

## **eLectionary Readings Discussion for Sunday, March 28, 2010**

A Ministry of Christ the Redeemer Church, San Marcos, Texas

### **Palm Sunday**

*This discussion is the opinion of Bert Cobb and is not necessarily the opinion of anyone else. Do not interpret these reflections to mean anything other than what Bert Cobb thinks and feels. They are for the exhortation, encouragement, and edification of the Saints and may be used freely for that purpose.*

The Lectionary Readings for the week:

Isaiah 50:4-9a

Psalm 31:9-16

Philippians 2:5-11

Luke 22:14-23:56

Palm Sunday is the ultimate opportunity to explore our feelings surrounding the events of "Holy Week". A lot can happen in a week. Our emotions are raised to mountain tops by the triumphal entry into Jerusalem and plunged to new depths by the crucifixion. Imagine for a while that you and I were witnesses to the events of the week in which Christ established a "new covenant" and fulfilled many prophecies of the Hebrew Bible. A "new religion" is born. A new "creature" is created in the 'risen Christ. We are offered new HOPE through faith. What a week. What a new beginning. What an opportunity to gain new HOPE. The outcomes of many of the events that we sense as "tragedies" are determined by our ATTITUDES. Use this week to explore the depths of God's love in that God sacrificed his most precious child to save the rest of His Children...you and me. See the events afresh. Explore the emotions of the people who witnessed these days of self-exploration. We know the outcome of the week's events but, they did not. They witnessed their son, their brother, their best friend murdered as an innocent man by the cruelty of the Romans and Jewish authorities. Who are we in this story? Are we the Romans, the Jews, the friends, the doubters, the by-standers or the ones crying for his blood? I cannot be too critical of these people because I know I could have been any of them. People do terrible things to each other in this cruel world. Hate rules this world while love rules the Heavenly Kingdom. When we show love to one another, we may catch a glimpse of Heaven and taste the world where God is sovereign. This world is not our home. IF we had "Heaven on earth", no one would be willing to die. The certainty of death makes us "grow up" and cling to life with tenacity born of fear. Christ was crucified and rose from death to show us that we, too, may experience life beyond this existence. We, like Christ, long for the presence of the Father. God raised Jesus and we live in the HOPE of our resurrection. May God bless us all as we reflect on the birth of Christianity during the events of Holy Week. Without Friday's crucifixion, there could not have been the JOY of Sunday morning.

### **Isaiah 50:4-9a**

**The Lord GOD has given me  
the tongue of a teacher,  
that I may know how to sustain  
the weary with a word.**

**Morning by morning he wakens--  
wakens my ear  
to listen as those who are taught.**

**The Lord GOD has opened my ear,  
and I was not rebellious,  
I did not turn backward.**

**I gave my back to those who struck me,  
and my cheeks to those who pulled out the beard;  
I did not hide my face  
from insult and spitting.**

**The Lord GOD helps me;  
therefore I have not been disgraced;  
therefore I have set my face like flint,  
and I know that I shall not be put to shame;  
he who vindicates me is near.**

**Who will contend with me?  
Let us stand up together.**

**Who are my adversaries?  
Let them confront me.**

**It is the Lord GOD who helps me;  
who will declare me guilty?**

Each of us is a “teacher” who someone is watching. What are we teaching? Are we so “smart” that we cannot learn anything new? The admission of ignorance is the beginning of true knowledge. Facts are dandy but, KNOWLEDGE born of experience (faith) is sustaining in times of doubt. My “experiences” have “taught me” that I can do nothing by myself. Every time I have tried to rely on my strength, my “wisdom” or my “wits”, I have failed. Isaiah tells us of his assuredness in his knowledge of the love of God. Do we “lean on God” or upon our “knowledge”? I know that my “knowledge” is insufficient for my salvation. Isaiah encourages us to “lean upon God” who will sustain us and teach us. The fool has said in his heart “There is no God.” We may not have said these words but our lives belie our “faith” when we act as though God does not exist. The “wise ones” do not “lean” on their own “false wisdom”. Wisdom admits its own ignorance and incompleteness. “I KNOW whom I have BELIEVED...” Seek God and you will find God. This is His promise of love. The problem is that many of us have been “looking for love in all the wrong places.” Do not forget that Isaiah did not learn about God from reading the King James Bible. Isaiah learned about God from living life and seeking to learn. We would do well to do the same. Can we find “God” in these passages?

**Psalm 31:9-16 Page 623, BCP**

*In te, Domine, speravi*

9

*Have mercy on me, O LORD, for I am in trouble; \*  
my eye is consumed with sorrow,  
and also my throat and my belly.*

10

*For my life is wasted with grief,  
and my years with sighing; \*  
my strength fails me because of affliction,  
and my bones are consumed.*

11

*I have become a reproach to all my enemies and even to my  
neighbors,  
a dismay to those of my acquaintance; \*  
when they see me in the street they avoid me.*

12

*I am forgotten like a dead man, out of mind; \*  
I am as useless as a broken pot.*

13

*For I have heard the whispering of the crowd;  
fear is all around; \*  
they put their heads together against me;  
they plot to take my life.*

14

*But as for me, I have trusted in you, O LORD. \*  
I have said, "You are my God.*

15

*My times are in your hand; \*  
rescue me from the hand of my enemies,  
and from those who persecute me.*

16

*Make your face to shine upon your servant, \*  
and in your loving-kindness save me."*

Who do you trust? Do you "feel" like the psalmist? The summation of the psalmist's plea is "I have trusted in you, O LORD. I have said, 'You are my God.'" Do we trust God or our own "wits" and "strength"? Is our plea the same as the psalmist: "Make your face to shine upon your servant and in your loving-kindness save me"? After all our striving to "save ourselves", we must come to the same conclusion: we must rely TOTALLY upon God's good grace, love and mercy. Coming to this conclusion means surrendering our will to the will of the Father and our surrendering will allow us peace. Peace comes when we LIVE in

the “will of the Father”. No, while we are in the midst of life, we may experience pain, disease, cancer, divorce, unemployment, hate, disappointment and any of the other “ills” assigned to our human existence. What matters is our ATTITUDE so that we can humble ourselves to accept God’s will for our lives and THEN we will have peace. We see this in the events of the “week of passion” as exemplified in these scriptures and the Easter scriptures. What will we learn from these passages?

### **Philippians 2:5-11**

**Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus,**  
**who, though he was in the form of God,**  
**did not regard equality with God**  
**as something to be exploited,**  
**but emptied himself,**  
**taking the form of a slave,**  
**being born in human likeness.**  
**And being found in human form,**  
**he humbled himself**  
**and became obedient to the point of death--**  
**even death on a cross.**  
**Therefore God also highly exalted him**  
**and gave him the name**  
**that is above every name,**  
**so that at the name of Jesus**  
**every knee should bend,**  
**in heaven and on earth and under the earth,**  
**and every tongue should confess**  
**that Jesus Christ is Lord,**  
**to the glory of God the Father.**

These few sentences are the encapsulation of the life of Jesus. It is his “mission statement” given to the Philippians by Paul. The exhortation is that we should “Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus...” that is, we should have the same ATTITUDE as Jesus who was willing to humble himself and take on human form and complete the mission His Father gave him...to save the world. Because Jesus obeyed God, God exalted him and made his “name” the object of worship and a means of salvation. It is through the “name” (essence, spirit) of Jesus that we “confess” and “acknowledge” the Son of the Father as our “means of salvation”. By glorifying the “name of Jesus”, we give GLORY to the Father. But, to achieve the “will of the Father”, Jesus had to submit himself as a willing sacrifice for ME and YOU. Through Christ’s sacrifice, we may attain to the salvation offered by God’s only Son. “For God so loved the world that he GAVE his only begotten SON...” No matter how many times we hear it, those are words of LOVE, HOPE, JOY, PEACE and SALVATION. Without the obedience of the Son, WE would have remained in our sin, lost forever. Praise God for the

gift of Jesus who offers us the gift of salvation through the blood sacrifice on Calvary.

### **Luke 22:14-23:56**

***When the hour for the Passover meal came, Jesus took his place at the table, and the apostles with him. He said to them, "I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; for I tell you, I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God." Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he said, "Take this and divide it among yourselves; for I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes." Then he took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." And he did the same with the cup after supper, saying, "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood. But see, the one who betrays me is with me, and his hand is on the table. For the Son of Man is going as it has been determined, but woe to that one by whom he is betrayed!" Then they began to ask one another, which one of them it could be who would do this. A dispute also arose among them as to which one of them was to be regarded as the greatest. But he said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those in authority over them are called benefactors. But not so with you; rather the greatest among you must become like the youngest, and the leader like one who serves. For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one at the table? But I am among you as one who serves.***

***"You are those who have stood by me in my trials; and I confer on you, just as my Father has conferred on me, a kingdom, so that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and you will sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.***

***"Simon, Simon, listen! Satan has demanded to sift all of you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your own faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned back, strengthen your brothers." And he said to him, "Lord, I am ready to go with you to prison and to death!" Jesus said, "I tell you, Peter, the cock will not crow this day, until you have denied three times that you know me."***

***He said to them, "When I sent you out without a purse, bag, or sandals, did you lack anything?" They said, "No, not a thing." He said to them, "But now, the one who has a purse must take it, and likewise a bag. And the one who has no sword must sell his cloak and buy one. For I tell you, this scripture must be fulfilled in me, 'And he was counted among the lawless'; and indeed what is written about me is being fulfilled." They said, "Lord, look, here are two swords." He replied, "It is enough."***

***He came out and went, as was his custom, to the Mount of Olives; and the disciples followed him. When he reached the place, he said to them, "Pray***

***that you may not come into the time of trial." Then he withdrew from them about a stone's throw, knelt down, and prayed, "Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me; yet, not my will but yours be done." When he got up from prayer, he came to the disciples and found them sleeping because of grief, and he said to them, "Why are you sleeping? Get up and pray that you may not come into the time of trial."***

***While he was still speaking, suddenly a crowd came, and the one called Judas, one of the twelve, was leading them. He approached Jesus to kiss him; but Jesus said to him, "Judas, is it with a kiss that you are betraying the Son of Man?" When those who were around him saw what was coming, they asked, "Lord, should we strike with the sword?" Then one of them struck the slave of the high priest and cut off his right ear. But Jesus said, "No more of this!" And he touched his ear and healed him. Then Jesus said to the chief priests, the officers of the temple police, and the elders who had come for him, "Have you come out with swords and clubs as if I were a bandit? When I was with you day after day in the temple, you did not lay hands on me. But this is your hour, and the power of darkness!"***

***Then they seized him and led him away, bringing him into the high priest's house. But Peter was following at a distance. When they had kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and sat down together, Peter sat among them. Then a servant-girl, seeing him in the firelight, stared at him and said, "This man also was with him." But he denied it, saying, "Woman, I do not know him." A little later someone else, on seeing him, said, "You also are one of them." But Peter said, "Man, I am not!" Then about an hour later still another kept insisting, "Surely this man also was with him; for he is a Galilean." But Peter said, "Man, I do not know what you are talking about!" At that moment, while he was still speaking, the cock crowed. The Lord turned and looked at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said to him, "Before the cock crows today, you will deny me three times." And he went out and wept bitterly.***

***Now the men who were holding Jesus began to mock him and beat him; they also blindfolded him and kept asking him, "Prophecy! Who is it that struck you?" They kept heaping many other insults on him.***

***When day came, the assembly of the elders of the people, both chief priests and scribes, gathered together, and they brought him to their council. They said, "If you are the Messiah, tell us." He replied, "If I tell you, you will not believe; and if I question you, you will not answer. But from now on the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the power of God." All of them asked, "Are you, then, the Son of God?" He said to them, "You say that I am." Then they said, "What further testimony do we need? We have heard it ourselves from his own lips!"]***

***Then the assembly rose as a body and brought Jesus before Pilate. They began to accuse him, saying, "We found this man perverting our nation, forbidding us to pay taxes to the emperor, and saying that he himself is the***

**Messiah, a king." Then Pilate asked him, "Are you the king of the Jews?" He answered, "You say so." Then Pilate said to the chief priests and the crowds, "I find no basis for an accusation against this man." But they were insistent and said, "He stirs up the people by teaching throughout all Judea, from Galilee where he began even to this place."**

**When Pilate heard this, he asked whether the man was a Galilean. And when he learned that he was under Herod's jurisdiction, he sent him off to Herod, who was himself in Jerusalem at that time. When Herod saw Jesus, he was very glad, for he had been wanting to see him for a long time, because he had heard about him and was hoping to see him perform some sign. He questioned him at some length, but Jesus gave him no answer. The chief priests and the scribes stood by, vehemently accusing him. Even Herod with his soldiers treated him with contempt and mocked him; then he put an elegant robe on him, and sent him back to Pilate. That same day Herod and Pilate became friends with each other; before this they had been enemies.**

**Pilate then called together the chief priests, the leaders, and the people, and said to them, "You brought me this man as one who was perverting the people; and here I have examined him in your presence and have not found this man guilty of any of your charges against him. Neither has Herod, for he sent him back to us. Indeed, he has done nothing to deserve death. I will therefore have him flogged and release him."**

**Then they all shouted out together, "Away with this fellow! Release Barabbas for us!" (This was a man who had been put in prison for an insurrection that had taken place in the city, and for murder.) Pilate, wanting to release Jesus, addressed them again; but they kept shouting, "Crucify, crucify him!" A third time he said to them, "Why, what evil has he done? I have found in him no ground for the sentence of death; I will therefore have him flogged and then release him." But they kept urgently demanding with loud shouts that he should be crucified; and their voices prevailed. So Pilate gave his verdict that their demand should be granted. He released the man they asked for, the one who had been put in prison for insurrection and murder, and he handed Jesus over as they wished.**

**As they led him away, they seized a man, Simon of Cyrene, who was coming from the country, and they laid the cross on him, and made him carry it behind Jesus. A great number of the people followed him, and among them were women who were beating their breasts and wailing for him. But Jesus turned to them and said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For the days are surely coming when they will say, 'Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bore, and the breasts that never nursed.' Then they will begin to say to the mountains, 'Fall on us'; and to the hills, 'Cover us.' For if they do this when the wood is green, what will happen when it is dry?"**

**Two others also, who were criminals, were led away to be put to death with**

**him. When they came to the place that is called The Skull, they crucified Jesus there with the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. Then Jesus said, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing." And they cast lots to divide his clothing. And the people stood by, watching; but the leaders scoffed at him, saying, "He saved others; let him save himself if he is the Messiah of God, his chosen one!" The soldiers also mocked him, coming up and offering him sour wine, and saying, "If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!" There was also an inscription over him, "This is the King of the Jews."**

**One of the criminals who were hanged there kept deriding him and saying, "Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us!" But the other rebuked him, saying, "Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed have been condemned justly, for we are getting what we deserve for our deeds, but this man has done nothing wrong." Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." He replied, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise."**

**It was now about noon, and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon, while the sun's light failed; and the curtain of the temple was torn in two. Then Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said, "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit." Having said this, he breathed his last. When the centurion saw what had taken place, he praised God and said, "Certainly this man was innocent." And when all the crowds who had gathered there for this spectacle saw what had taken place, they returned home, beating their breasts. But all his acquaintances, including the women who had followed him from Galilee, stood at a distance, watching these things.**

**Now there was a good and righteous man named Joseph, who, though a member of the council, had not agreed to their plan and action. He came from the Jewish town of Arimathea, and he was waiting expectantly for the kingdom of God. This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then he took it down, wrapped it in a linen cloth, and laid it in a rock-hewn tomb where no one had ever been laid. It was the day of Preparation, and the sabbath was beginning. The women who had come with him from Galilee followed, and they saw the tomb and how his body was laid. Then they returned, and prepared spices and ointments.**

**On the sabbath they rested according to the commandment.**

This entire passage needs little elaboration from me. The word content is obvious BUT, the depth is profound to the wizened reader. The experienced reader has been exposed to the background information that should enable us to dig a little deeper than the neophyte. Beware of looking only upon the superficial "words" of these passages. It is as though the child looks at a flower and sees only the flower in its entirety. But, the adult may look on the same flower and see the miracle of photosynthesis, the miracle of pollination, the miracle of xylem

and phloem carrying water and nutrients to the leaves or the arrangement of leaves colored to best gather the rays of the sun. The “beauty” is, indeed, in the eye of the beholder, is it not? Perhaps, our “knowledge” of botany prevents our really appreciating the flower? Does the child “appreciate” the flower more than the “educated adult”? Does the child in us “see” the truth of God’s love more clearly than our “adult mind”? **“Unless you become AS little children, you can in no wise enter the Kingdom of Heaven.”** What does that mean? Don’t let our “knowledge” get in the way of our seeing the LOVE of these passages. I leave the reader to plunge themselves into the depths of this enigmatic passage and glean what you will. I am unable to expand on its pathos or meaning because it is so personal. I pray that each will read and reflect as the Son of God willingly submits to the will of the Father and allows the taking of MY SINS upon his human body as a sacrifice for ME. Is this story “personal” to you? Can you see the pathos, the love, the blood, the cross, the wounds, the crowd, the dead body hanging in space, the sorrow of those who witnessed the crucifixion, the ceremonial washing of the body and the burial? Without the crucifixion there could be no Easter morning. Without the “death”, there could be no re-birth. Who are you and I in this story? Look and you will find yourself in someone. How did they feel? How would you have felt? What are we to learn from our reading and study of this scripture? What they thought was the “end” would become the “beginning” of a “new covenant” in which we have the promise of OUR resurrection through faith in the Son. Soon, the darkness will lead to blinding light and the quiet of the tomb will lead to shouts of joy. What mankind meant for “bad”, God made into the ultimate “good” whereby we might receive salvation. The “evil cross” of Calvary became the “emblem of HOPE” for those who believed upon Jesus. The psalmist has said, **“Weeping endures through the night but, JOY comes in the MORNING.”** Trust God. Wait upon the JOY. HOPE is alive.