

Pastor Jon's Sermon from April 2, 2023. Palm/Passion Sunday

Mother Theresa once said that we are the donkey's that carry the Lord Jesus, but in a little more colorful language. Think about that. As a Christian you carry Jesus everywhere you go.

When you think of a parade, what comes to mind? Shout it out.

You don't normally see just one person in the parade riding on a donkey.

Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem was surely a different kind of parade. In Jesus time, Rome would stage triumphal entries into Jerusalem with armies, war horses and chariots demonstrating their power and dominance to their subjects. Jesus' entry parodies this mindset. Riding a donkey, not a warhorse, Jesus' goal was not domination, intimidation, and greatness, but humble service. A donkey was an everyday working beast.

Jesus' parade was pre-meditated. He clearly knew the prophecy of Zechariah 9:9 quoted in our Gospel and appears to be acting it out in real time, "Lo, your king comes to you; triumphant and victorious is he, humble and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a Donkey. In this text, Zechariah celebrates God's defeat of Israel's enemies and establishes God's new reign, under way in Jesus.

The people were waving Palm branches, quoting Psalm 118:25, and shouting Hosanna, which means "save now" Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord." They wanted to be liberated from the powers of Rome.

Matthew tells us whole city was shaken to its foundations by the arrival of the Lord's Messiah. It is the same word in Matthew's Gospel that is present for the crucifixion and resurrection... earthquake.

But soon, the Jewish religious elite will be shouting crucify him. As we will read today in the Passion reading.

Jesus' throne will soon become a cross.

In this text, Jesus is intentional about what his reign looks like. It is one of humble service.

What sort of processions have you been involved in in your life? When have you marched for a cause? Is your faith lived out publicly, seeking justice for the oppressed or outcast?

I am afraid many of us like to play it safe. Our faith is more personal and private. We don't want to ruffle feathers or offend anyone. And yet, this display of Jesus' triumphal entry gets us to think about how to address those the injustices in the world.

What are your Hosannas today? What needs saving in our lives and in our world?

We need saving from the unchecked power of one country over another. Russia and Ukraine comes to mind. We need saving from gun violence in our schools and neighborhoods, the most recent happening in Nashville. We need saving from our own sins and selfish ways that hurt those around us and ourselves. Our planet needs saving from our dependence on fossil fuels. For this we shout, Hosanna.

Are our Hosannas short lived today, or are they a prayer for God to truly change the world using the example of Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem, a cross, and an empty tomb? Stay tuned as we enter Holy Week. Amen