

## “You Were Buried With Christ”

Matthew 27:11-66

Last week, when our Gospel reading was 45 verses of John 11, I mentioned how many options there were for preaching. This week is no different. It is Palm Sunday. However, our Gospel reading is not Jesus riding into Jerusalem amid the waving of Palm branches; rather it is 55 verses of the Passion reading from Matthew’s Gospel (and by the way, there was option to also read all of chapter 26 and the first 10 verses of chapter 27 in addition to what we read. And yes, there are 73 verses in chapter 26).

Don’t get me wrong, I believe we should read the Word of God at every opportunity. And we have read the Passion account from the Four Gospels during our Wednesday Lenten services, and we will hear many of the words of Matthew 26 on Maundy Thursday, and I rewrote the Good Friday service this year, and portions of that chapter are included there also. Come to the Easter Vigil next Saturday and hear the Word of God as the story of God rescuing His children is told through the Old Testament prophets – and we take time to remember our Baptism. The Word of God and our Baptism is where our faith is formed. The Word of God is joined with the water. Faith comes by

hearing, as St. Paul says. Baptism and the Word of God – that is what we are celebrating here today.

I hear St. Paul's words from Philipians that "at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father"; I hear that and the lazy part of the preacher in me says that all I need to do is ramble on for another 10 minutes and tell stories about our five confirmands and our time together these past few years. And how they will come up here, bow their knees before this altar, and speak their good confession that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. Amen and we are done.

But then, if you think about why they are doing this, and why we have all gathered, it becomes very clear, really quickly, that this day is not about them; it is not about you and me; it is about Jesus Christ, what He has done, and how we get the benefit of what He has done through Baptism and the Word of God. As I said last week, He was the only one who could fix the problem of death.

That is why we are here. As they confirm the faith of their Baptism, we are celebrating their death, and their new birth. Paul writes in his letter to the Romans, "Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with Him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life."

Baptism was the death of your Old Adam. Your sins were washed away and you received your new life in Christ. The day of your Baptism was your real “birth day”. Today, you testify before God and His Church that you still hold that faith and desire to remain in that faith all the rest of your days. But this day is still not about you.

You wear white robes today, just like you most likely did when you were baptized. I was not there, so I cannot say for sure, but that is most likely the case. To be clothed in the white robe to symbolize Christ’s righteousness is a long-standing tradition within the church. It shows the essence of the Gospel. As a young child, you were brought to the font, most of you, this very font. And your Old Adam drowned and died, was buried with Christ. This was not of your doing. This was not your decision. This is God’s work in you.

One of the questions that I asked them last Sunday was “What is the most important doctrine in the Christian religion?” The Doctrine of Justification. Then the follow-up question is, “What is the doctrine of Justification?” Madison had those questions, and she simply stated, “My sin is put on Christ, and His righteousness was put on me.” What a wonderfully simple confession of the Gospel. But that is the heart of the Gospel. It is all about what Jesus has done for you, and how you get the benefit of what He has done through Baptism and the Word of God.

Your sin was placed on Christ and buried with Him in the tomb. Joseph of Arimathea took the lifeless body of Christ down from the

cross; he wrapped it in a clean linen shroud, and laid Him in a tomb. You were buried with Him. That is why Baptism is such a big deal. That is why confirming the faith of your Baptism is such a big deal.

Earlier, when I said that this day is not all about you; that does not mean that you and your presence here and bearing witness and confessing your faith in Christ is not important. That is something worth celebrating.

But the day is not all about you, because the faith you confess this day; that faith is a gift from God – given to you. Your Baptism was a gift from God. Your new birth in the righteousness of Christ was no more your responsibility than your physical birth was. You didn't ask your parents to be born; you didn't decide to be born. You were born. In Baptism, you died with Christ, you were buried with Christ, and you were born again.

What we celebrate today is that you are joined with Christians of all generations, having been justified by Christ, having received this gift by grace, you now bow your knee and confess with your tongue that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Amen.