

# The Insistence of Life

*Sermon preached by the Rev. F. M. "Buddy" Stallings, Priest-in-Charge,  
at the eleven o'clock service, April 1, 2012.  
The Sunday of the Passion: Palm Sunday.  
Based on Mark 14:32-15:39.*

Hearing the passion gospel renders the most loquacious of us nearly speechless—appropriately so. This is a day that lives best with very little explanation or interpretation. It is not a time to delight in arguing theological nuance; it is a day for beholding.

For on this day the story of the gospel gets personal, the penultimate moment of a long historical arc narrowing to an account of brutality that somehow resonates deeply in our own souls. The momentary jubilation of a parade gives sudden way to a story of betrayal, denial and execution. We know the details, most of us having heard them throughout our lives with at least seasonal regularity, sometimes with little notice and sometimes as though the taunting and pounding were aimed at us. No learned conceit avoids or weakens the truth: Jesus suffered, was crucified and died.

Somehow his willingness to walk the way of Calvary is profoundly connected to God's desire for union with us, a truth to which I give my heart—a truth that exists regardless of and beyond my inability to fully comprehend it. Nothing less real than the untenable juncture of divine love and the fear it evokes could have led to the death of a man who came to teach us how to live and love.

He played with children, finding in them the soul of us all, windows, he claimed they were, into the kingdom of God. He talked with women, invisible, ignored and sometimes reviled by others, looking directly into their eyes as equals, loved and worthy. A carpenter, he made things with his own hands, a working man who knew sweat and toil. He enjoyed the company of friends around a fire that appeased the cool of the night, a meal and wine to enliven their conversation, interspersed both with familiar laughter and breathless intensity when their talk turned to the things that mattered the most in the world.

Then he died.

And, yet, he lives. I don't know how. I just know in that way of knowing that is deeper than any words can say, that life for him did not end on the cross—not in the ways that matter. I know it when I am loved and when I love; I know it when I witness faithful people walk through tragedies that otherwise they could not survive; I know it when hope exists where there should be none.

What more can we say? We walk this week of passion and death with him because we know that even it is infused with the insistence of life.

In the name of God: *Amen*.