

PALM SUNDAY  
MATTHEW 21:1-11  
APRIL 8, 9, 2017

YEAR A

Last December we read about and studied the appearance of John the Baptist as he came out of the wilderness. He came proclaiming a message of repentance and baptism that would bring forgiveness of sins. He also proclaimed that the kingdom of heaven was coming near. Many went out to where John was preaching and baptizing. They came out and they asked about his identity. Who are you? John went to the Jordan in dramatic fashion and the people responded with curiosity but also with desire to know more. There was a stir among the people as John came out of the wilderness. John's appearance brought questions and maybe some fears for the people. It caused them to think about their lives and about who they were.

You and I come today to worship the Lord and we wave our palm branches and sing Hosanna to the son of David. We sang "All Glory Laud and Honor, to You Redeemer King." We celebrate Jesus as being not only the King of the Jews but also our Lord and King. We come not because we want to hear more about John the Baptist but that we want to know more about Jesus. It could be that we hope for a fresh understanding of who we are as children of God. We also want to know more about the Lord's entry into Jerusalem. We want to remember that Jesus is the Savior of the World and our Lord. We proclaim, "Hosanna to the Son of David" and "Glory to God in the highest heaven" as we gather in anticipation.

When the crowds, on the way into Jerusalem, cried out they sang in anticipation. They were in anticipation because many saw Jesus as a prophet. As was the method of many of the prophets Jesus riding a donkey was a prophetic demonstration of what was to come. If Jesus is Messiah he might be saying that he comes in peace on a donkey but will soon give way to gaining victory. You and I know the victory would come on the cross. Those in the

crowd would see the victory in the defeat of the Romans and the restoration of Israel to its rightful place. The peace of Jesus is a peace that passes all human understanding.

It also might be interesting to note that as Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey, Pontius Pilate rode into Jerusalem on a horse. Jesus rode humbly on a donkey promoting peace even as he brings victory. Pontius Pilate rode on a horse and was not humble at all. His victory would be in keeping the peace in Jerusalem no matter what that might mean.

**Matthew 21:10, 11**      **When he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was in turmoil, asking, “Who is this?” The crowds were saying, “This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee.”**

There was wonder and expectation as Jesus made his way into Jerusalem on the back of the donkey. The crowds gathered and went with Jesus into Jerusalem. Some recognized the prophecy of Zechariah and of the other prophets regarding the coming of the Messiah. Zechariah said that he would ride on the colt of a donkey. The crowds declared Jesus to be the Messiah as they proclaimed, “Hosanna to the Son of David” and “Blessed is the one that comes in the name of the Lord.” These were words that traditionally meant God’s chosen Messiah was there. By singing “Hosanna” the people were asking Jesus to save them.

Along with the expectation and wonder was uneasiness among others in Jerusalem. There were questions about who this man was. Of course, they knew him and they knew his reputation because they heard and saw what he had done for so many. They knew this was the one from Nazareth in Galilee and so the question was not about identity but about title and what he was doing in Jerusalem. What does this demonstration mean? What was this procession about?

You and I know what this demonstration means but we also want to know what it means for us. We know that Jesus is Lord and that he is our King. Jesus is King of kings and Lord of lords. He is the Savior of the world. The One that knew no sin became sin that we might be free from sin. The exalted one humbled himself and became one of us. Jesus was obedient even to death on a cross. Jesus came into Jerusalem, not as a military or political leader, but as the one that brings peace on earth and good will to all. Jesus is the one that teaches us, feeds us and heals our diseases. On this Palm Sunday we celebrate Jesus as our King and we celebrate his victory but we also must look at how Jesus won the victory and why these events came about. When I read the Passion stories I think about the leaders of the Jews and how they miss who Jesus is. I think about Pilate as he tried to wash his hands of the whole matter. I also think about his wife who was troubled by a vision or a dream that said Pilate should have nothing to do with this righteous man.

What the Lord's entry means for me is that I am called to work for peace. Our world is filled with injustice and violence against many that are not able to fend for themselves. Jesus calls us to fight against injustice that brings violence and to work for justice that brings nonviolence and peace. Jesus sets the example of bringing justice and peace to the world. You and I are called to share in his ministry. We work for justice and peace in our land and in our world.

The procession of Jesus into Jerusalem was the beginning of the last week of our Lord's earthly ministry. Jesus did lots of wonderful things as he made his way from Galilee to Jerusalem. He healed many diseases and cast out demons. He cleansed those with leprosy and he fed many that were hungry. Jesus taught his disciples about greatness meaning they must become the servants of all. If they would enter the kingdom of heaven it would be as child with a childlike faith. All of these teachings and the other ministry events are important but Jesus came for this one purpose. He came to save his people from their sins. He came that you and I would have life and that we would have

it abundantly. Jesus is our King and our Lord but he did not come to overthrow governments but to change the lives of people. He came to die on a cross that our sins are forgiven and our lives restored. By the blood of the Lamb our lives are restored. Jesus shed his blood on the cross. God loved us so much that God gave God's only Son that we would have life.

Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey. It was not his purpose to overthrow governments but to move God's people to salvation. We come to this Palm Sunday proclaiming Jesus as Lord and Messiah. The people proclaimed, "Blessed is the one that comes in the name of the Lord? Hosanna in the highest heaven". AMEN