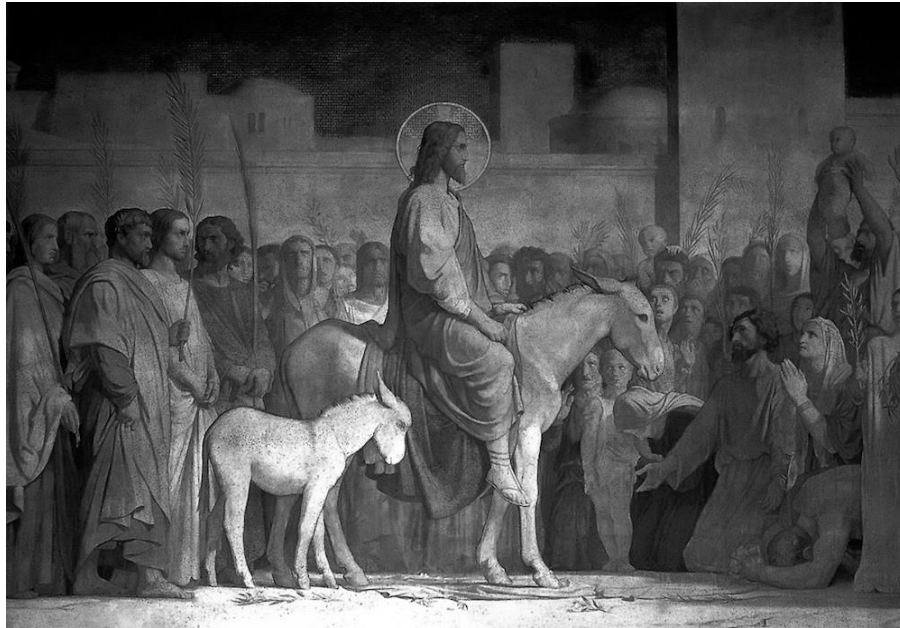


JESUS GOES ROGUE



Scripture:

Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29

¹O give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his steadfast love endures forever!

²Let Israel say, "His steadfast love endures forever."

¹⁹Open to me the gates of righteousness, that I may enter through them and give thanks to the LORD.

²⁰This is the gate of the LORD; the righteous shall enter through it.

²¹I thank you that you have answered me and have become my salvation. ²²The stone that the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. ²³This is the LORD's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes. ²⁴This is the day that the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it. ²⁵Save us, we beseech you, O LORD! O LORD, we beseech you, give us success!

²⁶Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the LORD. We bless you from the house of the LORD. ²⁷The LORD is God, and he has given us light. Bind the festal procession with branches, up to the horns of the altar.

²⁸You are my God, and I will give thanks to you; you are my God, I will extol you.

²⁹O give thanks to the LORD, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever.

Matthew 21:1-11

¹When they had come near Jerusalem and had reached Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, ²saying to them, "Go into the village ahead of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her; untie them and bring them to me. ³If anyone says

anything to you, just say this, 'The Lord needs them.' And he will send them immediately.”

⁴This took place to fulfill what had been spoken through the prophet, saying,

⁵“Tell the daughter of Zion, Look, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.”

⁶The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them; ⁷they brought the donkey and the colt, and put their cloaks on them, and he sat on them. ⁸A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. ⁹The crowds that went ahead of him and that followed were shouting, “Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest heaven!”

¹⁰When he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was in turmoil, asking, “Who is this?” ¹¹The crowds were saying, “This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee.”

This is the Word of the Lord! Thanks be to God!



JESUS GOES ROGUE

Besides the Palm Sunday scripture passage, this story is called “The Triumphal Entry.” Jesus enters the city of Jerusalem like a humble king, something the crowds had never seen before. They were saying, “This is the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee.” That’s like saying this is the choir director, Barbara, from Glen Ellen in Sonoma County. They thought they had him figured out.

On one hand, they understood who Jesus was when they said, Save us, Son of David! Hosanna means Save Us! Hosanna is a combination of the Hebrew words *yasha* which means “deliver, save” and *anna* which means “beg, beseech.” Literally, *hosanna* means “I beg you to save us!”

And when they call him the “Son of David,” it means he is the Messiah. The Messiah had to be a descendant of King David, which Jesus was through the lineage of Joseph (according to Matthew) and also through Mary’s lineage according to Luke. So the Bible makes sure he is doubly linked to David.

On the other hand, the crowds still called him a prophet as well. The term Messiah means “promised deliverer of the Jewish nation as prophesied in the Hebrew Bible.” So it is possible that the Messiah is also a prophet because a prophet can be a deliverer, too.

WHO DO YOU BELIEVE JESUS IS?

Jesus, Emanuel (God with us), Prince of Peace, Messiah, Savior, King of Kings, Jesus is many things all at the same time. He is effable and ineffable, compassionate and a revolutionary, God in the flesh and Mary’s first born son.

Who do you believe Jesus is? Palm Sunday is a good day to ponder your feelings about Jesus and be open to the leading of the Holy Spirit. How do you incorporate your faith in Jesus in your daily life? How do you follow him today as one of his modern day disciples?

We have been pondering how God is present with us in the darkness this Lenten season.

The Holy Week coming up is a good opportunity to continue sorting through your sense of God’s presence in your life, especially in the darkness when your pain and suffering can be obstacles in the way of feeling God’s love, and interferes with seeing the light of hope.

FEAR OF THE DARK

In Barbara Brown Taylor's book, *Learning to Walk in the Darkness*, she explores her own fear of the dark and finds solace in the stories from the Bible that happen after dark. She learns to abide in what feels like God's absence. Taylor learns to accept the fact that loss is a way of life. And most of all she learns to trust that the light is still present with her even if she can't see it.

At the end of her exploration of the darkness (to physically remind her of the light present in darkness), Barbara plants a moon garden in her backyard: a dogwood tree, white rose bushes, a white gardenia plant, and moonflowers, plants that help her remember how much light there still is in the dark.

THE DISCIPLES WERE IN DARKNESS

After the triumphal entry, the disciples felt they were in the darkness. Jesus didn't end up being the kind of revolutionary leader that his Jewish disciples thought he would be. After he turned over the tables of the cheating money changers at the temple market, those watching Jesus thought he was going to rally his own troops and conquer the local authorities. But their dream of Jesus leading a violent takeover never came true. Instead, Jesus goes rogue and shows them the Way of humble self-sacrifice and forgiveness.

THE PALM SUNDAY PARADE

Reverend Michael Curry who is the presiding Bishop in the Episcopal Church describes the Palm Sunday parade this way.

"Jesus didn't just happen to be in Jerusalem on that first Palm Sunday. Jesus was in Jerusalem on purpose. He arrived in Jerusalem about the time of the Passover when many pilgrims were in the city, when people's hopes for freedom that Moses had promised in the first Passover might suddenly be realized for them in their time."

Jesus entered into Jerusalem in a way that would send a clear message to Rome and to

the Jewish authorities. He entered on one side of the city at just about the same time that Pontius Pilate made his entrance on the exact opposite side with a military parade.

Pilate rode a warhorse with Roman sword-carrying soldiers all around him. Pilate's triumphal parade represented the Empire that had taken away the freedom of the Jews by brute force and violence.

In clear opposition, Jesus entered the city on the other side, not on a warhorse, but on a donkey, recalling the words of Zechariah:

Behold your King comes to you
Triumphant and victorious is He
Humble and riding on a donkey

Jesus entered the city at the same time as Pilate to show them, and to show us, that God has another way, that violence and hatred are not the way, that brute force and brutality don't win freedom. Palm Sunday commemorates the first non-violent protest parade recorded in the Bible. Christ's non-violent parade inspires us to follow his way. His message? Don't be afraid to protest when you see injustice. But protest in a way that has lasting impact. Protest with the purpose of sacrificial love.

That's why Jesus entered Jerusalem. That's why he went to the cross. It was the power of that heavenly love (that even after the torture of the crucifixion) love's power raised him from death to life.

**Bishop Curry explains that,
"God came among us in the person
of Jesus to start a movement.
A movement to change
the face of the earth.
A movement to change us
who dwell upon the earth.
A movement to change
all of creation into the dream
that God intends for it."**

Jesus didn't just happen to be in Jerusalem on that Palm Sunday. He went to Jerusalem for a reason. His fearless triumphal protest sent a clear message to the governing powers, that not even the power of death and darkness can stop the love of God. And on that Easter morning, he rose from the dead, and proclaimed that love wins.

A video was shown to the congregation and we were asked to take time to ponder who Jesus is today for us.

**A PRAYER BY
MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.**

I will close with a prayer by Martin Luther King, Jr., one of the greatest teachers of non-violent protest (after Jesus and Mahatma Gandhi). This was written by Martin Luther King Jr. for the end of his Palm Sunday sermon in 1959.

O God, our gracious Heavenly Father, we thank Thee for the fact that you have inspired men and women in all nations and in all cultures. We call you different names: some call Thee Allah; some call you Elohim; some call you Jehovah; some call you Brahma; and some call you the unmoved Mover. But we know that these are all names for one and the same God, and we know you are One.

And grant, O God, that we will follow Thee and become so committed to Thy way and Thy kingdom that we will be able to establish in our lives and in this world a brotherhood. We will be able to establish here a kingdom of understanding, where people will live together as brothers and sisters and respect the dignity and worth of all human personality. In the name and spirit of Jesus we pray. Amen

Benediction:

Join us next Sunday for the wonderful Easter choir Cantata. Come prepared to be inspired to go forth and be people of the Resurrection who follow the way of Jesus.

To help you sleep at night in God's loving arms I printed out passages of assurance of God's presence.

And may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you now and forever more. Amen



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