and you will see a parent watching their child suffer and die.

Look at your own life and recall the feeling of watching someone you love experience pain and death. Remember the feeling of total helplessness. Certainly watching that person suffer and die felt like a sword piercing your heart.

Look closely at the story and you will see an individual offer a random act of kindness when the weight of the world was bearing down on another person's shoulders.

Look at your own life and remember what it was like to experience grace at a time when you most needed it, but least expected it. Certainly you remember that unexpected gift.

As a life-long Episcopalian, I can recall times where this story deeply touched my life. Yet, I can also recall times where I showed up for Palm Sunday and never connected with the story at all.

Perhaps there were too many distractions in my life to pay attention to the story...

Maybe I had heard the story so many times that I thought I didn't need to hear it again...

Or maybe I was scared...yes, scared to listen to something I didn't want to hear. Scared that listening to something so holy and powerful might challenge the false assumptions that I use to define my life and to construct my identity.

To be crucified with Christ, as St. Paul writes, might mean the story is asking me to re-order and re-program a life that I have worked so hard to create.

So, let me be very clear: To hear the story without entering it, or to hear the story without allowing it to enter your life, is a grave mistake.

Jesus takes on our flesh, so that we can enter the story of his life. Jesus takes on our nature, so that we can recognize his presence in the story of our lives.

Look closely at the story and you will see the truth about God and the truth about your own life.

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