

Palm Sunday, March 28, 2021 Philippians 2:5-11 Mark 14:1-2, 10-21

Walking the Road of Christ's Passion

During this last year you have probably seen or even been a part of a birthday parade. Due to the pandemic and stay at home orders people of all ages celebrated birthdays by either standing near a window and looking out or sitting on the lawn or driveway as vehicles decorated with balloons, signs, and filled with excited people would drive in caravan form like a parade on the street. The person celebrating their birthday would then see who was in each vehicle and they would wave and smile. They might even receive flowers or gifts to remember the day. But it wasn't only birthdays that lead people to be in caravan parades—this was also completed by many who wanted to honour the front line workers at hospitals, long term care homes and clinics. Some of these gatherings proved to be very popular and as more people joined there was traffic back ups along main roads. Those being honoured were usually just finishing / starting their shifts and so having horns and people shouting their words of support helped to boost these health care workers.

Parades are usually fun and filled with enjoyment as each float is carefully decorated, music plays and usually there is a reason to celebrate. We must remember that locally, even Santa Claus had a different parade experience this past Christmas, as he and Mrs. Claus sat and watched the parade of cars go by them. But with each vehicle moving by them, they waved as children and adults alike experienced the lights and sounds of the event.

Today is Palm Sunday when we remember and share again in the excitement of a parade that took place on the road into Jerusalem. But this parade was not just Jesus' way of drawing attention to himself as the One who would save His people. The prophet Zechariah wrote "Your king comes to you, gentle and riding on a donkey, a colt, a foal of a donkey" many years before Jesus' birth. But in order to fulfill scripture Jesus asks two of the disciples to go into the village of Bethphage and get the donkey and her colt tied up. They were to bring the animals back to Jesus and when they did, cloaks were placed on top and Jesus sat. Word spread very quickly that Jesus was coming and those who knew who he was prepared for a time of celebration and wonder. It was a royal procession except for the fact that the only One who rode was not to be attending a huge banquet at the governor's palace, but in just a few days, would die by crucifixion.

Those who knew who Jesus was were filled with hope and joy and as they placed their cloaks on the ground they also placed their trust in the One who came in the name of God. For

they were oppressed and needing Christ to save and love them. Shouting Hosanna- Save Us the crowd grew larger and palm branches waved in the air, as Jesus waved back fully knowing that they would soon not be supporting him, but yelling for his death. Yet the donkey walked through the streets of Jerusalem and people asked, "Who is this man?" Those who knew him, responded he is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee. He is the One who God sent to save us from sin. He is the One whom we believe is the Son of God and through his life, death and resurrection changed the course of human history. He is also the One by whom, many people are filled with hope that Christ will lead us and love us and move us to be faithful to Him. This is so that we may grow in abundant faith knowing that what we have already received is because of God's grace.

Palm Sunday marks the beginning of Holy Week when we recall the last week of Jesus' life. Jesus enters Jerusalem with much fanfare amongst his followers but this excitement and support changes just a few short days later when he is arrested, tried and sentenced to death. Yet as he rides into the city, he knows that there are others plotting to kill him, and that he will bring about change and hope to all people if they believe in him as the Son of God who came not for himself, but for all people.

Jesus came not for the parades and accolades and be served by others, he came to serve. He rode the donkey so that those who did not know him would listen to his story and believe who the crowd said he was- Jesus, the Son of Man. And that he came riding on the donkey, so that others would know that through the Hosannas, Jesus gently and humbly sat as people believed that he had come to change the world.

And Jesus did change the world, and the Spirit of God still does. Each time we share Jesus' story of unconditional love, of the New Covenant made in His name we remember his passion his pain and the hope which we all need more than ever. Throughout Lent we have been recalling the covenants God made with people – Noah, Abraham and Sarah, people of Israel and Promised Land-with 10 Commandments and bronze serpent, and Jeremiah's law in their hearts and knowing God. It is during the time when Jesus and his followers celebrated Passover that Jesus speaks of his purpose on earth and that he will die to rise again. Jesus came to save all people who would believe in him from their sins. He did this through his death, taking upon himself all sin- even though he had no sin- and offering himself as the One who could and did save us. Through his death on the cross, he was able to make it happen that instead of us dying we would be given the hope and promise of eternal life with God. This is the hope that we all need. We need to know again what Jesus meant at the table that evening

before his death. We know what he did by, “taking a piece of bread, blessing it, breaking it and sharing it, calling it “his Body”. And then he followed this by taking the cup, blessing it and shared it too. “This is my blood of the new covenant which is poured out for many. The new covenant is the promise that God makes with humanity. God will forgive sin and restore fellowship with those whose hearts are turned toward Him. Jesus Christ is the mediator of the New Covenant, and His death on the cross is the basis of the promise but it is up to us to believe and know that we are forgiven.

Today we will share in what Jesus asks us to do in remembrance of Him—to eat and drink of the regular things in life; but these elements are made holy by their purpose—to be symbols of the New Covenant in Christ. As we eat and drink, let us remember the Hosannas of the people shouting with joy and excitement. Let us also remember that Jesus was betrayed and then arrested for doing what he needed to do in order to reach as many people as possible.

Jesus rode into Jerusalem—with people shouting and excited about his coming to save them. But they did not expect that he would ride on to die a death often imposed of thieves and criminals, full of agony and pain. Jesus rode fulfilling Zechariah’s prophecy but he also fulfilled the God the Father’s outpouring of love. For this is why Jesus came- that whoever believes in Him should not perish but receive eternal life. This is foundational of our Christian faith and enables us to look beyond death and to have hope with God forevermore.

Let us pray

God of grace we praise you and thank you. We offer to you the wonder, joy and excitement of our hearts as we share in Holy Week and the blessings of Christ Jesus and his love for us all. Enable us to come before you with prayer and praise; with hurts and pain and the ability to be forgiven and set free to begin again. We ask in the name of Jesus. Amen.