

Sermon

Palm (Passion) Sunday

‘You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free’

Mark 15.1-39



‘You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free,’ Jesus said.

In Caesarea Philippi, Jesus asked his disciples, ‘Who do you say that I am?’ Simon Peter answered, ‘You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.’ Jesus answered him, ‘Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you but my Father in heaven.’ And from that time on, Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and undergo great suffering at the hands of the elders and chief priests and scribes and be killed and on the third day be raised’.

But Peter took Jesus aside and began to rebuke Jesus, saying, ‘God forbid it, Lord! This must never happen to you.’ But Jesus turned and

said to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me, for you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.”

Then Jesus told his disciples, “If any wish to come after me, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it. For what will it profit them if they gain the whole world but forfeit their life?..For the Son of Man is to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay everyone for what has been done.’

Today is Palm Sunday. The Messiah is to be crucified. Houston, we have a problem.

In the book of Genesis, the people of God are witnesses to a moral universe. Where human beings live in a state of righteousness, in a state of obedience to God, and his sovereign right to *be* God in the lives of his creatures, there is freedom, and fulness of life. Where humans live in a state of wrong, in a state of disobedience against God, and his right to sovereignty over their lives, this way of life leads to spiritual death.

Here the judgment of God does not come to us externally, from the outside, it comes to us internally, from the inside. As we former blessing, turns to dust in our hands. As we are handed over, to the consequences of our actions. To our subjection to the elemental forces of this world.

You may be an ambassador to England or France
You may like to gamble, you might like to dance
You may be the heavyweight champion of the world
You might be a socialite with a long string of pearls

Said Bob Dylan.

But you're gonna have to serve somebody

Well, it may be the Devil or it may be the Lord
But you're gonna have to serve somebody

In the Garden of Eden, which lords one serves, which life one leads, depends on which voice one listens to. The voice of God. Who says trust me. Trust in my goodness. Trust in my Provision. Trust in my government of the world.

Or the voice that is there, to undermine God, by calling what is good, evil, and what is evil, good. The voice that leads to confusion, corruption and chaos. The voice that leads us human beings, instead of serving God, and the good, to work against Him, and what is bad. The voice that leads us human beings, into the wrong side of history.

In the early church, after some initial hesitation, the church fathers came to see the Roman Empire, as part of God's good government of his world. The early church father Origen saw the pacification and unification of the ancient world, in the days of Christ, as part of God's promise, that in the days of the Messiah there would be peace, unity, and a flourishing of righteousness.

Eusebius was the historian of the early church. Eusebius saw in the rise of Rome, and its conversion to Christianity, with all of its imperfections, a complete unity of Church and society. In the Roman Empire, then, there is the world government of God.

According to the prophets, with a few notable exceptions, at the time of Jesus Christ, the Jewish people as a whole had become an unsaved collective. They had turned away from God. Their former blessing, had turned to dust in their hands. As God handed them over, to the consequences of their actions. To their subjection to the dark forces of this world. To a state of confusion, chaos, and corruption. Self-interested, political power, had become the order of the day.

In Jesus' day, the Jewish messianic expectation was centred on a political king, who, when he came, would come to overthrow the Roman Empire, overcome their suffering, and put themselves, over

other people. They have no interest in the one, obedient human being. They have no interest in an obedient, suffering Messiah. They want a revolution. They want insurrection. They want what the Zealots were seeking. Witness, the release of Barabbas. They had fallen into temptation. A culture of triumphalism stood in the way of the reconciliation of the people to God, under the sign of the Crucified Christ.

In Jesus' day, they did not see that in Jesus' rejection, condemnation, suffering, and death, God's action, once, for this whole world, both Jew and Gentile, to reconcile the world to himself.

God's action, to overcome the power of human sin. God's action, to remove the offence, the guilt, and all of its consequences, including death. God's action in driving out the ruler of this world, once, and for all, out of heaven, the Satan.

'Now is the judgment of this world,' Jesus said of his imminent crucifixion. 'Now the ruler of this world will be driven out... Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honour'.

Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah of God. The King, not only of the Jews, but of the Gentiles, too. He is the King of the world.

Not through the temptation to political power, not through any program of economic and political liberation, not by any messianic rule over the nations, but by faith in the Crucified, will the nations, wherever the gospel of Jesus Christ is proclaimed and accepted, come to worship the God of Israel, as the one and only God.

The Messiah of God, Jesus does not exercise his dominion through political power, but through his suffering vicariously for the sins of the human race, Jesus first cleansed the Jewish hope from all

falsehood in the consciousness of his disciples. Then he opened their eyes to the reconciliation of the Gentile world with Israel and its God.

The man Jesus, is the crucified and exalted Lord; the Christ of God; the fulfilment of ancient Israel's hope of salvation, he altered and extended that hope, by what befell him. He is the hope, and the salvation of the world.

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