

13th April, 2014

Reading: Matthew 21: 1 – 16

Sermon: You'll Get Through This

I came across a book the other night by Max Lucado with the title **You'll Get Through This**.

I was ploughing through a box of chocolates at the time and was making a pretty good job of getting through them, I have to say, but I failed in the end. I had to give up but Max Lucado wasn't talking about chocolates. He was talking about hard times, about pain and suffering, about the times in life when we sit and wonder if we will ever get through the dark days.

In the advertisement for the book, his comment was: With the help of God, you'll get through this. The subtitle of the book is Hope and Help for your Turbulent Days.

There can have been no more turbulent days for Jesus than in that last week of his life on earth, that week between Palm Sunday and Easter Sunday, and yet, when we follow the lectionary and the Bible Readings suggested for each Sunday, by and large, we miss that whole period in Jesus' life. We jump from the joy of Palm Sunday, from Jesus' welcome by the palm branch waving crowd to Jerusalem, we jump from that to his resurrection and to a large extent we avoid the pain and the suffering and the cost to Jesus in those last days, particularly when we have no Holy Week Services.

It's interesting but when we look closely at the gospels, we see that even although Jesus' ministry lasted for three years, there is proportionately more focus on that last week in his life than there is on any other period in the rest of his life and yet we avoid it or skim over it. What is that about?

There was a time when our Churches were pretty full and to a large extent, many ministers were preaching hell fire and damnation but along side that there was the promise that you'll get through this. There was the promise of salvation for those who accepted Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour.

We all know the verse that says **God loved the world so much that He sent his Son that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.**

That's an incredible promise but when I say that we all know it, it is probably all over a certain age because you learned that verse in Sunday School and in Bible Classes and you heard it preached. It was a verse that assured you that with God's help you would get through this life with all its

problems, with all its hardships, with all its pain and suffering. You would get through and you would enjoy eternal life through faith in Christ.

That is what Jesus' ministry was all about. That was its sole purpose, to bring people to faith and to assure them of life eternal through Him, through Christ Jesus, the Son of God and that is still our purpose or it should be, to share our faith and to bring people to faith in our Lord and our Saviour and so today we are going to focus on more than simply the story of Palm Sunday and to do that we begin by going back to an earlier chapter.

In Chapter 20 of Matthew's Gospel, when Jesus was on the way from Jericho to Jerusalem, he stopped and took his disciples aside to speak to them and he said to them:

We are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the teachers of the law. They will condemn him to death and will hand him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified. On the third day he will be raised to life!

This was planned. It was not that Jesus headed to Jerusalem and was taken by surprise when he was arrested. He knew it would happen. It was inevitable if not ordained, just as it was ordained that Jesus would rise to life again on the third day.

Max Lucado says: These words tell us that Jesus died.... on purpose. No surprise. No hesitation. No faltering.

The way Jesus marched to his death leaves no doubt: he had come to earth for this moment.

And Max Lucado goes on to say that the journey to the cross had begun long before Jesus left Jericho. He goes as far as to say that 'as the echo of the crunching of the fruit was still sounding in the Garden of Eden, Jesus was leaving for Calvary. In other words, as soon as man fell from grace, as soon as we turned on our backs on God and did our own thing, Jesus was leaving for Calvary.

I'm not sure I would go that far because the Parable of the vineyard owner suggests that God tried other ways to get his people to listen. He sent prophet after prophet and it was only when those missions failed that He sent his Son. Surely they would listen to Him but they killed him too just as they done with so many of the prophets.

However, Max Lucado goes on to say that Jesus stepped towards Jerusalem with the promise of God in his heart. **On the third day, he will rise again.** You will get through this.

The journey from Jericho to Jerusalem was only fourteen miles. It wasn't a long journey. It took about half a day depending on what speed you walked at. It wasn't a long journey but even the shortest journey, even a walk down a

corridor can feel like an eternity when you know that there is pain and suffering ahead.

As we approach Jerusalem with Jesus at this time, the question I ask is one that is put to us by Max Lucado. Is there a Jerusalem on your horizon? In other words, is there pain and suffering on your path? Are you only steps away from the walls of your own heartache?

Is there any comfort for you, for us in knowing that Jesus has trod the painful road ahead of us? Can we draw any strength from knowing that he managed to walk that road despite what was ahead of him?

Are we able to keep in mind what made it possible for Jesus, namely the promise that He would rise again on the third day? He would get through this.

I remember a number of years ago going through what is the third longest tunnel in the world. It is some sixteen kilometres in length. It is the Gotthard Road Tunnel between Switzerland and Italy and I hated it. The tears were running down my cheeks as we sat in the bus because I felt trapped and I felt that that tunnel would never end.

But we too rise from the depths, from the darkness of tunnels, from pain and suffering. Just as we got out of that tunnel after what felt like hours, so we get through the pain, the darkness, the awfulness that meets us as we walk from Jericho to our Jerusalem and we do it by clinging to the promises of God. We will not perish. We will not go under. We will rise again. We will enjoy eternal life.

Max Lucado says that the next time we find ourselves on that road from Jericho to Jerusalem, we need to put the promise of God on our lips. When the darkness of oppression settles around you, he says, draw courage from the Word of God.

Jesus walked on towards the cross for you and me in the strength of God knowing that God would walk with him and would see him through the events of that final week in his life and knowing that He would rise again.

He would get through this. He would come out the other side and we will too. All we need to do is follow our Lord's example and trust the promises of God.