May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing to you, O LORD, my rock and my redeemer. Amen.

As we do every year we began this day by taking our place in the triumphal entry, singing our hosannas, and carrying our palms. The triumphal entry, palms, and hosannas have in many ways come to characterize this day and the beginning of Holy Week. But today I want to talk with you about a different entry into Holy Week. I want to talk about tears and weeping as our entry into Holy Week.

Maybe you’re wondering and asking, “Why not the triumphal entry? Why not the palms and the hosannas? Why focus on tears and weeping?” Well, let me ask you this. What does St. Luke have to say about all that? After all, his account of the gospel (Luke 19, 28-40) is the one we hear today.

* What does Luke say about the palms? Nothing. The people following Jesus neither carry nor throw down palms along the way. True, they spread their cloaks on the road but there is no mention of palms. Luke’s gospel account is the only one that does not mention palms or branches.
* What does Luke say about the hosannas? Nothing. Yes, the people praise God with a loud voice but there is no mention of hosannas. Luke’s gospel account is the only one that does not mention the hosannas.
* What does Luke say about tears and weeping? Nothing, if you read only today’s assigned portion of the gospel. That’s why I took the liberty of extending our first gospel reading to include verses 41-46. The very next verse after today’s assigned portion says, “As he came near and saw the city, he wept over it” (Luke 19: 41). Luke’s account of the gospel is the only one in which Jesus sees the city and weeps.

Luke does not describe the usual triumphal entry that we are used to. What Luke describes might be more accurately called the tearful entry. St. Luke records three episodes of weeping in today’s two gospel readings.

First, “*As [Jesus] came near and saw the city, he wept over it*.” Jesus’ tears formed a river of love, compassion, and heartbreak flowing between him and the city. We know that city to be Jerusalem but it’s not about only a particular city. Yes, it is Jerusalem but it’s also Afghanistan, Beirut, Ukraine, and a thousand other places of violence today. Jesus sees it all and he weeps.

The second time Luke records weeping is concerning Peter. He denies Jesus three times, the cock crows and, Luke tells us, Peter “*went out and wept bitterly*” (Luke 22:62). His tears are the recognition that he has seen the reality of his life. He has not only denied Jesus, he has also denied himself. I’ve wept those kinds of tears and I’ll bet you have too. They are tears confessing that our life is not what we want it to be and that we are not who we want to be. They are the tears that tell us we are lost and the tears by which God calls us home, and the way home always goes through Holy Week.

The final episode of weeping that Luke records is on the way of the cross. Among the crowd following Jesus were some women beating their breasts and wailing for Jesus. Jesus turned to these women and said, “*Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for you children*” (Luke 23:28). Jesus isn’t speaking to just a group of women. Through them he is speaking to the entire city and to us. The kind of weeping he implores is not grounded in self-pity or selfishness. Rather, it is weeping that recognizes and names our situation and assumes responsibility for it. It’s as if Jesus is saying, “I have wept for you, now weep for yourselves that your tears and my tears may mingle and become one.” It’s as if our eyes now weep with the tears of Jesus. That’s what it means to enter Holy Week through tears and weeping.

Some of us weep tears that are wet and run down the cheeks. Others of us weep tears that are dry and never moisten the eyes. Wet or dry, they are both real. Both express the same truth; our heart has been pierced. Jesus’ heart was pierced when he saw the city. Peter’s heart was pierced when the cock crowed. The women’s hearts were pierced first at the recognition of Jesus’ situation and then at the recognition of their own situation.

Sometimes our heart is pierced with sorrow, grief, and death. Sometimes it’s guilt, regret, or disappointment that pierces our heart. Other times our heart is pierced by the pain of the world and the suffering of another human being. Some hearts are pierced with the loss of what could’ve been, dreams that didn’t come true, wishes unfulfilled, or promises unkept. Other hearts are pierced by burdens and the weight of life. Fear, change, and the uncertainty of life pierce many hearts. Whatever it is and however it happens we’ve all had our hearts pierced. We’ve all wept.

So tell me about your tears; the ones you’ve cried and the ones you’ve denied, the ones that never seem to end and the ones you need to weep but just aren’t there, the ones that scare you and the ones you can’t explain and don’t understand. In what ways has your heart been pierced? What’s behind your tears and weeping? What makes you weep?

Whatever your tears and weeping may be about let them become your entry into Holy Week. To push back our tears or to wipe them away is to deny a part of ourselves the power of this Holy Week and the joy of Easter life. Let this Holy Week transform your tears into the holy waters of baptism; waters of cleansing and release, waters of forgiveness and healing, waters of rebirth and new life. Amen.