

**[After Isaiah 50:4-9a and Psalm 118:1,2,19-29]**

The authors of the four Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, seldom presume to tell their readers what exactly was on Jesus' mind, what he was thinking. We are left to wonder just what was on his mind by taking him at his word and by observing what he did from their accounts. I suppose that claiming to know his deepest thoughts would have been tantamount to knowing what God was thinking, a deduction which would be both presumptuous and impossible. No, those Gospel authors expected, I think, that their readers would instead be best served by accessing Jesus' thoughts through the disciples. And so, all these years later, we hear the questions they asked him and what Jesus said to them and his other followers. We hear his teaching and his commandments through their ears, and we have the opportunity to become like them, even if we, too, then wind up scratching our heads sometimes, wondering what he really meant, and being in awe of his divine insights.

As first century Judeans, we would, like the disciples, have been well-versed in the writings of the prophet Isaiah, and we would have known this passage Kellie read to us. And watching these events on that Palm Sunday long ago, attending to Jesus and being his handlers (so to speak) we would have been participating in a great and momentous event. As his closest companions, what would we have been thinking? Well, we might have recalled that ancient reading from the prophet, written some 500 years earlier, and been just bold enough to ask "Who will contend with me? Let us stand up together. Who are my adversaries? Let them confront me." They must have been filled with confidence, almost giddy with their good fortune to be part of this triumphal entry into the greatest city of all, the city of the temple itself, as those commoners beside the road waved their palm branches in jubilant honor. Oh, if my friends could see me now! I am part of history, one of God's chosen, one of the twelve most important people in the land. On this day the lord has acted, and I will be glad in it indeed! Thanks be to God, his mercy endures forever!

But this is only the beginning of the story, the story of those days which we call Holy Week.

**[After Philippians 2:5-11]**

The authors of the four Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, seldom presume to tell their readers what exactly was on Jesus' mind, what he was thinking. Instead, they seem to want us each to be enrolled as his disciples, experiencing the events through their eyes and ears, and knowing Jesus as they did. There is one glaring exception to that, however, and it occurs during that Holy Week: As you may recall, after the Last Supper, Jesus takes some of his disciples to the Garden of Gethsemane and asks them to stay awake and keep watch while he prays to God the Father. And we overhear him pray about what is on his mind. We hear his deepest thoughts. We hear what is troubling him. We come to know the mind of Christ. When Paul writes his Letter to the Philippians, from which Leslie has read this morning, I think he is drawing directly from what we have been told about this Gethsemane prayer. When Paul, whose letter is written sometime later, after these events of Holy Week have taken place, hopes we will have in us the same mind that was in Christ Jesus, I think he wants us to remember what Jesus prayed that Thursday evening.

Now, by what divine inspiration the Gospel authors knew just what Jesus prayed we must take on faith. For, if the disciples, as we are told, could not stay awake and overhear Jesus' most personal prayer, how then were his thoughts known? And as it turns out, there would be no time afterwards for Jesus to tell anyone about his prayer. But God knows, and by the insight and inspiration of the Holy Spirit, we have come to know. We have come to know by faith and personal experience the prayerful intentions of our beloved Christ. What Paul has written for the Philippians, and for us, is a eulogy. Not the facts as would appear in an obituary, but a eulogy which explores the motivations and intentions of an extraordinary person. A person whom the disciples, for three long days, feared they had lost forever. Let us hear how that week unfolded, as we listen to the account from the Gospel of Mark:

**[Mark 14:1-15:47]**