

COMMUNION MEDITATION – PALM SUNDAY

Psalm 118 which we read here today is considered to be a festival Psalm for both Jewish and Christian communities. Our Jewish friends read this Psalm during Passover as they recall God's deliverance of them from slavery in Egypt to freedom in the Promised Land. For Christians, this Psalm which we read every year on Palm Sunday, is a liturgy of faithful people welcoming Jesus who had come to save them.

This was said to be Martin Luther's favorite Psalm. He wrote verse 17 on the wall of his study in Coburg Castle: "I shall not die, but I shall live, and recount the deeds of the LORD." He said that his Reformation experience had taught him that he could no longer place any confidence in kings or nations – only God alone could be his sure refuge.

Why is it so hard for many people to live in thanksgiving for God's goodness and love? We mean to live, make decisions, and relate to others in the joyful freedom and salvation that God brings. Yet we still act (or react) out of fear instead of faith. Threatened or afraid we feel that we are left on our own to make it in this world. We depend on our own power or our own resources rather than God. Individuals, groups, even whole nations turn to economic strength, intellectual powers, physical or military might to overcome the things that threaten us. Fearful and insecure, we measure ourselves against others. We either judge ourselves against the assessment of others or we judge others as being unworthy.

This Psalm 118 once again turns our attention back to God. Again we hear that God sometimes makes good things from the things that we reject. "The stone that the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. This is the Lord's doing..." What looks weak and unworthy to us, may be the very thing that God has chosen to be most important of all.

On this Palm Sunday, we join the crowd in Jerusalem, naming Jesus as the One who has come to bring salvation. However, unlike the crowd in that first Palm Sunday Parade we have the advantage of knowing what lies ahead. We know about Good Friday and we know about Easter. We know that Jesus was rejected by more than the chief priests and other Roman authorities. We know that he was even rejected by some of his closest friends and followers. Even by his own disciples. Though we try to live in faith rather than fear, we are still in the company of those who sin over and over again. We fall asleep, we deny him, and we doubt him. We often reject what God wants us to do. And that is why we need this sacrament. Our Lord's Table is a place where we can renew our covenant and ask again

for God's forgiveness. Through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus we are offered new life – over and over again.

So we end where we started: in joyful thanksgiving to God who comes to set us free. This does not mean that we will escape sadness, danger, disease or death. It simply means that God will always be with us. And knowing that, we can live with confidence. We need not fear. Come to this Communion Table on this Palm Sunday and give thanks to God because God's steadfast love endures forever. Amen.