

Gaines Congregational United Church of Christ

April 10, 2022

First Reading; Mathew 21: 1-11

Responsive Reading; Psalm 31: 9-16

Epistle Reading; Philippians 2: 5-11

Gospel Reading; Luke 23: 1-49

Sermon Title:

IT IS FINISHED

By Rev. Jim Gardner

Summary; The debt of sin is paid in full so Christ may now commit His soul into the hands of the Father.

OK, today is Palm Sunday.

When I was a child in the Presbyterian Church this was the happy day that Jesus made His triumphant entry into Jerusalem. Palms and singing filled the sanctuary and all was happy. Then we went home and came back to church the next Sunday and the stone had been rolled away, Jesus was alive and all was happy. As protestants we tried to skip over the heart ache of passion week. We justified this by saying that we worshiped a living Jesus Christ so we wore the empty cross

around our necks instead of a Crucifix. Although there is a certain validity to this, it was also an escape mechanism that we used to shield ourselves from the pain of what really happened. A living Jesus Christ that had not made that terrible sacrifice for us would have made our faith as futile as that of Pagans and Humanists. Without the crucifixion we would just be worshiping a God that thought more of Himself than He did of His creation.

Our God is a God that will not stop at anything to save His bumbling, stubborn children that were just too stiff necked to get it right. We took His holy laws and rearranged them to fit our temperament and our needs. We washed our hands and dishes but left our hearts filthy with selfishness and contempt. God had a heaven that He wanted to share with like minds but all He could see was hypocrites, not the kind of folks He would like to share a beer with after a beautiful long day in paradise.

OK, maybe God is not a beer drinker but you get my drift.

To God we are not Battle Bots that He created for entertainment. We were created to be family. As God is Holy, we were created to be Holy. Holy is to be set apart as something special. God is special and is set apart from everything else. God has set us apart to be special but because He gave us free will we can choose to screw it up, and this is something we do really well.

In our Epistle reading Paul tries to get us into the right frame of mind by telling us, "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who being in the form of God...made himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men....He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross."

Death on the cross was the most terrible, humiliating death ever known to man. Jesus said earlier "I give my life up; it is not taken from me but I give it up." In Nazareth they were going to stone Jesus but He simply walked away from the mob and they could not hold Him to stone Him because Jesus was not choosing to die at that point and no-one could TAKE His life. Jesus chose to die in that terrible way so all would see what God was willing to do for His creation, not sparing His only begotten son that we might have eternal life.

Jesus lived His entire life on Earth as God had directed Him to live. At the cross Jesus completed His assignment from His Father in heaven. In dying on that cross Jesus traded His righteousness for all of the sins of mankind, past, present and future. Jesus paid the debt in full. In John 19:30 it says, "So when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said "It is finished." The phrase, "it is finished" is the phrase used when a contract has been completed, today our receipts would say, "Paid", or

“Paid in Full”, but either way this was Jesus saying that His work as a flesh wearing human on Earth was completed.

Having completed His assignment from God Jesus could now say, “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.”

The work of Jesus on Earth is now done, God will take care of the resurrection part and then comes our part.

As Jesus bowed His head and said, “Father, into your hands I commit My spirit”, let us bow our heads and say, “Father into your will I commit my life and every breath from now until we meet in your heavenly kingdom”.

Hallelujah and Amen!