



## ST. ANDREW'S IN THE PINES EPISCOPAL CHURCH

### SERMON

Palm Sunday – April, 2014

There is something pretty unique in our church year that starts today and continues until next Sunday. And if you're quite sharp you will say to yourself- I know- it's Holy Week. And yes Holy Week does start today and comes around every year and we have all sorts of church services for 7 days and we churchy folks wear ourselves out. But then that's not so unique anymore. No, there is something else I noticed this year which is what makes it unique in my mind.

This year I noticed that starting today we spend eight days with a singular focus on Jesus. Oh sure – we're a Christian church so Jesus is always our focus. But I maintain not so – not like this. We have a Trinitarian faith so God, Jesus, and Holy Spirit get spoken on and mingled together a lot. And every week we hear about each of them in our readings and lessons. So- we never forget Jesus. BUT during this week we really pay attention to Jesus. We really pay attention to Jesus – and not the Jesus that now sits at the right hand of the father- caring for us all. Not the Jesus that was from the beginning with God and ever more shall be.

No – starting today we key in on the human Jesus – the Jesus that walked this earth, just like you and I. For this week- when we look, when we pray, when we pay attention – we see a face, a human face among other human faces. Quoting from Frances Spufford in *Unapologetic*: “It is a face in an angry crowd, a crown engorged by the confidence that it is doing the right thing, that it is being virtuous. The man in the middle of the crowd does not look virtuous. He looks tired and frightened and battered by the passions around him. But he is the crowd's focus and center. The center of everything, in fact, because if you are a Christian you do not believe that the characteristic action of the God of everything is to mold the course of the universe powerfully from afar. For a Christian, the most essential thing God does in time, in all of human history, is to be that man in the crowd; a man under arrest and on his way to our common catastrophe.

This week we pay attention to Jesus – to Yeshua – his humanity, the tragedy of betrayal, the difficult circumstances. We pay attention to the pitfalls and foibles and stumblings of human nature. And I ask you to spend this week using your compassionate imagination. May we use our imagination to see humanity at its most lost, broken and monstrous. And in our imagination we are there, and Jesus is there, and each person we know is there. We've been and can go again to the place where we betrayed and are betrayed, where we are frightened and uncertain, and where we frighten others. The place where we say things we wish we could take back and where

we unleash pain and harm to others, and where pain and harm from others comes upon us. We go there.

And then we live with the hope and promise that there is a hidden life and history and promise deep within every one of us that takes us to being accepted back again and again. That Jesus' affection for us will expand to encompass whatever flawed thing that has just appeared in us – and we will understand his love as the deepest, dearest thing and we will return to ourselves ready to err in the direction of kindness.

Let's get ready for Easter. Thanks be to God.