

Sermon for Palm Sunday – Sunday of Passion

In my first all the Community High School Basketball team won the District Championship that year. Later that same Saturday night, I was awakened at 11 PM (Yes, I was in bed because I had to preach the next morning), with sirens and horns honking. Looking out the window I saw many of the town's folk lining the main street waving and clapping and hollering. Yes, it was the team, with the parents, cheerleaders, and other boosters coming through town on their way back in parade fashion. They were met at the town limit by the VFD, and our local policeman. The town's folk were there to cheer the and welcome their conquering hero's home. I am sure Laurens has had similar kinds of parades and receptions for their local hero's when they return to home.

This morning Jesus is greeted by adoring folks as He enters Jerusalem just before the Passover Festival. The lay down palm branches and garments in His pathway as He draws near the gates of Jerusalem. Jesus has shown miraculous power, just having raised his friend Lazarus from the dead. Could Jesus be our conquering hero. Could He be the longed for, hoped for, promise Messiah? Is He the one to redeem Israel? Is He the one to finally defeat the worldly powers and kingdoms and set up the Kingdom of God? Blessed is He who comes the name of the Lord. Hosanna, Hosanna in the highest heaven, Hosanna!

I certain that many who welcomed Jesus that Palm Sunday were ready to join the parade. By joining in this Jesus march, they could be a part of something special. So, the crowds crowned Jesus with honor and glory. You can see it in the eyes of the zealots who are now ready to drive the Romans out their land. They pin their political hopes on Jesus. He is the one to bring power and glory back to Jerusalem forever and ever. Amen!

I suppose, Jesus being aware of these expectations chose the mode of transportation that he did. A unceremonious donkey of all things. Pastor John Nunnes describes this entry equivalent to Jesus arriving in a Ford Fiesta instead of a chauffeur driven limo. Although Jesus never refutes the accolades from the crowd or never shuts them up with, "Oh, please stop it, you do not get it," there is something in this way He entered Jerusalem, humble and riding on a colt (or donkey) that foreshadows the cross. In fact, the path and trajectory is downhill from here for.

Rather than taking up the title, Son of God, Messiah, or any identity of royalty, Jesus makes the opposite move. He empties Himself, He as St. Paul writes in Philippians 2:5 ff...Jesus already gave up equality with God, to become human, even being born of woman, and taking on the role of a servant and humbling Himself to the point of death, even death on a cross.

Instead of seizing the throne in Jerusalem, He aims right toward a Garden on the out skirts of Jerusalem, then to a place of the forsaken, a place reserved only for criminals. Jesus takes this march for you and for me. If you feel like an outsider, or forgettable, or unforgivable, or if you cannot get your life back on track, Jesus has come for you. I like the way Martin Luther puts state what Jesus is up to: "This King does not rule by means of money, possessions, and power; He is nonetheless a ruler like no other, who can save and help where no man, no creature on

earth or heaven can help – against sin, that we may not be damned by it, against death, that it may not devour us, against the devil, that he may not keep us captive.”

Jesus hides His power and divinity behind His humanity to die on our behalf so that we can join the Jesus march and die to our self – that old life of sin, so we will not rely on the need to gain power and riches in our self-created kingdoms, nor be driven by our own pride-full ambitions.

This Holy Week, through the Easter celebration and beyond, let us walk with Jesus, for He is our sure and certain hope in all the world, in a world that resorts to name calling, labeling, dividing so that one political party may claim victory. What Jesus did is our only hope because what the cross of His salvation does is name you, Child of God, labels you a disciple, and unites us, because He has torn down the dividing wall between you and God, and the wall between you and your neighbor, so that we are saved to serve one another and neighbor and for their well-being. May all have the this same mind that Jesus had for you and me.