

**Palm Sunday**  
**March 17, 2008**  
**The Rev. Sylvia Sweeney**

Have you ever seen the face of God? Or been touched by God's hand? I have. I had a vision once where both those things happened. I was 18 and became very sick after having my wisdom teeth removed, running a very high fever and delirious from it. Some time during that delirium... Jesus came to me. Even to this day I can still remember that experience. I can no longer remember Christ's face, but I so vividly remember his touch, his tenderness, his compassion, his forgiveness! I remember learning in the experience of his presence what it means to be truly and deeply loved, to be the recipient of unrestrained, unambiguous, unconditional love.

Unconditional love. It's a great concept...a wonderful concept. The whole idea that someone might love us without wanting anything from us in return. That someone might love us despite all the things we might do to thwart that love. That someone might love us forever. I think we all yearn for unconditional love in our lives. But how many of us have experienced it? How many of us have actually had a moment of being held in unconditional love? It changes you. It makes you whole, and in that moment you learn that through no merit of your own, through nothing you have done or will ever do to make it so, you have been made fully and completely, loveable!

Now perhaps you have never felt anything else. But if you are like so many of the people I know, who struggle many days of their life to believe that they are worth loving, then you know that just such a moment of being held in love's embrace is all that many of us have ever wanted

or needed or longed for our whole lives long. And if you have ever experienced a moment when you moved from knowing yourself as unloveable to knowing yourself as loveable, you know that is the moment that changes your life forever. Forever. Christ's forgiveness of us on the cross was an unconditional embrace—of all of humankind, yes! But also of each of us. Just as we are. Who we are.

The cross is about unconditional love. It is about Jesus loving you and me, all of us, all of humanity, so fully, so unconditionally that no matter how hard we try, we cannot undo that love. There was nothing anyone could say or do or believe—no matter how cruel, no matter how selfish, no matter how full of hatred and loathing or apathy and cowardice they might be. There was nothing that could keep Jesus from loving them, and with them, loving us. Through His unfailing goodness and love, we have seen God. We have come to know the Love of God.

This week as you find yourself returning to this horrible yet wondrous, holy story. As you find yourself walking in the way of the cross, give thanks for a love that cannot be broken. Give thanks for a God whose love knows no bounds. Give thanks for the promise that has been made to you that you of all people, you are now... and forever... Christ's beloved!