

### Sermon Byte One

*At the name of Jesus, every knee shall bow – in heaven and earth and under the earth – and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.*

It is time for us now to leave behind the joy of palm branches and hosannas. It is time for us to move into the darkest part of our faith together with the sad story of crucifixion. It is a long story. It will occupy all the rest of our time together this morning save for our prayers and our celebration of Holy Eucharist.

If you chose, now is the time to put aside all other thoughts and cares. You may want to take a few deep breaths to clear your mind and relax any tension you're holding in your body. Open your heart to hear the full sweep of this story even if you've heard it before. Even if you've heard it every year for decades. Look for fresh details. Experience it deeply. There are sounds in this story. Can you hear them? There is the scent of night air in the desert. Can you smell it?

We're about to go outside now, on a Thursday evening, in the chill of night to the garden area of Gethsemane on the Mount of Olives. It is to the east of Jerusalem. We will go down into the Kidron Valley, a modest dip in the landscape that separates the city from the Mount. Then we'll go back up about 2500 feet to the peak. It is a burial site. It had been for hundreds of years by the time of our story and it is still today.

Cemeteries like the Mount of Olives are hallowed ground; sacred spaces. Here it is that Jesus has prayed before. He prays here now. But not like he has ever prayed before: **SINGING BOWL.**

### Sermon Byte Two

Jesus had barely finished praying; barely gotten up from the ground when he is met by a murderous kiss. By a friend, no less: Judas, one of the twelve. With Judas is a crowd of very religious people: the chief priests, the scribes or lawyers of religious law; as well as the most esteemed elders of the temple. They seized the gentle rabbi and took him to the high priest.

It's probably past midnight now; already it has become early Friday morning. False testimony has been leveled against Jesus but even it is inconclusive. The high priest asks, "Are you the son of the Blessed One?" And Jesus says what any of us would say: YES. Because we are all sons and daughters of God.

Today our "yes" is inclusive. It includes all in the love of God and the common family of humankind. But that same "yes" two-thousand years ago was blasphemy. And blasphemy in that time and among those very religious people was a capital offense. **SINGING BOWL.**

Sermon Byte Three

It has been a long night. By daybreak, Peter has disgraced himself. It's possible that even he doesn't know how it happened – it all happened so fast: warming himself by the fire; some silly peasant girl trying to make conversation; him, trying to dismiss her. Before he knew it he had denied even knowing Jesus. How did that happen? He was ready to die for Jesus!

As morning progresses, Jesus is questioned by the official Jewish council, then by Pilate. If things have started moving quickly for Peter, so have they for the Jewish leaders of Jerusalem. It is their task to quell any possibility of political disturbance that might cause Roman authorities to come down harshly on the city. They are quickly convening a court session . . . . **SINGING BOWL**

Sermon Byte Four

It has been a busy morning. In the span of just a few hours, Jesus has been questioned by the official Jewish council; by Pilate; and by Herod. Finally he is sent back to Pilate for the death sentence. No one could find any fault in him. “Indeed,” said Pilate, “he has done nothing to deserve death.”

Things have moved very quickly for Peter; for the Jewish leaders; for the Roman authorities. For Jesus, things have moved slowly. It has been as if time were standing still. Throughout it all, he has had the courage not to fight back. He lived in peace; he'll die in peace. He lived in love; as he dies he offers love. “Father forgive them . . . . ” **SINGING BOWL**