

Palm Sunday

Scripture scholars tell us that the story of the Lord's passion was passed down in the earliest community, at first orally and then in writing, as one piece. It was the complete account of the Lord's arrest, trial, torture and execution. As such it is different from the other parts of the Gospels which were individual stories of the sayings and miracles of the Lord which the Gospel writers then pieced together to make their Gospels. Thus a Gospel is in fact the Passion Story, often called the Passion Narrative, preceded by these individual sayings and miracles. Therefore, when we listen to this story or narrative, we are listening to the oldest part of our faith. And when we think about it, that makes sense. The followers of the Lord could not get over what happened to him at the end of his life and told that story as a whole. Then later on they collected and added to it all they could remember of what he said during his active years.

And what does this story teach us? At least two things. First of all, it teaches us that human beings are strange creatures. When they meet the good, they often reject it, thinking that they can find their own good in some other place. Jesus was good. Nevertheless, the religious leaders of his day called him evil. How strange! And what can we draw from that for ourselves? We can look first of all at our lives and try to figure

out where we reject the good and turn instead to our own idols of goodness. Then we can pray for ourselves, asking the Lord to educate our tastes so that we may seek him, the truly good one, and not some counterfeit good in our lives.

Second, this story teaches us that God pursues us with love and is even willing to suffer in this pursuit. We identify Jesus with God. We believe that he is God's Word to us. We believe that, mystery of mystery, he, the Word of God, is willing to become one with us and overcome our resistance to his love by suffering its rejection. Thus divine love teaches us that evil is overcome by goodness. That is very hard to believe. That is very hard to practice in our own lives. It is the turning of the cheek. It is the returning of evil not with evil but with goodness. Can we live that way? If we can, we are followers of the crucified Lord. If not, we are still not there. We have not yet understood what the Passion Narrative means for us and our lives.