



ecce homo, Caravaggio, 1605.

Greetings!

Holy Week is always a special time for me. The events of Thursday – Sunday are riveting. Its an old story of human frailty. There is disappointment in the Holy Meal especially in the discussion between Jesus and Peter. The struggle in the spiritual and human dilemma of safety/flight and obedience. Then there is the betrayal in the Garden of Gethsemane. The complicity of the Religious to the authority of a dominant culture that is oppressor to a native population of color. The fear of losing power makes leaders do things that are self-serving. Its all in the Book, as they say, by multiple eyewitnesses in a genre called Gospels, and in fragments of letters to early churches. Reading the passion narrative is helpful. It will take you a few minutes of your time, but you will discover new dimensions or things you might have missed previously as you go from the beginning to the end. Please take a moment to do this now.

The Passion Narratives

It is traditional to read the various narratives of the Passion of Christ on Palm Sunday and in Holy Week. In many places these readings are distinguished not only by their length and solemnity but also by being read by a group of people, each taking one or more 'parts' in the style of a dramatic reading.

Various lectionaries use various schemes, and this page contains the readings specified by the Revised Common Lectionary for use on Palm Sunday (Matthew, Mark and Luke in successive years) and Good Friday (John in all years). Both the full and shortened forms are provided, but it is appropriate that the full reading should be used wherever possible.

in continuous form

- according to Matthew: [Matthew 26.14 – 27.66](#) or [Matthew 27.11–54](#)
- according to Mark: [Mark 14.1 – 15.47](#) or [Mark 15.1–39 \[40–47\]](#)
- according to Luke: [Luke 22.14 – 23.56](#) or [Luke 23.1–49](#)
- according to John: [John 18.1 – 19.42](#)

in dramatic form [1]

- according to [Matthew](#): Matthew 26.17 – 27.66 or Matthew 27.11–54
- according to [Mark](#): Mark 14.1 – 15. end or Mark 15.1–39 [40–47]
- according to [Luke](#): Luke 22.14 – 23.56 or Luke 23.1–49
- according to [John](#): John 18.1 – 19.42 [1]

One of my favorite pieces of art comes from the Passion narratives. The trial of Jesus in *ecce homo* (eco homo), translated from the Latin “Behold the Man” is perhaps Caravaggio’s most famous painting. Several years ago I took a confirmation class to the Columbus Art Museum and had the privilege of viewing it in person. It is a traditional painting of the era using light and shadow to tell a story. This style is called *Chiaroscuro* and was highly developed by Caravaggio and other great masters of his era. The artist paints himself in the picture as the Pontius Pilot figure.

Some questions for the painting

- Which image were you first drawn to?
- Is the man behind Jesus putting the robe on or taking it off?
- Is Pilot asking you the question, “*What shall I do?*” or inviting you to trade places?
- When you look at the painting, how do you answer a 400-year-old question?
- When you read the passion narratives from the Bible, how do you answer a 2,000-year-old question?
- What are the questions that you are afraid to answer now?

As I contemplate Holy Week 2021, I know there will be disappointment in our Holy Meals. Something won’t be right. People won’t get the meaning of the symbols, bread/wine, cup/plate, dipping the sop or washing the feet. People’s expectations won’t be met. There will be a struggle for power, and it may materialize in the human dilemma of safety as flight vs. standing present to what is needed. There is still betrayal in our world, maybe it has happened to you? And these things are not going away. In addition, religious leaders will be complicit and silent because they are afraid to tell truth to power, even if the truth must be told to the one gazing in the mirror. It is better to go along in order to get along, so they say. Who are **they** anyway?

Finally, people of color will continue to be marginalized by colonizers. And as always, there will be people in power who fear losing that power – so they only act in self-

serving ways, suggesting it's just *for the good of the order* .

The reason people keep reading the story is because it is contemporary. I wish you a mysterious and disturbing Good Friday, filled with many questions and few answers. But wait..... there is more!

[1] NRSV. The dramatic arrangements are copyright © Simon Kershaw 1999-2003 and may be freely used, provided the NRSV acknowledgment is left intact.

Peace,



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