

brutal death, a brutal end. They did not know there would be more to the story. The crucifixion was meant as a warning to those who might disturb the status quo; those who stepped out of line, stepped out of their places, committed crimes (like the two thieves who were crucified at the same time) – brutal punishment was awaiting them.

So, the joyful hosannas from only a handful of days earlier have a sorrowful, sour echo today.

What brought this man to this place? So many pieces to this puzzle, but perhaps one of the big pieces was His message of love for everyone, no exceptions; caring for everyone no matter who or what they are. Radical love that could begin to change the way things were done, radical love that encompassed the outcast, the “different”. Radical love that could upset the balance of power that had been in place for so long. Jesus lived in a time filled with injustice, violence, despair and poverty. His answer was to live with radical love and a deep trust in the living, loving God. Radical love. Imagine it! Live it! Radical love.

PRAYERS OF LOVE AND CONCERN: *(together)*

God, we are here on the darkest of days. We pray for resolution to the problems our world faces, the problems our communities face, the problems we and our families and friends face. There are refugees that need our love and concern; sick and dying people that need our love and concern; people who live with violence, poverty, despair, isolation and so many other hard things. They all need our love and concern. All around us are situations that need our love and concern. Let us take a moment to silently think of those we know who need our care. (silent prayer) It is in our power to effect change with love and concern, even if it is only one family or one person that we can reach with our care. On dark days or bright days, let us bring light and love where we can. In remembrance of the Saviour who taught radical love. Amen

HYMN: When I Survey the Wondrous Cross VU #149

DISMISSAL:

Let us all go out now, quietly, in thoughtful remembrance, and take radical love with us into our world.

LEAVING SONG: Jesus, Remember Me VU #148

*Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.
Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.*



WATERFORD UNITED CHURCH

March 29, 2024

Chris Savory

WELCOMING:

Welcome to all of you this morning. We are here to bear witness to the suffering and death of our Saviour. We are here to think about His life and the reasons for His death. Let us open our ears and our hearts to the stories.

LIGHTING THE CHRIST CANDLE:

We light the candle today as we remember the light and love Jesus brings to us.

LENT CANDLE EXTINGUISHING

One: We are living in troubling times.

All: Let us remember and celebrate the good.

One: We allow ourselves to be pulled down by fear and sadness.

All: Let us pull ourselves up with good thoughts and good deeds.

One: We can effect change by living a life that mirrors our Saviour's love.

All: Let us live in His love, share His love, reflect His love onto ourselves, our families, our friends, our community, our world.
God is Love, Jesus is Love, we are Love – all made visible through our actions.

GATHERING HYMN: There Is a Green Hill Far Away VU #152

OPENING PRAYER: *(together)*

As we gather on this, the darkest of days, let us remember that God is always with us. Let us open our eyes, our ears, our hearts, to make room for that presence.

CHORAL RESPONSE: Take, O Take Me As I Am MVU #85

*Take O take me as I as; summon out what I shall be;
Set your seal upon my heart and live in me.*

MUSIC MINISTRY: The One on the Tree

SCRIPTURES AND STORIES:

The First Danger

Matthew 2: 1 – 3, 8, 13, 16

It started when He was born, in the time of Herod's reign. He and his parents became refugees in Egypt so they would be safe. But how safe were they really? Refugees don't have an easy life today and we have many throughout the world right now. Even when Joseph, Mary and Jesus left Egypt, to return to the land of Israel, Joseph was warned and so they went, not home, but to Nazareth.

Take, O Take Me As I Am

MVU #85

His ministry spreads and the dangers increase

Mark 1: 23 – 26, 31, 34, 42 - 45; Mark 2: 3 – 7, 14 – 16; Mark 3: 1 – 6

So many healings, so many miracles, so many teachings, feeding thousands out of nothing. All the while telling those He helped to stay quiet, to just go home. But of course they didn't stay quiet – the tales of wonder spread – the priests and Pharisees getting more upset and worried. They speak with those in the government, hoping to figure out what was next, what could be done. Surely the last thing the Romans want is someone gaining in popularity, in power, and upsetting their comfortable way of life. And He is definitely upsetting more and more people in power with His teachings. For He tells the people things they have not heard before, tells the people stories, parables, in words they understand, that make them think for themselves. He spends time with prostitutes, publicans, tax collectors, all manner of unsuitable people, misfits, outcasts and He even breaks bread with them. He tells the people about the great love God has for them. But when the people with power ask Him questions, He answers in ways they don't like, in ways that feel threatening – or – not at all.

Take, O Take Me As I Am

MVU #85

Entering Jerusalem - a donkey, Hosannas, palms, cloaks spread before Him

Matthew 21: 7 – 9

We weren't there and we will never know, but the cloaks and garments thrown down on the road before Jesus were almost surely those of regular people. The kind of people He has been spending time with. Poor, marginalized, some just following the parade without knowing what was happening. Cloaks of brown, grey, natural colours, as there was likely no budget for bright cloth or dyes in this crowd – so not, perhaps, the colourful cloaks we see in paintings from centuries later. The people in that parade were looking for a king, someone to save them, free them from the

stranglehold of the ruling Romans. So, when it began to become clear that this man was not a warrior king coming with force, what did that do to at least some of the people from that parade? Might we have seen them later in the week calling "crucify him"?

Take, O Take Me As I Am

MVU #85

Holy Week and the trouble grows

Matthew 21: 12, 14 – 15, 23, 45; Matthew 22: 34

Jesus continues to teach His disciples and others, in and out of the temple. Many were healed, children and adults alike kept saying "Hosanna to the Son of David", His parables were getting more pointed and close to home. He was certainly getting a lot of attention and adoration and word of Him was spreading fast. The chief priests and Pharisees felt he was speaking of them in His parables, but the multitudes who felt he was a prophet made it difficult for them to act on what they perceived as threats. They tempted Him with questions intended to trip him up, but it didn't work.

Take, O Take Me As I Am

MVU #85

Thursday: Passover, the first Communion, Betrayal

Mark 26: 17 – 22, 26 – 28, 46 – 50, 57, 64

There is a Passover meal together, and the first communion (during which the disciples may not have grasped the full meaning of His words and actions). Then Judas did what he did and Jesus was taken into custody. It would seem trouble has come to a head. Jesus is taken to the high priest, the scribes and the elders. They question Him, but He does not answer, or not the way they wanted. He tells them they will see the Son of Man on the right hand of power. That tipped the scales – to think of him with power, when surely, they could lose theirs if the ruling Romans felt threatened. It was all a delicate balance around who had power, who did you know with power, who could lose power, which group could influence another. Jesus was upsetting everything, for everyone.

Take, O Take Me As I Am

MVU #85

Friday, the final day

Matthew 7: 1 – 2, 11 – 14, 19, 33 – 35, 50

(Extinguish the Christ Candle)

And here we are. It would appear that the story is over. But remember that we look at this dark day knowing what was going to happen next. 2,000 + years of perspective dims the worry, dims the horror. We must try to remember that all those who gathered at the foot of the cross witnessed a