

Pastor Jon's Palm/Passion Sunday Sermon on March 28, 2021.

How quickly the shouts in the streets of 'Hosanna!' turned to 'crucify him.'

Folding a palm branch into a cross is a good way for us to see the abrupt mood change in worship today. We move from the triumphal entry to the suffering of the cross. Thank you to Karin, who made all of our palm crosses for Palms to Go.

Like a true king's procession, palms were waved and cloaks were thrown on the ground and people shouted hosanna as Jesus rode into Jerusalem on the colt of a Donkey. However, many scholars believe that Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem was actually an anti-triumph march.

It wasn't what people were used to from the emperor, who rode into his occupied territories on a prancing horse with huge armies and shows of power surrounding him. He wore a gold crown on his head and purple clothing. There were trumpets and the façade of peace built on a foundation of rule by fear.

I learned this week that a donkey is actually the mount of royalty arriving in peace (Genesis 49:11, Judges 5:5, 10:4). Riding in on a horse is to arrive in war. According to Bishop Mike Rinehart of the ELCA in Texas, LA, SC Synod, "This Jesus is royalty, but he is the Prince of Peace, and he is arriving in peace, not as a conquering hero. This king practices humility"

Jesus' processional into Jerusalem was well thought out. He had his disciples go into town and retrieve a donkey colt. "Just tell them the Lord needs it." We believe Jesus had the prophecy of Zechariah 9:9 in mind. "Your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey." This prophecy was interpreted as the way the Messiah would enter to save the world.

In Jewish tradition, what is known as the **the Messiah's Donkey** refers to the donkey ^[1] upon which the Messiah will arrive to redeem the world at the end of days. In Modern Hebrew the phrase

"the Messiah's donkey" is used to refer to someone who does the 'dirty work' on behalf of someone else.

Where have we heard this before in church? Isn't this what Holy Week is all about? Isn't this what the cross is all about... someone doing the dirty work on behalf of someone else?"

Palm/Passion Sunday marks the beginning of Holy Week for us. In a few minutes you will hear a dramatic reading of the Passion Gospel from Mark. The anti-triumph parody continues in the passion. Listen for it. Jesus is dressed in purple, a crown of thorns woven and put on his head, and people shout, "Hail, king of the Jews." The charge against Jesus is sedition. (Conduct or speech inciting people to rebel against the authority of a state or monarch.)

On Thursday this week, which we call Maundy Thursday, you will hear about Jesus last meal with his friends where he kneels down and washes the disciple's feet and he commands them to love one another as he loved them. On Good Friday, you will hear the Passion according to John's Gospel. I invite you to immerse yourself in Holy Week this week to get the full story.

What can we take away from today's reading?

Bishop Mike Rinehart shared this thought on his weekly blog that really struck me as he reflected on Jesus' humility.

"I have often thought if we, the church, could learn this kind of humility, the world would pay careful attention. It could be our greatest form of evangelism, living lives of humility. As others have said, your life is the greatest sermon you will preach. Jesus showed his greatness through lowliness, his power through humility. The lesson for me this Palm Sunday is humbleness."

I wonder if instead of practicing humility, that we practice lowliness. Even though you may have privilege or power over someone that you take the lower position. That you do the dirty work on behalf of

another. Just a thought for us to ponder and practice during holy week. Amen.