**Isaiah 50: 4-9a (Dusty Rhoads);  Philippians 2: 5-11 (Dusty)**

 **Mark 11: 1-11**

**Sermon: “What A Week!”**

**Isaiah 50: 4-9a (GNT)**

**The Obedience of the Lord's Servant**

**4** The Sovereign Lord has taught me what to say,
    so that I can strengthen the weary.
Every morning he makes me eager
    to hear what he is going to teach me.
**5** The Lord has given me understanding,
    and I have not rebelled
    or turned away from him.
**6** I bared my back to those who beat me.
    I did not stop them when they insulted me,
    when they pulled out the hairs of my beard
    and spit in my face.

**7** But their insults cannot hurt me
    because the Sovereign Lord gives me help.
I brace myself to endure them.
    I know that I will not be disgraced,
**8**    for God is near,
    and he will prove me innocent.
Does anyone dare bring charges against me?
    Let us go to court together!
    Let him bring his accusation!
**9** The Sovereign Lord himself defends me—
    who, then, can prove me guilty?
All my accusers will disappear;
    they will vanish like moth-eaten cloth.

**Commentary**

Our passage from Isaiah refers to the Suffering Servant of God which Jesus saw as His role as Messiah.  The great prophet known as Isaiah (this was Second Isaiah written around 500 BC) speaks the word of God about a Messiah who suffers for the sake of God’s children.  Such a Messiah was not anticipated by everyone as many wanted a mighty military ruler who would simply kill their enemies.  Rather Jesus teaches a gospel of love and forgiveness.  He is surely an unexpected Messiah filled with the miraculous surprises of God.

Christ suffered some of the exact injuries described in Isaiah 50.  Here is how the New King James Version puts it:  I gave My back to those who struck Me,

And My cheeks to those who plucked out the beard;  I did not hide My face from shame and spitting.

How terrible the sufferings of Jesus which He experienced Thursday night and on Good Friday.  We too identify with the sufferings of Christ when we are abused by loved ones, by the violence in our streets, countryside and cities—in Gaza and Ukraine.  The impact of Holy Week and all that Jesus Christ endured on behalf of humanity is alive to this day. Lord, what a week!  What a reality check God has taken for us and for our salvation.  May we ever live the great mystery anew throughout our earthly journey.

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**Philippians 2: 5-11 (GNT)**

**5**The attitude you should have is the one that Christ Jesus had:

**6** He always had the nature of God,
    but he did not think that by force he should try to remain equal with God.
**7** Instead of this, of his own free will he gave up all he had,
    and took the nature of a servant.
He became like a human being
    and appeared in human likeness.
**8**He was humble and walked the path of obedience all the way to death—
    his death on the cross.
**9** For this reason God raised him to the highest place above
    and gave him the name that is greater than any other name.
**10** And so, in honor of the name of Jesus
    all beings in heaven, on earth, and in the world below
    will fall on their knees,
**11** and all will openly proclaim that Jesus Christ is Lord,
    to the glory of God the Father.

**Commentary**

Here the Apostle Paul writes a beautiful hymn about the humility, mystery and greatness of God incarnate (enfleshed) in Christ.  It is a wonderful passage of scripture that some students of the Bible have designated as their favorite.

Please read it carefully to determine how we are called to live and the true miracle of what Jesus accomplished “of His own free will” for us.  He was GOD yet He was humble and walked the path of obedience all the way to death…on a Cross.  This is the most marvelous good news on earth.  We rejoice and are made glad by the message of salvation that we have to share because of this week.  What a Week, indeed! And now Jesus is alive!  “God raised Him to the highest place and gave Him the name above any other name, so that at the name of Jesus all beings in all of creation in all universes will worship.”  Amen.

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**Mark 11: 1-11 (GNT)**

**The Triumphant Entry into Jerusalem**

**11** As they approached Jerusalem, near the towns of Bethphage and Bethany, they came to the Mount of Olives. Jesus sent two of his disciples on ahead **2** with these instructions: “Go to the village there ahead of you. As soon as you get there, you will find a colt tied up that has never been ridden. Untie it and bring it here. **3**And if someone asks you why you are doing that, say that the Master needs it and will send it back at once.”

**4** So they went and found a colt out in the street, tied to the door of a house. As they were untying it, **5** some of the bystanders asked them, “What are you doing, untying that colt?”

**6** They answered just as Jesus had told them, and the crowd let them go. **7**They brought the colt to Jesus, threw their cloaks over the animal, and Jesus got on. **8**Many people spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches in the field and spread them on the road. **9** The people who were in front and those who followed behind began to shout, “Praise God! God bless him who comes in the name of the Lord! **10** God bless the coming kingdom of King David, our father! Praise be to God!”

**11** Jesus entered Jerusalem, went into the Temple, and looked around at everything. But since it was already late in the day, he went out to Bethany with the twelve disciples.

**Commentary**

Jesus knows what He is doing as He enters the final stage of His earthly journey in human form.  Christ specifically calls for a humble donkey, never before rode, to show the kind of Messiah who would inaugurate the new age.  This picture has been drawn before by the prophet Zechariah 9: 9.  This belief about the humble Messiah was so entrenched that some Rabbis said if anyone saw a donkey in their dreams they receive salvation!

No wonder Jesus gave such clear instructions about the animal upon which He would enter Jerusalem.  People knew the ministry of the great healer and teacher was coming to a climax.  He has been clear about what is going to happen, even if no one quite understood or believed that it would, should or could!  Christ laid it all out in the open—enter Jerusalem, suffer, die and be raised!  He was met with blank faces, rebuke or disbelief. Basically, what in the world are you talking about?  Or, yeah, I’ll never leave you, I’ll go all the way with you, I’ll even die with you—I believe in you and love you so.  Jesus knew their words were hollow and even if their spirits were willing, their flesh was weak and that strong faith could not take place until after the resurrection and gift of the Holy Spirit. And He is a gentle Saviour who will work with these flawed disciples—and with us.

So as we enter Holy Week we have all the elements of the roller coaster before us:  the Triumphal entry with celebration and tension, the Cleansing of the Temple which will seal His fate, marvelous teachings and healings always by His very presence, Passover, Holy Communion, Gethsemane, betrayal, arrest, beatings, denial, torture, trials, crucifixion, death, burial, and resurrection.  Lord, “What A Week!”  Amen.

“Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!  Blessed is the coming kingdom of our ancestor David!  Hosanna in the highest heaven!”

(Hosanna means “please save us” it is a cry reserved for one believed to be the Messiah.  “Hosanna in the highest—save us beyond all measure.”)