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## *Living with Passion*

**A sermon by Canon Wallace Marsh**  
**Palm Sunday – Year C**

Have you ever noticed that in the face of death we start asking the existential questions? We start asking about the meaning and purpose of life, and what it means to live a good life.

A few years ago, a group of theologians from Yale Divinity School approached the university administration about this very topic. The theologians noted that in the past fifty years, society in general, and universities in particular, have stopped talking about the meaning of life, and what it means to live a good life.

They pointed to the fact that for hundreds of years universities were places that wrestled with these questions; however, they no longer pay much attention to the questions at all. (Let me be fair, the theologians also levied this same critique against today's church).

So, this group of theologians started working with the college administration to create a class for undergraduates, and the class has become quite popular. The name of the course is "Life Worth Living."

In that class, students study the meaning and purpose of life through the lens of both religious and secular traditions.

The question for each tradition is, "What are the truth claims this tradition is making and, second but more importantly, if those truth claims are true, how would your life have to change?"

At the end of the term, students are asked to write a final paper articulating the meaning and purpose of their own lives. If they are from a particular faith tradition they are asked to draw upon their faith in the final paper.

So, if you were taking that course what would you write? As a Christian, how would you articulate the meaning of life and what it means to live a good life?

I don't know about you, but I couldn't write that paper without drawing upon the themes of Holy Week.

Today, we hear the Passion of Christ, and in hearing this Passion, we are reminded that life is to be lived with passion.

Yes, we live in a culture that talks about living life with passion, but those passions are very different from the Passion we have just heard read.

Here is what I mean by that—if I did an inventory of those things I desire in life,

I would likely discover a dichotomy between the passions of my life and the Passion of Christ.

So, why is that important? Well, I believe the moments where we lose our meaning and purpose in life happen to be the moments where our passions have drifted the furthest from the Passion of Christ.

This is why Holy Week is so foundational to our faith and daily lives.

Holy Week is about immersing ourselves in the Passion of Christ. It is a week where we prayerfully align Christ's Passion

to our own passions.

It is a week where we ask ourselves what it means to serve others and be a person grounded in forgiveness and love.

It is a week where we see God incarnate endure the pain and suffering that we cannot seem to avoid in life.

Holy Week is a reminder that the God who redeems the agony of the cross is also the God at work redeeming our lives.

But most of all, Holy Week is a reminder that while death might be the last word in today's reading, it is not the last word in the stories of our lives.

Holy Week is at the center of our faith; it is a week that shapes the passions of our lives, reminding us what it means to live a good life.

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