

Sermon - April 13, 2025

How many of you have picked up the irony of today? We claim today to be Palm Sunday because we associate the day with Matthew's version, Matthew or John's version, of Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem. In those stories, they take branches off of trees and they wave them, and we associate those with palm branches because that was the predominant tree in that area. But if you listened carefully to Luke's Gospel story there are no palms. There are also no hosannas, which is what we're used to crying out on Palm Sunday. "Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!" That's not said today in Luke. Luke claims, "Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven, and glory in the highest heaven!" No hosannas, no palms; but a parade nonetheless. A parade that was very threatening to the Roman government.

Luke has told us previously of Pharisees, and, in one instance, they were actually trying to warn Jesus about coming into Jerusalem because they knew that Herod wanted to kill Jesus. They thought they were being helpful, but it turned out that that's not God's plan. Here again we see Pharisees. When I said that word what popped into your head? We often associate the Pharisees with those that were out to get Jesus, those that were enemies of Jesus, those that were sly and cunning. But in Luke, that's not always the case. Again, it's easy to associate individuals and assume that the individual within a group is how the whole group is. But, once again in our story, we see the Pharisees doing something that we're not used to.

We often hear the end of the triumphal entry, verses 39, "Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, 'Teacher, order your disciples to stop.'" and we often think that that might be the Pharisees trying to get control of the situation. But I wonder, were they trying to be helpful? Were they trying to find a way to allow Jesus to continue to do the miracles that he's been doing, the teaching that he's been doing? Were they trying to warn him that, if things kept going the way they are, he would end up dead? So instead of saying, 'Make them stop...' I wonder if they're pleading, 'Have them be quiet so that you don't bring attention.'? It's a whole new understanding for the dynamic in there. But whether we understand their motives or not, Jesus knew what needed to be done in that moment. His response to them, "I tell you, if these were silent, the stones would shout out." Jesus knows this must happen.

Earlier in Luke's Gospel he writes that, "Jesus set his face to Jerusalem." That was way back in Chapter 9. Jesus set his face towards what he knew would be coming. He knows this is the moment, and he also realizes that those around him don't understand the dynamic that is going on, as evidenced by how our passage starts. "After he had said this..." Again, coming in the middle of something. So, I did a little bit more research. Just before he enters Jerusalem Jesus tells the twelve a parable. It's a parable of preparation. It's a different parable than what we're hearing when I tell you the Parable of the Talents. When I use that phrase, we often think of Matthew's version. Three slaves, three different amounts, all invest them differently. Luke's Gospel tells it much differently.

The man going away is a nobleman and he's going away to be crowned a king. In the meantime, he entrusts ten slaves all with the same amount of talents. And when he returns, he asks for what they've done. I'm not going to go through the whole parable; I do encourage you to research this. But it's a parable of warning about how we invest our time and live our lives in the absence of the one who is over us. It caught me that he tells a parable about a nobleman who will become a king and what they're to do in that absence; and the very next thing that happens is this humble rabbi, Jesus, gets put on a colt that's never been ridden (and I'll get back to that in a moment) and enters Jerusalem being called a king. We

know that by the end of the week this king, this nobleman, will be gone for a few days before returning. We also know that once he does conquer death, he ascends into heaven but will return. Now we are entrusted with the mission. We are given something to invest in the meantime.

So that parable becomes the foreshadowing of this entry. Jesus understands that those that are there, and maybe a lot of us today, don't fully understand all that is going on and he laments. He enters the city and he says, "If you, even you, had only recognized on this day the things that make for peace!" We have a church word that is associated with this understanding of peace, *atonement*, at-one-ment. A desire, not just to have there be no violence, but a sense of fullness within the midst of whatever is happening.

Jesus shows what peace can be as he enters on that colt. A donkey that has never been ridden needs to be broken in and domesticated. Which means they're not going to be happy having somebody sitting on top of them. Add on to that the fact that they are now going to be in a crowd of people. It was pointed out in one of my commentaries, that this alone is a miracle that Jesus is performing in the midst of this scene. That he can sit on the colt and ride through a crowd in peace, his divinity and his humanity on display all in one.

The crowd cheers and recognizes something. "Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven, and glory in the highest heaven!" Sometimes we say things without realizing the full meaning behind what we say. They recognized Jesus was someone special. Earlier in the gospel there was a crowd that wanted to make him king, and he walked away; and, here again, they are claiming him as king, hoping that he will fulfill the prophecy of restoring the Kingdom of Israel. In their minds they are looking for a military conqueror, and they are treating Jesus as such with this procession. But the type of conquering that Jesus does isn't over military victories, it's over death itself. It's over the barriers that we place between ourselves and God, and ourselves and one another. Jesus knows they don't understand. He laments that they will not claim what is truly there for them, but he doesn't give up hope.

I found it fascinating that Luke talks about peace more than all of the other gospels combined. Peace was important, and the peace they're glorifying wasn't the peace on earth that we pray for and that we look for, but it's the peace of heaven. We know that heaven is at peace because Jesus was faithful to the mission that God gave him. We look for how we can bring that peace of heaven to the earth. We long for peace. God longs for peace; and we have the ability to help bring that peace by the way that we use what God has given us and investing it wisely while we wait for our king to return.

Today we can join with the multitudes of disciples and we can, indeed, praise the King of Heaven and the peace that is there; and in the midst of our praise be mindful of the challenge that we now have as we await the returning of our king. We have the opportunity, as we walk with Jesus this week, to reflect on what Jesus has taught and what Jesus has asked of us. How can we live the commission to love and, in doing so, bring the peace of God, the peace of heaven to become the peace we seek on earth?

Let us pray. Good and gracious God, we thank you. We thank you for the faithfulness of Jesus to enter into this challenging week. We thank you that he, indeed, is the King of heaven and of earth. And we pray, Lord God, that as we await the King's coming again, that you would be with us. That you would grant us strength, and that you would help us do what you would have us do to prepare the way for his coming now and forever. Be with us, hold us dear, give us strength. For we pray this in your holy and loving name. Amen.