

People of the Cross

Luke 19:28-40 | Palm Sunday | April 13, 2025 | Pastor John Klawiter, preaching

Grace and peace to you my friends in Christ,

After worship, we will watch the kids enter the prayer garden and the gym for this year's Easter egg "hunt".

I use "hunt" loosely. Why?

Almost all the eggs are hiding right in plain sight.

It ends up becoming a dash to get eggs—and there's always enough for everyone—but the majority of eggs are easy to see and retrieve.

Except... there's always a few stragglers. Last year, the outdoor egg hunt happened during a snowstorm. A week later, when the snow melted, at least half a dozen eggs were still found.

Two weeks ago, my son Sullivan was in the storage area behind the gym looking for a ball. Wouldn't you know, he found an Easter egg. It had been there over a year—somehow evading all of the Easter egg hunters.

While Easter egg candy might not age like fine wines or cheese, sure enough, it was good enough for Sully—who shared with his brother Edison.

It was hiding in plain sight, but he was the first one to see it.

That's what this story of Jesus riding into Jerusalem is like for me.

All the clues about what is to happen are hiding, right in plain sight. Jesus isn't trying to hide it. He knows what the consequences of coming to the city will mean for him. He describes, **three times**, that the Son of Man will be killed and on the 3rd day rise again. Luke says that the disciples will be completely ignorant of this (SLIDE 3). In the dark.

It doesn't make sense. Yet. But it will.

You see, we're a week before Easter, but what's hiding in plain sight is how important resurrection is. Even when we are like the disciples and don't grasp what is said.

Sermon Transcript

It's kind of like going to an escape room all about Jesus and the Last Supper. Which is exactly what our 8th grade confirmation students did this week.

If you've never been to an escape room, there are literally clues all over the place. Hiding in plain sight.

After taking in the setting, the students realized that they needed to gather up items with names on them. Then, they solved riddles that could lead to combinations that unlocked padlocks.

They even had one clue that involved finding all the candles, then turning off the lights to see what the answer was.

Eventually, they started to solve each riddle by working well in small groups. They made it to the final clue.

The only thing that remained locked was a loaf of bread in the middle of the table. The last clue required the kids to figure out which passage in the gospel of John would solve the final riddle.

Finally, they got it. They opened up the last combination and took out the loaf of bread.

But this was no ordinary loaf of bread.

Once broken apart, there was a message inside, written on a cross. The words of John 3:16 told the kids:

John 3:16 ¹⁶ “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

What was the purpose of the escape room? To see that his journey to the cross provides the promise of eternal life.

That the resurrection brings us new life through Jesus Christ.

What a powerful message to teach these kids as they had a great time, they learned a lot, and yes, they escaped the church basement of Spring Lake Lutheran.

In fact, they set the fastest time yet of 41 minutes.

I couldn't believe how quickly they solved the puzzle because it took them a long time to solve their first clue. Then, it was as if all the pieces started to fall in place.

Sermon Transcript

The journey by Jesus into Jerusalem creates the situation for a lot of things to fall in place for different people.

For Jesus and his followers, this isn't a parade.

For the chief priests, scribes, and Pharisees, Jesus becomes a threat to be eliminated. Every time Jesus speaks out, they have more evidence to use against him—although let's be honest, their evidence is flimsy. Hearsay.

For the empire, Jesus and his cronies better just sit down and be quiet if they know what's good for them.

It might seem incredible to us that Jesus would be killed so quickly after arriving to town, but even Jesus recognizes that reception will quickly turn on him.

Jesus knows that Jerusalem will fall—that every stone will be destroyed because they don't recognize the time of their visit from God.

This story is so important because it's the lead-up to the most important story. The conflict, the tragedy, the utter devastation of Jesus being sacrificed. Scapegoated. Targeted. Killed.

We hear that story, year after year, because in the midst of that devastation, we celebrate victory over death. We proclaim a Messiah who rides into town—facing off with an empire set to squash him.

We may wake up next Sunday to hear that the stone is rolled away, but we must never forget the pivotal turn in the story that put Jesus in the tomb in the first place.

We are the people of the resurrection.

But this day, this WEEK, we remember that we are also people of the cross. We ride with Jesus through the suffering, the challenges, the sadness, the loss of expectations, the feelings of inadequacy, the nagging sense that we aren't worthy.

Jesus says enough of that. With Christ, we don't have to bury away those feelings. We are freed. We are alive.

As people of the cross, we acknowledge our own milestones as believers—of following Jesus. We began worship with the baptism of Jack, Addie, and Francesca. Cleansed by the Holy Spirit, we celebrate the newest members of the body of Christ.

Sermon Transcript

In a few moments, our younger students come forward to receive first communion—after learning about the promises through a broken piece of bread and the reminder of the body and blood of Christ, given for us.

Holy Week leads up to that day. Holy Thursday—when Jesus gives us the mandate: I give you a new commandment: love. Love one another as I've loved you.

And why? Why does Jesus love us SO MUCH????

If only Jesus gave us some hints!!!

For God so loved the world. Christ loved the world. Christ loves us. The clues were hiding there all along. In plain sight. Amen.