

Sermon Mattins Palm Sunday 2019

May I speak in the name of God;

Father, Son and Holy Spirit

Amen

Today is Palm Sunday

And for some reason

Today's readings remind me

Of those artworks

Which come in three parts

I believe they are called a triptych

Artworks

Where the theme in the centre panel

Is the main focus of attention

and the side panels

obliquely reflect that theme

Through different images and perspectives

Jesus is in the centre this morning

Jesus whose triumphal entry in Jerusalem

Is the opening

To the events of Holy week

events which will lead inexorably

to his passion and death

in light of that

What do we learn from today's readings?

Both are stories
about a vineyard

The first is a love song
A love song
From the prophet Isaiah
to his beloved
to God

Isaiah
who saw the Lord
Who saw God high and lifted up,
in a vision in the temple

Isaiah the prophet who learned
that this high God
lived in delight with the humble.

Isaiah's song of the vineyard
Brings his audience
Back to the reality
Of Israel at that time

Despite the love and care
The Lord had poured
Upon his Covenant people
They had not responded

The reality Isaiah places
In front of them
Is that whatever hope of redemption
May be there for the future
The sins of the present
Must be faced and dealt with

God expected Justice,
but saw bloodshed
Righteousness
But heard a cry

the reading from Luke's gospel
is also about a vineyard

those who heard Jesus speak
would have been immersed
in the words of the prophets
with vineyards
representing the people of Israel

so the end of Jesus parable
must have been a shock

Jesus condemns the scribes and Chief Priests
The leaders of the Jewish people

Condemns them for forgetting
That they are accountable to God
Telling them
It is God's vineyard not theirs
And it is God's son they have killed

Two sobering readings
Which remind us
Both of God's love and care for us
And of our personal
And communal accountability to God

And for me
Readings that can feel overwhelming

Unless the focus
Returns to Jesus at the centre

Over the past week
I have walked the traditional
Devotion of the Stations of the cross
Most days

These stations
on the university campus
Have been created by Fine Art students
And give me other perspectives
On the events of Holy Week

walking the stations with other people

talking about them as we go round

Does two things for me

It makes me reflect on

the horrors of Christ's passion

and on the suffering of people now

and it helps me recognise

Christ's image in my fellow travellers

Today is Palm Sunday

The day when Holy Week begins

And we walk with Jesus

The way of the Cross

Our task

is to keep our eyes fixed on Jesus

and to follow him

And to expect the unexpected,

As we grow in Christ's image

and are changed by God's grace

Amen