

Palm Sunday, Year B
March 28, 2010
Saint Ann's, Old Lyme

In the name of the One who died for us, Jesus, the Christ.
Amen.

This is a day when nothing quite makes sense, (certainly not to me)
a day when life is turned upside down.

It's a day begun with a funny looking parade amid laughter and joy and hope - and even a sense of triumph. But then it all seems to fall apart, as the day begun in hope is turned upside down into despair, as the day full of joy is turned upside down into sorrow, and the day vibrant with life is turned upside down into death.

Life is turned upside down, and it hardly seems to make any kind of sense. It doesn't make sense when life seems turned upside down because good religious folks like you and me turn into traitors. Perhaps we're not all Judas, who betrayed Jesus for thirty pieces of silver, but aren't we all Peter, who deny Jesus from time to time?

Aren't we all like the rest of the disciples, who often can't even be wakeful and attentive for Jesus for even a single hour? And aren't we sometimes the crowd that demands the death of an innocent person, and the release of one rightly convicted?

Does anything make sense when faithful, well-intentioned people - like us - seem to do everything possible to frustrate God's good intentions for the world? To be sure, this isn't the only day we betray Jesus, but it's certainly a day when we are confronted by our betrayals. It is indeed a day when nothing makes sense and a day when life is turned upside down.

Well maybe, just maybe, what we're supposed to do this day is let the world be turned upside down. And maybe - even though it makes no sense to us - maybe in the turning upside down God's intentions are fulfilled, rather than thwarted.

Maybe God wants us to let our lives be turned upside down, even though we don't understand, because the very meaning of this day is bound up with the success of God's intentions, not whether or not those intentions make any sense to us.

And surely at least one of God's intentions, even on this day when we witness the horrific death of God's only Son, is that God promises for us life - life more joyful, fulfilled, flourishing and abundant than anything we could fashion for ourselves.

Even on this day when nothing makes sense to us, God, by letting life be turned upside down, intends to renew, refresh, and reinvigorate us for joyful, fulfilled, flourishing, and abundant life. That's Good News, especially on this day when nothing seems to make sense.

So, are we willing to let our lives be upended by God's extraordinary, redeeming and incomprehensible power? That, it seems to me, is God's invitation on this day when nothing makes sense, and that is our choice - a choice that the Gospel calls us to make - to let our lives be upended.

This week, for us to make that choice - to let our lives be upended - is for us to walk - as pilgrims - to Calvary with Jesus, and to understand as we walk that we are Judas and Peter and the crowd. This week we are also Simon of Cyrene, pressed into service to carry a cross that doesn't necessarily belong to us. And perhaps most importantly, this week we are all Barabbas, rightly convicted, but then forgiven and set free by the death of Jesus.

We don't understand how all that works, but we're not asked to understand it, any more than we are asked to rescue Jesus from his fate on the Cross.

What God does ask of us, on this day and during this week, is that we go with Jesus to Calvary and to stay with him there, even as the world turns upside down.

God's promise is that Jesus does the same for us: stays with us even as our world is upended, and that God's good intention for the world will be fulfilled.

Come, then, let us walk to Calvary.

The Rev. Nancy Miller