

Grace to you and peace from God, our Creator, and from our Savior, Jesus Christ.  
Amen.

How many of you noticed that there are no shouts of “Hosanna!” in the reading today? How many of you noticed that there’s no mention of palm branches – or any other type of branch – in the reading? There’s also no explicit mention that the colt Jesus rode was a donkey.

Palm Sunday, when told by the gospel according to Luke, is sometimes called the “coats and cloaks” Palm Sunday. It doesn’t have any of the things we typically associate with this day. The only shouts that happen are songs of praise for all the mighty deeds God has done.

And some of those acts were witnessed in Jesus. But many of the shouts and songs were about Passover – the reason so many people were on pilgrimage to Jerusalem that week.

So, together, this all sets a slightly different tone for the day. But the tension is still there. Because for all of the celebration coming from the multitude of disciples as Jesus entered the city, there was an undercurrent of threat from the religious leaders if the people didn’t shush.

And that tension ticked up a couple of notches when Jesus says that if the people were to be silent, the stones would shout out. <sup>1</sup>Effectively reminding the religious leaders that the celebration of what God has done is written in the foundations of the earth.

There also isn’t a clean break in this story after the Triumphal Entry. So, it’s tempting to just move into what comes next because it all unfolds so quickly.

But pausing here, in the events of Palm Sunday, helps us remember who Jesus came to be – the type of king he was – and the peace that he brought to our world.

<sup>2</sup>For the last several weeks, we’ve heard stories from Luke’s gospel about Jesus’ journey to Jerusalem. That journey has now ended and things are beginning to shift.

The final week of Jesus’ life begins with recognition that what Jesus has done has been noticed. It’s a moment of celebration before the brutality that will come, and before the celebration of the resurrection

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.pulpitfiction.com/notes/palmc>

<sup>2</sup> Spirituality of Conflict commentary for April 10, 2022.

It's also a celebration that wasn't understood by the disciples or the crowd. They worshiped the one they believed to be the king that would save them from the Romans. But the actions of Jesus, riding on a colt, are the actions of a king of peace. A king who knows that power can be used and abused – and who used the power given to him for the good of humanity.

The people who worshiped Jesus as he entered Jerusalem had witnessed this. They saw that the way Jesus used his power honored his call to social justice, feeding the hungry, and his passion for fully including people who'd been cast out.

<sup>3</sup>The people who worshiped Jesus that day witnessed that he used his power for the sake of people – that he noticed people and their humanity. They knew Jesus saw beyond a person's social or economic position and their perceived authority, and noticed the sacred quality of who they were as a person.

As Jesus approached Jerusalem that day, those with political power – those in positions of authority – were the ones who panicked and criticized and threatened, and who planned to kill him. But those without power echoed the song the angels sang on the night of Jesus' birth, "Peace in heaven, and glory in the highest heaven!"

It's a reminder of why Jesus was born – of the king he came to be for us. The king we need – and the peace that he brings even when the rest of the world doesn't seem to make sense.

<sup>4</sup>Theologian Debie Thomas reminds us that that paradox is what gives Jesus' story its shape and weight and texture. It calls us to hold together truths that seem bizarre and counterintuitive.

There are days when we understand that that paradox is exactly the reason the Christian faith has credibility. In a world filled with pain and contradiction, we need a faith strong enough to bear the weight of that, and that allows us to face the reality of it.

<sup>5</sup>But our faith also puts us face-to-face with some difficult questions: will we choose Jesus' way of peace? Will we choose to notice the sacredness of each person? Will we accompany Jesus on his colt and honor his way – or will our impatience get the better of us and make us desert him?

It's this particular Sunday, more than any other, that puts us face-to-face with the way of Jesus – the coming of God's kingdom – a kingdom of peace, self-emptying love,

---

<sup>3</sup> Lederach, J, 2014, *Reconcile: Conflict Transformation for Ordinary Christians*, Herald Press, p48

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.journeywithjesus.net/essays/2958-save-us-we-pray>

<sup>5</sup> Ibid

radical embrace, radical patience, and radical risk. A kingdom that demands a degree of trust, vulnerability and courage that much of the world doesn't support.

A kingdom that humans reject. A kingdom that humans very much need.

Over the last six months, and probably longer, there hasn't been a break in violence in our world. It used to ebb and flow and give us a minute or two of breathing space, but now it feels constant. The wars in Ukraine and Palestine haven't stopped, despite attempts at ceasefires. The military in Sudan is systematically violating human rights as it expands control over its country.

In our own nation, people are being taken from the streets and detained without due process or regard for what happens to them afterward. Economic policies are structured so that people with wealth and power maintain those things at the expense of people who don't have them. And for many people, fear and anxiety over just surviving is part of daily life.

Our faith in Jesus puts us face-to-face with these struggles every day. It puts us face-to-face with humanity's tendency to opt for a violent solution to situations instead of one that honors life. It puts us face-to-face with the choice of paying attention to things that may not directly affect us

Our faith in Jesus puts us face-to-face with our society's obsession with prosperity and living an easy life. It puts us face-to-face with the way people who are pushed aside or pushed down are ignored. And with the way we set conditions for whether or not we love others.

But each time our faith in Jesus puts us face-to-face with any of these situations, it also puts us face-to-face with the opportunity to live the way of Jesus. To face the truth of our world and hold it up against the truth of his kingdom. To live into its demands – the humbleness and sacrifices we'd rather run away from.

Our faith in Jesus puts us face-to-face with the opportunity to embody the peace that he brings to our lives and make it real in our world.

"Peace in heaven, and glory in the highest heaven!" These aren't words we say just at Christmas. <sup>6</sup>When the crowds in Jerusalem said them on Palm Sunday, they were dreaming of a king who would bring victory and glory. And in Jesus as their king, they got what they needed – a savior.

---

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.workingpreacher.org/dear-working-preacher/speak-the-dream-of-peace>

One who came to topple sin and death and Satan – all the things that underlie the kingdoms that humans build. And Jesus didn't do that in a way that anyone expected. But he absolutely did it in a way that the world needed.

More than any other Sunday, this day puts us face-to-face with the truth about Jesus. The one who will never leave us alone, even in our emptiest of moments. The one who sees and honors the sacredness of each person. The one who brings peace to our broken world.

Thanks be to God! Amen.