**Homily Introducing the Passion According to Mark**

**Palm/Passion Sunday 2021**

**Pastor Jonathan Adams A SACRED STORY**

I think one of the first books that I truly remember reading, the first real book, with chapters and lots of words, and no pictures, was “Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone.” It was probably towards the end of elementary school or the beginning of middle school when my mom bought it for me. I remember it taking a while to get into at first, but that the story quickly drew me in and hooked me, so that I eventually read all seven books in the series as they were released (and have read them again several times since then.)

If you’re somehow not familiar with Harry Potter, it’s a story about an eleven year old orphan who discovers that there is an entire magical world of witches and wizards hiding from the rest of us, and that he himself is a wizard. The books follow his adventures during seven years of education at a school called Hogwarts, where wizards are taught and trained.

The thing is, without pictures, and before there were movies made of the books, you had to use some brainpower and imagination to immerse yourself in the story as you read. I didn’t know what a school of magic would look like, but oftentimes, I imagined its hallways looking slightly like the school where I attended at the time. I pictured the train that carried them to school looking a bit like the DC Metro that I had ridden on several trips to Washington. I imagined the various magical creatures to look the way I had seen them in other picture books or cartoons or movies.

It’s not that the author, JK Rowling, didn’t give enough detail to fuel one’s imagination, but in order to really appreciate the story, I had to take what she gave me and weave it in with the things I had seen and had experienced in order to paint a picture of it all in my mind, to have something I didn’t just read, but that I truly experienced while I was reading. Frankly, it’s something we all do to a certain extent when we read a story: one way or another you place yourself inside of it.

This week, we throw ourselves into the single most significant story in our lives as people of faith, The Passion of Our Lord. We heard it in part just a few moments ago, but in these next days, we have the opportunity to not just hear it, but live it. To pull together the details that we read in scripture, provided for us by Mark & John, & Matthew & Luke, with the real-life experiences we’ve had in our lives.

We may not know exactly what Jerusalem looked like, but we can imagine Jesus and his disciples making their way into the city triumphantly welcomed by joyful crowds.

We may not know what the seating arrangement was at the Last Supper, but we can imagine what it might have been like to hear Jesus say “This is my body given for you,” for the very first time.

We may not know how each individual disciple felt when they saw their friend arrested, interrogated, tortured, and murdered, but we can imagine how *we* might feel in a similar situation.

What we have before us is an exceptionally important sacred story of faith, and we owe it to ourselves to not just read it, but also experience it, and that is the opportunity that is afforded to us in Holy Week.

And so, today, we start fresh. Most of you have heard this story hundreds of times, but imagine yourself hearing it for the first time. Imagine yourself living it out minute by minute. If you do, the surprise of good news at the end becomes all the more powerful, and the promise of eternal life and forgiveness of sins made real through Christ’s resurrection becomes all the more meaningful. So allow yourself to dwell in the story, these final days of Christ, and the first days of our new faith in God’s covenant. Amen.