

Palm Sunday, March 25, 2018

John 12:1-16

Psalms 31:9-16

Mark 14:1-11

Blessed is Jesus Who Comes

Everybody loves a parade. Here in Windsor there are several parades held at different times of the year that celebrate different seasons, causes, events and special days of the year. It is often very hot on July 1 Canada Day and last summer with Canada turning 150 there were many people dressed up in red and white along the parade route. Early December marks Santa Claus' tours in the various communities and sometimes it is so cold wearing snow pants becomes mandatory! But in either of these parades what is very significant is that there is more than one person, one float, several bands, businesses, schools, teams and overall it is a celebration. The participants' energy spills out to the people watching these parades and this often leads to other family or community celebrations. For any parade to be successful, there is usually a cross section of people participating and of course the people who line the parade route cheering others on. Everyone loves a parade. But not everyone participates. Anyone can be a bystander. It takes a little something extra to be a participant.

Today, we have experienced the Palm parade in our way of celebrating Jesus' entry into the city of Jerusalem. The disciples obtained the donkey as Jesus had directed them and he rode upon the donkey and made his way into the city. When people realized who it was on the donkey, they began to celebrate him. They shouted 'Hosanna'== save us because many people started to believe that Jesus could save them, but they were not sure how. They had recently raised Lazarus from death and was anointed. Jesus was preparing himself for what was to come for he knew that soon he would die.

That Palm parade with Jesus as the main 'float' included many of his followers who believed he was the Messiah. Witnesses also witnessed by many Jewish people who saw this man riding on a donkey. They also heard the stories of what had occurred and now people were shouting Hosanna and

they were also shouting words that were very important to them. Words of the Hallel. The Hallel is the Jewish prayers which include Psalms 113-118 which are recited together on joyous occasions like festivals. The people were shouting “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.” Words from Psalm 118. Words which remind us that Jesus’ life and death were prophesied a long time before that day he rode into Jerusalem. Words which might have confused Jewish onlookers to this parade of one. Words which when combined with the fact that the people were shouting “Hosanna” save us caused more questions than answers.

Could this Jesus who rides be the Messiah? After all the prophet Zechariah stated that the king of peace would ride on a donkey. Kings ride horses when they go into battle but when they come in peace they ride on donkeys. But how could a Messiah riding in peace stand up to Roman rule?

Jesus came riding on a donkey in peace. It was his followers who shouted “hosanna”, cut branches down and waved them. Instead of watching him walk on by, they began to participate in the parade. They could no longer stand by. They had to do something- Jesus their Messiah was in their midst. Using the words of their Hebrew training as Jewish faithful people and singing the songs of praise they were taught to sing in festivals of faith. They shouted “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.”

Yet what did this mean? Blessed is Jesus, who was the teacher who came to the people; he is God’s Son, the messiah, the promised One, the one who would save them. But how? How was a man riding a donkey going to save the people and help them to live a new and better life?

The events of the last week prior to Jesus’ death caused different responses of the people. Jesus continued to teach those who followed him even his closest disciples. But they did not fully understand that in order to save the people—Jesus was going to die. Many people thought the Messiah’s task was going to be completed by overthrowing the Roman government and leaders and having this individual take charge. They thought that God’s Son would save them from the tyranny of their poor lives and that

they would live better lives by having a better place in the society. Yet this is not why Jesus came. Jesus came for 3 main reasons. 1) Jesus came to “give His life as a ransom for many”. Mark 10:45 “For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” He came to give His very life to save ours. He was born into the world so that He could die for the world. Jesus came—that’s Christmas—to give His life as a ransom—that’s Easter. On this Palm Sunday, Jesus comes in God’s name in order to pay the price that we cannot. The payment demanded was His sinless life.

2) Jesus also came because as he said, “It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.” Luke 5:31-32. In the same way, we all to be forgiven of our sins, we need of Jesus and to receive him, we just have to repent and believe that is to have faith in the one comes on that donkey—for you. Only Jesus could save us then and now too! “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23). We need Jesus to save us= from tyranny and death and

3) For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.” (John 3:16). This is why Jesus is fulfilling prophecy as he rides the donkey. He went to Jerusalem knowing that his dying was imminent—very soon. He knew that his disciples would abandon him for their own safety. He knew that God had sent him to earth in order that he would die. . And he knew that in order to give eternal life to whoever believes he had to die and rise again. He wasn’t going to sit on a throne to overcome any government leader, he was going to die in order to rise again for the sake of everyone. Jesus’ gift of eternal life doesn’t come automatically. You don’t get eternal life like you get hair. It only comes once you put your trust in Jesus. You have to believe in Him.

In the name of God Jesus comes to offer us life eternal but we are called to remember him and what he did for us. This means to hear again the stories of Jesus and his passion for others. It means imagining oneself as he clears the temple of people who sought that prayer was not as important as the money. It means hearing Jesus instituting the sacrament of Holy Communion and expressing the new

covenant in His name. This New Covenant began when Jesus said, "This is my blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for many " (mark 14:24) The blood of Christ had accomplished eternal redemption for all people. It also means hearing the story of the disciples falling asleep while Jesus sweats it out praying to God. It means to hearing the story of Jesus' arrest, trial and death so that when the news of his resurrection is shared we will be filled with joy and wonder! You have to believe in the Hosannas of our time; you must also believe in the blessings that Jesus offers as well. And what are these blessings? In the name of God, Jesus comes to offer us strength and power and hope. Blessed is He who comes in the name of God.

SINGING:

There is strength in the name of the Lord.

There is power in the name of the Lord.

There is hope in the name of the Lord.

Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.