

March 30, 2021
Tuesday of Holy Week

Lectionary Passages:

Isaiah 49:1-7

Psalm 71:1-14

1 Corinthians 1:18-31

John 12:20-36



Selected Verses:

I will give you as a light to the nations,
that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth. – Isaiah 49: 6

In you, O Lord, I take refuge;
let me never be put to shame.
In your righteousness deliver me and rescue me;
incline your ear to me and save me.
Be to me a rock of refuge,
a strong fortress, to save me,
for you are my rock and my fortress. – Psalm 71: 1-3

For Jews demand signs and Greeks desire wisdom, but we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles. – 1 Corinthians 1: 22-23

Now among those who went up to worship at the festival were some Greeks. They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and said to him, “Sir, we wish to see Jesus.” – John 12: 20-21

Devotional:

Once Jesus entered Jerusalem, signs of his popularity were visible. The religious leaders had been watching Jesus worried about his popularity. Now that he is in Jerusalem, some Greeks are wanting to meet Jesus. They went to one of his disciples as a way to be introduced. “Sir, we would like to see Jesus.” They were probably not from Greece, but Greek speaking pilgrims in Jerusalem for Passover. The word Greeks is another word for Gentiles. Since they had come up to Jerusalem for Passover, they were either “God-fearers” or had completely converted to Judaism. Either way, their request to meet Jesus was a perceived threat to the Sanhedrin.

The nations coming to see the Messiah is also a fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies. Micah states, “Peoples shall stream to it, and many nations shall come and say: ‘Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths.’” (Micah 4: 1-2). The nations are coming to see Jesus is a fulfillment of this along with other passages (Isaiah 11: 1-10; 19: 16-25). Jesus had earlier said that he came first for the people of Israel. Now that the nations are coming to meet him, it is time

for the completion of his ministry. The gentiles will only get to meet Jesus after his death and resurrection.

When Philip went to Jesus, he was told, “the hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.” For the ministry of Jesus to convert the nations requires his death and resurrection. As we plant our gardens now for an abundant crop later in the year, the death of Jesus will bring a glorious harvest for the kingdom of God.

The focus on the cross is a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to the Greeks. It is a stumbling block to the Jews because the law stated that “anyone hung on a tree is under God’s curse.” (Deuteronomy 21:23) The fact that Jesus humbled himself to death on a cross for the sins of others looks like foolishness to all others. For the root of all sin is rebellion from God and putting oneself above others. In accepting Jesus as our Lord and Savior, people are called to give up their life, their self-authority and accept the authority of God.

During Holy Week, it is important to focus on the cross. All too often we want to move from Palm Sunday to Easter. Yet, the focus of salvation is on the cross. For it is the sacrifice of Jesus for the sins of the world that conquers the power of sin. The cross brings freedom from sin. Taking up our cross is standing along with Jesus and saying, “but not my will, but your will be done.” At the cross we find our focus. And, for the nations, it is only at the cross that they can see Jesus. When we truly see Jesus, we see a call to our lives to follow him.

Prayer:

Almighty God, may we keep our focus on the cross. Through your son, you have conquered the power of sin and death. Forgive us when we focus on ourselves and not on your kingdom. May we find your saving power in the message of the cross. May we take up our cross and follow you where you lead us. We cast ourselves upon your grace and humbly trust you with our lives. May we realize our sin and the wonder of your pardoning love. To you and you alone be all honor and glory. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.