



Japan has advertised for 6 full-time ninjas to promote tourism. Yes, Japan is looking for more of those fighting warriors that flourished in the time of the samurai and were known for their unconventional and stealth warfare. The radio clip took me aback and sent me searching for more information. Something was “off” and I wasn’t sure I had heard correctly.

Today there is a lot “off” about this service. One of the graphics I found and which will appear on the version of this sermon when it is posted to our website has a palm branch and a cross in the middle with mirror wording: Palm and hosanna backwards and passion and crucify easily readable. That’s a good image for today. How quickly the palm branches turn from green to brown. Life turns to death. How quickly the triumphant hosannas fade into merciless and brutal shouts to crucify.

In the discussions and decisions leading up to the 1979 Book of Common Prayer, there was a recognition that fewer and fewer people attend church every Sunday. More and more people were going from the highs of Palm Sunday, those waving palm branches and hosannas and directly to Easter with its alleluia’s and Christ has risen. We just plain skipped over the last week of Jesus’ earthly ministry, including the trial and the crucifixion.

Christianity makes no sense without Maundy Thursday and Good Friday. Life isn't all sweetness and light although many of us do not have the level of disappointment, pain and tragedy that Jesus did in those last days. Our faith is pretty hollow when we don't engage with all of it. And skipping over Maundy Thursday and Good Friday leaves us with a very shallow participation in our faith.

Today, as we have done for awhile, we will read the Passion Narrative according to the Gospel for the Liturgical Year. For 2016, this is the Gospel of Luke. The purpose of this extended reading is for us to enter into the events of those last days by reading part of the script. The script is our sacred text, inspired by God for our learning and for deepening our faith and our knowledge of God. Reading our parts out loud engages additional parts of our brain and thus we understand the text in ways we do not always when we read silently to ourselves or even when we listen to someone else read the text.

As you listen and participate today, think about the last things that Jesus says and how your life is changed for knowing Jesus as Lord and Savior.

“Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.”

Where have you been forgiven when you have done something hurtful even as you did not mean to do something hurtful?

Where have you been able to forgive when someone hurt you and you knew they did not understand the hurt they had inflicted?

“Truly, I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise.”

This is the promise to us from Jesus. If we believe, we will have eternal life with God. How does this promise impact how you live your life?

“Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.”

All that we have and all that we are comes from God and we will go back to God when our time on earth is done. What do you need to do to be at peace when your time on earth is over? How does your daily life witness to your faith?

Hear the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ according to St. Luke listening for the healing that Jesus brings to each of us- body, mind and spirit.

Join in the Passion listening for the peace that Jesus offers to us even as the world cuts off our ears.

Receive the Passion and the promise that God loves us now and forever. Amen.