

March 25, 2018

## **Palm Sunday – Come and See**

### PRAYER

May the words of my mouth be mediations of our hearts and be always acceptable unto Thee. O Lord our strength and our redeemer. Amen.

### SERMON

At 8:00 I promised that the sermon wouldn't be as long as usual. I'm not going to make that promise this time. Today we celebrate Palm Sunday, it's also known as Passion Sunday. I am convinced that the reason that we have the triumphal entry and the passion narrative on the same Sunday before Easter is because the leaders didn't have a great deal of faith in us to actually walk through the rest of Holy Week. And to come together on Good Friday to hear the passion story on the day when it should be heard.

In years past, I've tried to balance the triumphal entry and the passion. I'm not going to do that this year. I want to focus on the triumphal entry. I want to think a little bit about what was actually going on when Jesus entered Jerusalem.

You know that Passover was coming up. Imagine if you will, the city of Jerusalem. It has grown in its population over the last few days. Will continue to grow up until the Passover. People from Israel, people from Corinth, Rome, Ephesus, Philippi, all coming together. All the Jews coming together to celebrate the Passover. To celebrate their identity of the chosen people. The chosen people of covenant. The people whom God heard and came to Egypt, sent Moses to Egypt to lead them out of slavery. To lead them through the desert. To lead them to Mt. Sinai to give them the law. To make the covenant with the people.

Now free people, a chosen people. A people who are being led to the land of promise. Part of their identity is to gather on that Passover to remember what God has done for them. To remember who they are and whose they are. For a good practicing Jew of the first century, it was to come to Jerusalem. It was to come and have the Passover meal. It was to come and make sacrifice at the temple and then return home.

Now Jesus almost certainly attended Passover in Jerusalem every year. In each year I suspect he walked into Jerusalem unknown. No one paying a lot of attention to him until of course after the baptism of John. After he had begun his earthly ministry then people began to know who he was. But even then, for those first couple of years after he had started his ministry, he and his disciples and the group that followed him which became larger each year I imagine would just walk into Jerusalem. Unannounced, hardly noticed, would go to the temple. Would make the sacrifices, would teach the people who wanted to hear. But nothing big happened.

This year was different. This year Jesus has had the experience of the transfiguration. This year he knows he is going to face who he is and what he is called to do for the world. This was the time. And he chooses to enter Jerusalem not unassumingly but he sends his disciples in to go and get a colt. They put their cloaks on top of it. He rides the colt into town, into Jerusalem. Hundreds of thousands of Jews have gathered. His disciples are making a big deal of this. Here he is. Here is the Messiah. Here is the one that you've been looking for.

With the fervor of the Passover coming up their identity as the chosen people of God, people get on the bandwagon. Could this really be the Messiah? Could this really be the new king in the Davidic line? Could it be the one who is going to restore Israel to its greatest time as the people of God, a great nation among nations?

Excitement builds as he rides like a conquering king up to the gates and through the gates into the city. Then we hear Mark, you got to love Mark. Then we hear Mark tell the rest of the story. He got off, looked around the temple, looked at everything, and went back to Bethany. That's the story of the triumphal entry. The people had expectations. The people were excited for that moment.

We don't hear that Jesus immediately went to the temple and turned over the money-changers tables and whipped the animals out of the temple area. We don't hear that he stood in the center of the city and made a great speech, a great sermon about the kingdom of God and now was the time. We don't hear him talking about an army. We don't hear him talking about the time is now to throw these dirty Romans out of our city, out of our temple. He looks around at everything and then he goes back to Bethany. Because it was late. That's the story of the triumphal entry.

Through this next week, through the services that we will celebrate here at St. Jude's. We will hear the story of walking through that week. We will hear a little bit about what Jesus and his disciples did. We will hear the rest of that story that leads up to that Thursday night, that Passover meal. That institution of the last supper, the Eucharist that we celebrate every Sunday. You will hear more about Jesus' approach to his death and how the people begin to turn away the high priest because he doesn't fulfill what they believe is the law, what they are looking for.

The people who greeted him as the next king, the Messiah began to question. Because he's not meeting their expectations about what this king in the Davidic line should look like. What he should be doing here when he has his army, if you will, gather together from all the corners of the known world. See how easy it is to move from welcoming Jesus

as king of kings, as Lord of Lords and to turn away. And say, “Crucify him. Give us Barabbas.”

So, this is an invitation. It’s an invitation to come and see. To come to the services and hear about the last week of Jesus’ life. To experience over the time, what it is that we are called to be as followers of Jesus. To begin to understand how easy it is for us as we look at our own expectations of who Jesus is, who we want Jesus to be in our lives. And how easy it is to misinterpret what it is Jesus is coming to offer.

Did he come to be the next king of Israel that will restore the nation? Did he come to replace the high priest? What did he come for? What did he offer? We need to know these things so that our expectations can be real. Our expectations can be in line with what it is to be a follower of Jesus Christ. The son of God, the Messiah, the Christ, the Savior.

To understand that in our lives today, we have welcomed Jesus according to what we want Jesus to be, not always what Jesus claims to be. That we expect things from God, we expect things from Jesus not based on what Jesus says he is bringing to the world, but what we want for our lives. And how easy it is when this Jesus doesn’t live up to our expectations. Live up to what we think we deserve from Jesus. How easy it is to turn away and in our own ways and our own living of our lives instead of proclaiming the good news. Instead of proclaiming salvation, we cry out crucify him because his demands are too hard. Because they are not what I want Jesus to be and to do in my life.

So, this is an invitation to come and see. Come and experience the story. Come on Maundy Thursday and hear about disciple’s feet being washed and are called to servanthood. Hear about Jesus offering to those who will follow a sacrament of body and blood. A promise to be with us always and to unite us with each other and with God.

Come on Good Friday and remember the path that he walked in order to accept the punishment for the sins of the world. Come on Sunday and truly experience what it means to have resurrection. What it means to have life and what it means to go into the world rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit.

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