

Holy Week 2020... some thoughts...

WHAT A WEEK IT IS, INDEED! Words and phrases that we keep hearing, but seldom if ever associate them with Holy Week, include the following:

pandemic

stay inside

social distancing

no contact with others

unprecedented

uncertainty

staggering unemployment

trillions of dollars of relief

survival checks for everyone

hundreds of thousands infected

tens of thousands dead and dying

shortages of “essentials”

factories & stores closed

massive layoffs

face masks & gloves

church services cancelled

WHAT A WEEK IT IS, INDEED!

AS CHRISTIANS, HOW ARE WE TO FUNCTION IN ALL OF THIS CHAOS?

Fear, anxiety, panic, hoarding? No, I don't think so. Not for a minute!

- I personally know several Christians who are making face masks for first responders, medical and other caregiver, friends, relatives and strangers. Some are donated, others are asking for donations, and a few make a nominal charge (\$5ish) for cost of materials...
- Others are faithfully contacting older family members and others every day or two, by phone, now that contact is so limited...
- Often Christians (and others, too) are buying and taking groceries and prescription medications to these folks...
- No longer able to visit those in long term care facilities, nursing homes, etc. people are utilizing technology in new and creative ways to provide a zone of comfort and calm for loved ones and others...
- Not to mention praying for others, perhaps in new ways...

Holy Week worship experiences, including Maundy Thursday Communion; Good Friday, Easter Sunrise and Resurrection Celebrations... won't be the same in 2020.

But... new opportunities have been presented to us through the turmoil and chaos of COVID-19...

- The church is NOT A BUILDING, but a PEOPLE who have surrendered their will and ways to Jesus!
- Creative alternatives to gathering in “sanctuaries”...
 - Parking Lot Worship with car windows open...
 - Facebook live...
 - Low Power FM radio signals carrying worship live to those who are close by...
 - Posting worship services on church web site both “live in real time” and/or at a future more convenient time...
 - The possibilities are endless!

Above all the things we've already mentioned, there are some even more opportunities for us this week...

WHAT A WEEK IT IS, INDEED!

That week so many centuries ago, that we recall at this special time of year, none of the things above were factors... In fact I imagine that none of the main characters in the unfolding Jerusalem drama we commemorate this week would even consider our inconvenience being anything to even notice...

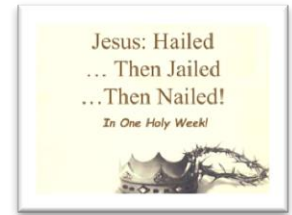
During this week, so many years ago... Jesus was

HAILED as He rode the lowly donkey into the city as He was cheered on!

JAILED after the betrayal in the Garden by Judas Iscariot...

NAILED to a cruel Roman cross after a mock trial, being scourged at the whipping post...

But that's not the end of the story...



WHAT A WEEK IT IS, INDEED!

These days, the sports channels are all broadcasting reruns of past games. When one of these games is shown, the viewers are always told the final score before the show begins. Having known the week isn't over until Sunday, we are not discouraged by the way things look on Friday...

A number of years ago, our then teenage son, Matt, and I attended a luncheon with a couple of hundred other Church of the Brethren folks at Annual Conference. The luncheon's speaker was a pudgy little Italian who was, at that time, a Sociology Professor at Eastern University in Philadelphia. Dr. Anthony (Tony) Campolo, is also an ordained minister in the American Baptist Church.

Dr. Campolo preached to us for about 45 minutes...

What do I remember after all these years?

One quotation:

It's Friday ... But Sunday's Coming!

It's Friday ... Jesus was judged, condemned, and sentenced...

It's Friday ... Jesus was scourged, mocked, and ridiculed...

It's Friday ... Jesus fulfilled the words of Isaiah:

He is despised and rejected by men, A Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. Surely He has borne our griefs And carried our sorrows; Yet we esteemed Him stricken, Smitten by God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed.

Isaiah 53:3-5 (NKJV)

But... Sunday's Coming!

The stone was rolled back... death could not hold Jesus! As Peter said on the day of Pentecost: "But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him." **Acts 2:24 (NIV)**