

Luke 19:28-44
Revel to Revile
WRCOB 3.28.21

It was Palm Sunday.

The family's 10-year old son had stayed home from church
Due to a sore throat.

When the family returned home carrying palm branches
The little boy asked what that was all about.

His mother replied, "Today is Palm Sunday.
"People waved palms over Jesus as he rode by."

"Wouldn't you know it," the boy fumed.

"The one Sunday I miss church and Jesus shows up!"

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We call it Palm Sunday, but note
The Gospel of Luke never mentions palms.

John is the only gospel
That specifically mentions palm branches.

Nevertheless, it has become tradition
To call the day Jesus entered Jerusalem, Palm Sunday.

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Ever since he turned his face towards Jerusalem
Jesus felt the tension and the pressure
The stress and the strain building within him.

For today is the day Jesus begins his final week on earth.

As he approaches Jerusalem
Jesus becomes overwhelmed with emotion.

(Photo, Jesus weeps)

He weeps when Jerusalem comes into view.

He is conflicted and his emotions are on edge.

Later, he expresses anger when entering the temple
Filled with the noise of the traders.

And later still, he succumbs to anguish
As he prays in the Garden of Gethsemane,

You know, we never hear much about how Jesus feels
Whether he's happy or sad or mad

But with these little morsels of information
We can see Jesus really struggling.

Even here, during his entry into Jerusalem
We don't read where Jesus is waving to the crowds

Taking babies from their mother's arms
And planting kisses on their rosy cheeks.

Any description of Jesus' reaction is strangely absent.

(Photo, Jesus entering Jerusalem)

Jesus enters Jerusalem, to the shouts of hosanna.

The text states the whole city was stirred
And crowded to the curb side
To get a glimpse of this one-man parade.

It must have gratified the disciples to see the crowd turn out.

Okay, so there wasn't time
To assemble the Jerusalem high school marching bands
Or bring out the bright red shiny fire engines
Antique trucks or Bob Gangwer's Farmall Cub.

They didn't contact the mayor in time
So that he and Jesus could ride together
In the dealer-sponsored convertible Caddy.

It was still a parade of sorts
Admittedly, somewhat spontaneously thrown together.

But nevertheless, everyone loved it!

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So, it must have shocked everyone, then
When they saw that Jesus was crying.

It must have all rung a bit hollow to Jesus.

This makeshift parade
That he, himself, had actually initiated
Seems almost to mock him.

I mean, here comes this group of vagabond wanderers
Misfits in the best sense of the word

Led by a man admired by the common folk
Despised by the religious leaders

Dusty from the miles of road they had traveled.

Jesus riding on a borrowed donkey no less
And enters the main street of Jerusalem
As if he was a king to be duly crowned!

What do you make of this?

Does that sound like Jesus to you?

I mean, why would Jesus do this?

What was the point?

The commoners loved him!

Here was this advocate for the poor
Healing of every ill
Finally being recognized.

The Pharisees, however, were beside themselves
As they watched Jesus enter the streets on a donkey.

This action riding into Jerusalem on a donkey
Was a **huge political statement!**

That is how the kings of Israel entered Jerusalem!

(Slide)

Zechariah 9:9 NLT

Rejoice, O people of Zion!

Shout in triumph, O people of Jerusalem!

Look, your king is coming to you.

**He is righteous and victorious,
yet he is humble, riding on a donkey—
riding on a donkey's colt.**

This not-so-subtle message
Certainly, was not lost on the Pharisees.

They were infuriated by Jesus' provocative suggestion.

By doing what he did, Jesus declares
Politically and theologically
That he, Jesus, is the long-awaited king
Promised by the prophets of God!

By doing so, Jesus pushed the Pharisees' buttons
Ultimately setting in motion the wheels of fate
That led to his crucifixion.

Indeed, it appears Jesus was intentional in all of this.

For Jesus knew that the real climax of his story
Wasn't riding a donkey into Jerusalem
Like the kings of old.

The real climax of the story
Would be later, on a hill called Calvary . . .
No, later still, on Easter Sunday.

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Though the city was stirred
And praise and adoration rung out through the streets
For this humble man in a one-donkey parade

Jesus grew wearier with each step of the donkey
Knowing full well this moment's revel
Would soon turn to revile.

That all too soon, the shouts of hosanna
Would be replaced with cries to crucify.

People were caught up in the thrill of the moment.

Everybody loves a parade!

(Photo, Jesus carrying cross)

Well, for that matter, everybody loves a lynching too!

The very same people praising this moment
Would be condemning the next.

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Palm Sunday Christians you might call them.

Quick to crowd the edge of the street
Quick to wave the banners
Quick to shout hosanna

Quick to take their coats
And strip branches from the local palms

Quick to spread them in the path of Jesus' procession.

Quick to give God the glory.

But what happens, come Good Friday?

Where are they then?

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Entering Jerusalem was excruciatingly difficult for Jesus.

He knew what lay ahead.

They didn't?

He warned his followers

That his kingship was different from what they expected!

He warned them

He would be handed over to the authorities

That he would suffer and die.

And he warned his followers they, too

If they were to follow him

Would have to take up their own crosses.

He warned them, three times, very clearly.

But they didn't get it!

Nobody did!

I mean, who would have?

Jesus looked down over the city knowing full well

That nobody . . . nobody, but he alone

Foresaw the coming days.

Imagine the haunting loneliness of that week.

The hard part was yet to come.

The climax of the story
Was still a mystery to the crowds.

The cross looms ever larger on the horizon
But only Jesus sees it.

And so, the disciples celebrate along with the rest
Basking in the warmth of the praise and adoration

Completely unaware
What would be asked of them
In just a matter of days.

Palm Sunday Christians want a parade!

They want the make-you-feel-good
Soft, warm, fuzzy kind of Jesus.

They'll rally behind that Jesus!

But when it gets a bit rough
Palm Sunday Christians quietly slip away.
Or worse yet, betray their whom they follow!

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From the entry into Jerusalem
The crowds swarmed, cheering on their leader.

But the closer Jesus got to Good Friday
The less cheering and the more jeering he got.

(Photo, Jesus crucified)

When at the end, hanging there on the cross
Overlooking the city he wept for
There remained but John, Jesus' mother
And maybe one or two more.

The world is full of Palm Sunday Christians.

They want reward without sacrifice
Glory without cost.

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But Jesus has all the Palm Sunday Christians he needs.

He needs a few Good Friday Christians.

Christians who would be there when things got tough.

Christians, whom he could rely on
To carry on his work

Christians who will not be silenced
But speak out against the injustices of the day

Christians who would carry the message of salvation

Do the work of healing and teaching
Of caring for the poor, sick, and oppressed.

Do the ministry of kingdom building.

These are the Good Friday Christians
If they were to keep silent
Even the stones would shout out.

Good Friday Christians know the cross
Grows larger on their own horizons

Fully aware of the consequences
For standing up to the powers and principalities.

Jesus calls Christians to be Palm Sunday Christians
But he expects them to become Good Friday Christians.

Jesus enters Jerusalem
And no matter which way he turns
He will not escape the fate
That he himself initiated.

He has resolutely turned toward Jerusalem
And his meeting with destiny.

He has taken the steps of no return
Things are set in motion that cannot be reversed.

And the closer he gets to the hill called Golgotha
The fewer his followers become.

Each of us, whether we are Palm Sunday Christians
Or Good Friday Christians

End up watching from a distance
As he approaches the final episode of his life on earth.

Because this is a journey only Christ can take.

Only Christ can be the redeeming agent of God's grace.

And no matter how much we love him
This is something he must do
And do alone.