

The Passion Reading from the Gospel According to Matthew

read in parts by the congregation.

Welcome to the beginning of Holy Week. Some people liken Holy Week to the final inning in game seven of the World Series or the last two minutes of the fourth quarter in the Super Bowl. It has all come down to this. The game is on the line. Can we push through to victory, or not? And so, we line the street waving palm branches and shouting at the top of our lungs, “Hosanna! Hosanna in the Highest!!” Go team! Bring it home God. We want that trophy for the trophy case.

Everything that we do for the next week fades into the vision and into the anticipation of next Sunday. Us, up on the podium. Jumping up and down with our hands in the air like Rocky Balboa at the top of the stair at the Philadelphia Museum of Art. We lose sight of the journey, because we are unable to take our eyes off the prize.

This Thursday we will be conducting a Seder meal, a Passover meal, as part of our Maundy Thursday services. We will remember Jesus’ last meal with his disciples. During that time, there is a Jewish tradition that is attached to the Passover commemoration that is worth taking a look at as we enter Holy Week. It comes in the middle of the Passover meal and is summed up in one word...Dayeinu.

Dayeinu is a Hebrew word that means, “It would have been enough.” Or “It would have been sufficient.” It is simply a statement of perspective and humility by the faithful. It is a statement that says to God that we are his people and we are grateful. We are grateful simply because he is God, and he wants to be in relationship with us, and has set a plan in place to bring us back into that relationship.

It goes something like this. There are 15 verses that recognize what God has done to bring the Jewish people out from captivity in Egypt. At the end of each verse, the people call out, “Dayeinu!”

For example:

If he had only brought us out of Egypt. DAYEINU! It would have been enough!

If he had only split the sea for us...DAYEINU! It would have been enough!

If he had only led us through on dry land...DAYEINU!

If he had only fed us Manna in the wilderness and brought water from the stone...DAYEINU!

If he had only led us to Mt. Sinai, only given us the Torah, only brought us into the Land of Israel...DAYEINU, DAYEINU, DAYEINU! It would have been enough!

This is a time for us where we get to say to God that we recognize all that he has done for us and how little we deserved it. It is a time for us to walk to the cross with Jesus and then through the cross to Easter. It is a great time, as we embrace the fullness of God's plan for salvation, for us to express our humble gratitude to God.

So, using the Hebrew word of gratitude, I would like to invite us give our humble thanks to God for all that he has done to bring us to this holiest of weeks.

Father, if you had only sent us your only begotten Son to be born as a frail human baby so that he might someday offer himself for us...(together): DAYEINU! That would have been enough.

If you had only brought him to his baptism as an example of our need for it and then into the wilderness as an example of how to stand against the evil one...(together): DAYEINU! That would have been enough.

If you had only disclosed your power and Christ's identity through the transformation of water at a wedding, the lame walking, the blind seeing, the deaf hearing...(together): DAYEINU! That would have been enough.

If your only lesson had been to teach us how to care for a person who was robbed and beaten on the road, or shown us forgiveness for the woman caught in adultery, or painted the picture for us of the welcome home for the repentant Prodigal Son...(together): DAYEINU! It would have been enough.

If you had only given us the words for us to pray to our Father in Heaven...(together): DAYEINU! It would have been enough.

All those things, each of those powerful acts and profound teachings of God, and so much more would have been enough for us...but the thing is, they weren't enough for God. He has poured out such blessings on us and now plans to pour out everything, all of himself, this week, this Holy week, in order to restore all things to their original relationship. And he is inviting us to walk through it with him, to pray through it with him. And we will. We will today at 12:30 with a public walk on Augusta Road that mirrors his entry into Jerusalem. We will do it with a Seder meal on Maundy Thursday followed by a Tenebrae service, and a solemn stripping of our altar, and a prayer vigil as we wait with Jesus. We will do it with a stark service for Good Friday at Noon, remembering the day and time of his crucifixion, and then at a powerful choir performance in the evening at 7:00. And through all that, because of all that, we will be able to

joyfully embrace God with alleluias and worship with the backdrop of an empty tomb on Easter morning.

Every time God reaches into our lives, each and every individual time he lets us know how he wants so much more for our lives than we apparently want for ourselves, let's remember, especially this week, that it was never enough for God until his God-Made-Man Son was able to proclaim from the cross that it was finished. And then on Easter morning, after having walked with Jesus through this coming week of hosannas, and foot washings, and betrayals, and trials, and calls for crucifixion, and a brutal execution; only then will our ears then be tuned enough in order for us to hear God finally proclaim back to us, DAYEINU!!...that is now truly enough.

Amen