

Great Expectations
Palm Sunday - Year B - 03/28/2021
Psalm Reading: 118:1-2, 19-29
1st Reading: John 12:2-16, 2nd: Mark 11:1-11

We learn from our reading that Jesus and his disciples
*“approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage and
Bethany at the Mount of Olives,”*

Jesus planning to come to the city for Passover.

Why? High holy day. Lots of people.

Comes through the East Gate.

Close to the temple.

Jewish tradition: Messiah would pass through.¹

Messiah – What is the Messiah (anointed one - King)

*Jesus sent two of his disciples, (ahead) 2 saying to them, “Go to
the village ahead of you, and just as you enter it, you will find a
colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring
it here.*

Jesus would enter the city on donkey.

Kings entry (Horse vs. Donkey)

3 *If anyone asks you, ‘Why are you doing this?’ say, ‘The Lord
needs it and will send it back here shortly.’”*

Does not demand imperiously that he receive the property
of the people, his subjects, but as always shows consideration
for others.

4 *They went and found a colt outside in the street, tied at a
doorway. As they untied it, 5 some people standing there
asked, “What are you doing, untying that colt?” 6 They*

1 <https://www.gotquestions.org/eastern-gate-Jerusalem.html>

answered as Jesus had told them to, and the people let them go.

Thought that Jesus arranged ahead of time.

7 *When they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks over it, he sat on it. 8 Many people spread their cloaks on the road, while others spread branches they had cut in the fields.*

Sign of honor and respect for Jesus.

Indeed they knew who Jesus was from his three years of ministry.

9 *Those who went ahead and those who followed shouted, "Hosanna!"*

"Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!"

10 *"Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David!"*

"Hosanna in the highest heaven!"

Hosanna, Hey story...

Hosanna means "Save Us".

From Romans (what they were thinking)

From Sin is how we understand it.

11 *Jesus entered Jerusalem and went into the temple courts. He looked around at everything, but since it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the Twelve.*

Always imagine this as early in day, but must have been later. It was a good time to come, few people there and would give him some moments of peace at what would soon become the scene of tumultuous events. I don't know about you, but at times I like to come to the sanctuary alone especially in the evening when the sun is coming in through the west windows. It opens your mind and makes you feel that you are communing more directly with God.

So, we have this grand entrance of the Messiah into Jerusalem. This is a royal entry.

East Gate

Riding a Donkey

Comes to the Temple – first thing he does
sign of intention

What a glorious welcome! the man Jesus showered with praise.

Imagine yourself in a parade.

Everyone loves you.

Long procession. You are seated on the back of a convertible waving your hand.

Everyone praises you.

And everyone has expectations of you, imprinting their own desires and solutions on you.

They all want to be saved.

It is a heady moment. And yet, for Jesus, every step the donkey takes, every moment that flickers by, is one step closer to a suffering so great that it would be unbearable for anyone except the Messiah.

The people understand Jesus is the Messiah. He is honored, praised, and his saving grace is begged for by the people in the streets.

I think it is important to remember that the very reason that Jesus was hailed as conquering hero and glorious king, was the same reason that he had to go to the Cross. It was because he was/is the Messiah. The dichotomy between how he was treated on Palm Sunday and how he was treated on Good Friday, when he was tried, crucified, and buried is stark.

How do we reconcile these two days? The truth is that we cannot have one without the other. They are two sides of the same coin. As king, Christ must be lifted up, must be glorified. It is manifest, Jesus is our savior. But Christ is our savior because of the death he suffers and so the Cross.

And there are interesting parallels between the two days.
walk of shame / lifted up / ends in sleep-death

So, how are we to feel about all this? What does it mean two millennia later? Of course, we can see Palm Sunday and Good Friday through a theological lens as fulfillment of prophecy. We can see it historically as a series of incidents that happened long ago. We can see it as a morality tale, and reflect upon how the mighty have fallen. Or we can take this lesson to heart. We can recall that what Christ did there was done for us, to save us. To save us primarily from ourselves, from our own sin. What good is what Christ did for us, if we do not reform our own lives in response?

We talk a lot about becoming disciples of Christ, and how often have I said that the object of being a disciple is to become like the master. Like Christ, there will be times when everyone loves us, when we are waving at the admiring crowds, waving their palm branches and singing “Hosanna Hey”. Jesus handles this time not with exuberance, but with an understanding of what such praise truly meant, he understood that much was required of him.

There will also be times when sacrifice is required. Of course, we could never bear all that Jesus bore. And we will make mistakes in our attempt to follow Christ’s example. Jesus handled that time with equanimity, too. In the same way we

must bear what we can, and do the best we can when we are called upon.

And there is another aspect here. When we are dealing with others, whether in the church or out in society, we must remember that, just as Jesus went through highs and lows in his manifestation as a being fully human, every individual is going through the highs and lows of life every day. They are doing their best in a chaotic world of sin and temptation. Because of this we must treat others with understanding and love.

On Palm Sunday we recall the entry of Jesus into Jerusalem for that Passover festival. The death of Jesus on Good Friday was a tragedy. In a narrative sense there must be a precipitous fall, and Jesus took that fall from an infinite height. It is for this that we must be grateful. It is for this we must respond as disciples of Christ.

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