**Palm Sunday 2025**

“[T]his is your hour, and the power of darkness.”

The mystery of this day is the mystery of two kingdoms, and of two hours. The Kingdom of darkness, and the kingdom of Light; the hour of Jesus and the hour of the Enemy. This is a day of contrasts, as we set the glories of the Lord’s entry into Jerusalem against the unrelenting darkness of His Passion.

S. Luke draws the contrasts for us. At the Supper before the Passion, “When *the* *hour* came,” Jesus, Who a few chapters before has entered the Holy City to shouts of “Blessed is the King Who comes in the Name of the Lord,” compares the ways of the Kingdom of heaven with those of the Kingdom of darkness: “The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them […] But *not so* with you. Rather, let the greatest among *you* become as the youngest, and the leader as one who serves […] I am among you as one who serves.”

The hour of the Kingdom of Heaven is the hour of the Supper, the hour of self-gift, Jesus giving Himself, Body and Blood, to His disciples, as He will shortly give that Body and shed that Blood *for* them. This is a self-gift which invites the disciples to participate in Jesus’ kingship, just as they have partaken of His Flesh and Blood: “I assign to you, as my Father assigned to me, a kingdom, that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom.” The Supper and the Kingdom are inextricably linked, and this is deliberate: the one is a sign of, a key to, and a foretaste of, the other.

But this kingdom, despite the disciples’ expectations, can only come about through the Passion. The whole narrative is shot through with a building tension to underline this point: “I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you *before I suffer*; for I tell you I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.” “[…]from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.” “behold, the hand of him who betrays me is with me on the table.” “Simon, behold , Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail.”

If Jesus is the King of the kingdom of heaven, making His friends kings, Satan is the king of the kingdom of darkness, friendless and jealous. The hour of Jesus, the Supper, is an hour of giving, the hour of darkness is an hour of *taking*, Jesus seized by the crowd. He entered the city in the daylight, but He is arrested in the dark; He came with peace, but He is taken with violence. “Have you come out as against a robber, with swords and clubs?”

That is the way of the kingdom of darkness, its power in strife. Look at all its little kings, the high priest, clinging to the scraps of his power, dreaming perhaps of the days when the priests were kings in Judah, but whose fate it will be to be deposed from his office by a gentile. Pilate, Roman governor of unimportant Judea; he only comes to the Emperor’s notice to be removed from his office and recalled, after which we hear nothing more of him. Herod, the puppet ‘king’ tetrarch of Galilee and Perea, whose fate is to die in exile, fallen from favour.

Such are the kings of that kingdom, divided against itself. Pilate and Caiaphas squabble over Jesus, one demanding, the other trying – but not very hard – to resist, His crucifixion. Pilate and Herod, “had been at enmity with each other,” until, oh the irony, the fate of Jesus reconciles them: they “became friends with one another.” Even for His foes, Jesus is the Prince of Peace.

What happens when these kingdoms collide, when these hours coincide? Luke gives us a taste of how it *might* have gone: “Lord, shall we strike with the sword?” “But Jesus said, ‘no more of this!’” Jesus’ Kingdom is a kingdom of peace. “Are you the Son of God, then?” they ask. “You say that I am.” “Are you the King of the Jews?” Pilate asks. “You have said so.” That isn’t ducking the question, but rather offering them, even in this, their hour, when darkness seemingly has the upper hand, the chance to confess Him and enter into His Kingdom of light.

They refuse. Pilate struggles, but the urgency of the crowd, and his own cowardice, are stronger. Darkness prevails. “There was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour, while the sun’s light failed.” Creation itself begins to fail at the death of its Maker. “This is your hour, and the power of darkness.”

But it is also, we know, the hour of the Lord. The hour that He has been looking for since the beginning. The hour when He triumphs, despite every appearance, over death and darkness. From before the beginning of ages, His victory was sure, and no petty plots of men can oppose it. Already He has entered the Holy City in triumph. Already at the Supper He has founded His kingdom of love. Already the darkness has been vanquished, though it must be allowed its hour, its little hour, before the End.

It is into that hour that we now enter, in this holiest of weeks, to walk with Our Lord as he ascends the throne of His Cross, crowned with thorns and mantled with His own Most Precious Blood. A passing darkness, a saving sorrow, and the promise of “Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!”