

Pastor Keith E. Wiens
Text: Luke 22-24

March 28, 2010
Palm Sunday

IT'S YOUR STORY!

Have you ever watched a movie about your life? Ever wonder what that would be like? What would it be like to walk into a theater, grab some popcorn, find a seat, and then watch your life unfold on the big screen?

In a way, this is what we can do this week - as we focus attention on the last days of our Lord's earthly ministry, beginning with his entry into Jerusalem, then going with him to the upper room where he shared a meal with the disciples, then on to the Garden of Gethsemane where he was betrayed and arrested, then back to Jerusalem to witness his trial before Pilate and King Herod, then to Calvary, the hill outside of Jerusalem, where he was crucified, then to the grave, and then back to the grave on Sunday morning to find the grave empty. As we take this journey with Jesus, are we not witnessing the story of our lives?

Now, I am sure you are quick to say, the story of Jesus happened two thousand years ago. Yes, I would agree. This story did happen two thousand years ago. But this story is also the story of your life and my life. For the story which happened two thousand years ago involves us just as surely as it involved Peter and Judas and Mary and the other followers of Jesus. Even though we were not present when these events took place, we are very much involved.

Perhaps if we substituted our names for the names of the people mentioned in the Bible, we would more readily see that this story is our story too. Perhaps then our hearts would beat faster and our muscles would tense up and we would take notice when the story says that we denied Jesus, or that we betrayed Jesus for a few bucks, or that we yelled "Crucify him, crucify him!" What an impact that would have! I know it would have an impact on me to hear that Keith betrayed Jesus or that Keith yelled, "crucify him!"

And it would be the truth! For each of us has said things and we have all done things which has resulted in the suffering and death of Jesus. In our own ways we have denied Jesus. In our own ways we have betrayed Jesus. In our own ways we have demanded his death on the cross. We are people who have failed to live as God demands and therefore deserve to be punished. But Jesus took our place! He suffered and died for us - for you and for me!

That's why this story is our story. As we watch Jesus entering Jerusalem on that first Palm Sunday, preparing to die, we are watching ourselves entering the place of execution. As we hear Pilate pronouncing the sentence that Jesus should be crucified, we are hearing our own sentence to die. As we watch Jesus breathing his last breath on the cross, it is our own death we are witnessing. This story is the story of our lives. Jesus is taking our place.

So we ought not read or listen to this story with mere casual interest. We ought not treat this story as if it were only a story out of the distant past. And we certainly ought not let this story be pushed aside because of more compelling things on our agenda. This is our story! We have a huge stake in what happens!

And just how do we fare in this story? We fare quite well! For this is the story of God's incredible love for you and me! Out of great love for us, out of the most amazing love you can imagine, Jesus came to suffer and die for us. Out of great love for us, out of love that is absolutely astounding, Jesus came to take our place on the cross. This is the story of God's love for you!

This is the story of how much God values us! God placed such a high value on rescuing us that Jesus came to take our place, to be punished for us, so that we might be set free from the wretched grasp of sin and eternal death. God paid a high price for our redemption, the highest price you can imagine. The price was nothing less than the suffering and death of Jesus! This is the story of how valuable you are to God!

This story, though, does not end on the cross. It does not end with death. It does not end in the grave. The story goes on to tell, how early on Sunday morning, God raised Jesus from the dead. This, too, is your story! The resurrection of Jesus is your resurrection. Death no longer has the final word for you. The grave is not your final resting place. Life is what you get! This story is about your life - your life with God - your life with God now - your life with God forever!

This story is awesome - it is just downright awesome! It is March madness at its best! There is nothing that matches it. This is a story to ponder - over and over again. That Jesus would deliberately go to Jerusalem, even though he knew it meant certain death. That Jesus would deliberately go to the cross, in spite of the suffering he would have to endure. That Jesus would deliberately go to the grave and be buried there among the dead. That Jesus would do this for you and for me! It is truly amazing!

Don't let anything get in the way of this story - not this week. Spend as much time as possible this week dwelling in this story. Allow yourself to enter this story, to hear it, to see it, to ponder it, to know in the deepest parts of your being that this is your story - the story of your death, the story of your resurrection, the story of your life with God. Let yourself be filled with wonder, astonishment, amazement, even surprise. Let yourself be moved to tears. Let yourself respond with praise and worship and adoration of this Christ who was willing to enter your story and take your place and make it all happen for you.

This story is powerful! It can transform your life! This week - let it do just that!