

## Palm/Passion Sunday Reflection 2025

Sydney Carter's Classic hymn, The Lord of the Dance, so beautifully shared by the Chancel Choir today, is a metaphor for the life of Christ. Jesus is like a Piper, calls his followers into the dance of life. It is a dance of God's love and grace for us found in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. The movements are based on John 3:16, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life."

In the cantata, one of the lines that Liz Bradley read said, "They saw the crowds cheering him as he walked along the road to Jerusalem for the last time. The choir then sang, "I Want Jesus to Walk with Me." In church, this is what we call Palm/Passion Sunday, when Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey to the shouts of Hosanna, which means Lord save us, fulfilling the prophecy in Zechariah 9:9, "Rejoice... See, your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey."

Then, in the story of the Passion after the last supper, Jesus agonized in prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane, praying, "Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done." After his prayer, Jesus found his disciples asleep because of grief. Then that night, Judas betrayed Jesus with a kiss and he was arrested.

Then on Friday, following Jesus' betrayal, arrest, imprisonment, desertion by Peter and the disciples, false trials, denial, condemnation, beatings and sentencing, Jesus was crucified on a cross with two other criminals at "The Place called the Skull." Jesus says from the cross to all who falsely accused him and called for his crucifixion, "Father, Forgive them for they know not what they are doing."

Then, as lifted up in the Cantata, we hear the story of the two criminals crucified on the cross with Jesus. I am so thankful for this story in Luke's Gospel, because it is a story of grace at the 11<sup>th</sup> hour. It's never too late to accept Jesus grace for you. You see, One criminal kept deriding Jesus saying, "Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us! But the other criminal rebuked him saying, "We indeed have been condemned justly, for we are getting what we deserve for our deeds, but this man, Jesus, has done nothing wrong." The repentant thief says, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." Jesus replies. "Today you will be with me in paradise."

We don't know what happened to the other criminal, but the repentant thief, who admitted his wrongs, who confessed his sins, and asked Jesus to remember him when he comes into his kingdom is promised.... "Today you will be with me in paradise."

Think about it, even thieves and criminals who repent and believe in Jesus are promised the gift of eternal life. And for us today a new beginning. This is good news for all of us who sin and fall short daily.

The dance goes on in us who are believers to share the story of Jesus and his love with others.