

Matthew 21:1-11 NRSV
Revere to Reville
WRCoB 4.14.19

Everybody loves a parade . . .

With all the bright red fire engines
the antique cars and tractors, flags just a 'waving
cruising down America's Main Street!

See the mayor riding in the yellow Cadillac convertible
sponsored by Rick Hendrick's Chevrolet.

Here comes Miss Virginia and Miss Peanut Queen
waving at all the google-eyed boys.

Now comes the rows of twirling baton throwers
and marching bands
all blowing trumpets and beating drums.

I mean, you can't help but get excited
and cheer and applaud
as each of the floats and entries pass by.

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During a Tournament of Roses parade
one of the floats suddenly sputtered and died
right there in the middle of main street.

It had run out of gas!

The whole parade came to a screeching halt
behind this one float.

Someone had to run and get a can of gas
to get the float going again.

Here's the real irony . . .
the float was sponsored by Standard Oil Company!

Actually, no one seemed to mind.

Everyone cheered anyway.

Because, of course, everyone loves a parade!

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Palm Sunday was a parade . . . of sorts!

Yes, maybe a one-man-riding-a-donkey kind of parade
but nevertheless, a parade indeed.

We celebrate Jesus' Triumphal Entry in Jerusalem.

A joyous occasion celebrating the king's arrival to the throne.

However, knowing all we know of the events that follow
Palm Sunday feels bittersweet.

Knowing what we now know
the crowd's response seems shallow and insincere.

Had anyone listened when Jesus predicted
things would quickly unravel
when they enter Jerusalem?

Had anyone heard Jesus predict his death?

Had anyone remembered him saying
that those who follow him
would have to bear their own cross?

How is it possible to celebrate Palm Sunday
when they know all hell would break loose
in a matter of days?

Well, but then again . . . everybody loves a parade!

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Everybody that is . . . except Jesus.

I don't have a strong sense Jesus enjoyed the parade.

We know he orchestrated the parade
by having the disciples find the donkey and all . . .

Maybe that was to satisfy the fulfillment of scripture.

We don't read where he waves back at the cheering crowds
Throwing candy at the excited children.

In trying to get a feel for how Jesus felt about all this
we turn to the Gospel of Luke where it mentions
That as Jerusalem comes into view

Jesus does what? He weeps!

The crowd presses in joyously shouting out their praises
but Jesus weeps.

And mind you, these are not tears of joy!
because he's finally being recognized as the Messiah.

Nor are they tears of fear
over his own impending suffering and death.

These are tears of deep grief
as he looks down over the city of Jerusalem!

His first words upon seeing the city
is a heart-wrenching reaction

**Would that even today
You knew the things that make for peace!**

~~

Everybody loves a parade!

Everybody loves a lynching, too!

And in a matter of days
the cheers turn to jeers
the revere to revile

The whimsical and fickle crowd
so quick to praise
so quick to punish!

The enthusiastic shouts of
 “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord”
 so quickly changes to shouts of “Crucify!”

~~

Palm Sunday is also Passion Sunday.

Passion in Greek means something different
 to the English understanding of passion.

The Greek word is *pathein*.

Words like pathogen and pathetic are rooted in *pathein*.

The word means to suffer.

And so when you hear the expression the passion of Christ
 it refers specifically to the suffering Jesus experienced.

Today’s entry into Jerusalem and Jesus weeping
 begins the passion of Christ.

Jesus is overcome with emotion
 as he hears the crowds cheers

as he considers the eventual demise of Jerusalem
 and the brutality that will fall upon its people.

~~

A king who weeps for his people!

What does that show you?
 Compassion!

Compassion is rooted in this word passion.

And it, of course, means, “to suffer with”

Jesus personifies the word.

He suffers with them.

He suffers for them.

He suffers because of them.

Jesus looks down upon the city of Jerusalem

And weeps for lost humanity

He grieves at their ignorance for what makes for peace.

The message of peace and reconciliation falling on deaf ears.

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The very same crowd that shouts “hosanna” today

will soon be shouting “crucify him,” on Good Friday.

And that is why I simply cannot celebrate Palm Sunday

without moving beyond to the events

that take place later in the week.

For if we only heard the joyous cries of “hosanna”

as Jesus enters Jerusalem on Palm Sunday

And then came back to church for Easter Sunday

to the sounds of “hallelujah”

we miss out on the passion of Christ.

And maybe that's just the point.

Maybe we really don't want to be reminded of his suffering.

Many churches have dropped a Good Friday service.

Not too many churches consider Maundy Thursday
The events that took place in the upper room
Very important either.

Brethren used to pride themselves
On having perfect attendance for Love Feast
On Maundy Thursday.

Not so much today!

We want to skip the crucifixion
And go right to the celebration of the Resurrection.

We don't want crosses in our sanctuaries
We don't want to be reminded of his death.

Because, ultimately, we'd rather have a parade.

Now that's something we can celebrate!

~~

Jesus manages to get through the parade
and looks down from Mt Olive and weeps . . .

His teachings fall on deaf ears.
Would his death be in vain, too?

**Would that even today
You knew the things that make for peace.**

Even today, Jesus weeps for the city of Jerusalem.

He weeps for the violence and the division
and the strife that plagued the city then
and plagues the city now.

Jesus weeps today for the innocents
caught up in a violent and destructive world.

For the victims and their families
in the mass killings of the 49 in Christchurch NZ.

of the 11 at the Tree of Life Synagogue
and the 12 in Thousand Oak CA
and the 17 in Parkland FL

for the 26 at the First Baptist Church in Texas
and the 58 in Las Vegas.

Jesus weeps for the 20 children killed in Sandy Hook
and the 9 killed in Bible study in Charleston, SC.

Jesus mourns for the humanitarian crisis in Yemen
where some 56,000 innocents have been killed
and threatens to starve a few million more.

Jesus weeps for the Chibok girls remaining captive
and the ongoing killings between the Fulani and Christian.

Jesus weeps for the 1000 innocents killed
and millions displaced by the worst cyclone
To ever hit South Africa.

Jesus weeps for the children who weep alone
on some dirt floor in some refugee camp

Where violence, HIV/AIDS, and poverty
have killed their parents.

~~

Jesus weeps for us, for the uncaring attitude
In the affluent European and American countries

He weeps for those whose ears are closed
to the sound of suffering in the world.

To those who have grown callous to the violence
to the death and destruction
to the hunger and starvation around them.

Jesus weeps for the victims as well as the perpetrators.

For God made them, too, in his image
and for whom he, too, died.

Jesus weeps for Judas and Cain.

Jesus weeps for all the pain
For all the sorrow
For all the brokenness
And for all the hatred.

And he weeps for the ignorant and the narrow-minded.

Would that even today

You knew the things that make for peace.

~~

From revere to revile

From praise to persecute

From joy to sorrow.

Holy Week

Begins with the celebration of Palm Sunday

And descends into the nightmare of Good Friday.

We are left with the haunting awareness

That Jesus's message of peace and reconciliation

Fall on deaf ears.

Jesus weeps

And we stand embarrassed, silent, dumbfounded

We look down and shuffle our feet

“Awe shucks, Jesus, all we wanted was a parade.”

“After all, we all love a parade!”